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Public-Private Partnership in Technical and Vocational Education and Training to Promote Industry Relevant Skills



Prothom Alo in association with International Labour Organization (ILO) organised a roundtable titled "Public-Private Partnership in Technical and Vocational Education and Training to Promote Industry Relevant Skills" on October 13, 2018. Here we publish a summary of the discussion.

Abdul Quayum, Associate Editor, Prothom Alo

Bangladesh is doing quite well in terms of general education but we are lagging behind in skills development. To remain competitive in the global market we need to create skilled manpower through technical and vocational education and training. Our education system has to be more attuned to job-market needs. Without proper support from the private sector, the government can't do it alone. Today's discussion will focus on how an effective public-private partnership (PPP) can be built to impart technical and vocational education and training to develop professional skills.

Tuomo Poutiainen, Country Director, ILO

I am really glad to be present in this important discussion. ILO has been working in Bangladesh for more than 10 years to develop skilled human resources. The whole world is changing rapidly. Everyone expects positive transformation. That's why everyone should work diligently keeping in mind the prospects of the future.

Nowadays, skills are given top priority in both government and non-government organisations. There is no alternative to technical education for the acquisition of skills. Bangladesh needs to invest more in this sector. Otherwise the country will not be able to achieve the SDGs.

ILO works with various national and international development partners such as Canada, EU, the World Bank, ADB, UNICEF and so on. We also work with public and private organisations of different countries. All the institutions need to come forward to support development of professional skills. National and local organisations in the country should also come forward in this regard.

The government alone can't develop skills in every sector. Participation of the private sector is a must. Considering the socio-economic conditions of the country, the resources, experience and opinions of the private sector should be given priority in developing professional skills. Otherwise initiatives to develop skills might fail to achieve their goal.

We have to consider prospects and challenges of both workers and investors. Instead of providing temporary training we need to think about creating adequate skilled manpower in the private sector and build a strong partnership between government and private sector. We need to modernise the technical institutions.

There is no alternative to technical education to achieve the SDGs. Both the public and private sectors should invest in this regard. Without adequate investment it is impossible to achieve the employment-related SDG target. Apart from garments and the export-oriented sector, we need to create skilled labour force for other industries too. We need to have a holistic plan regarding professional skills development.

Kishore Kumar Singh, Chief Technical Adviser, ILO

Public-private partnership is critical to the development of market driven skills system and professional skills needed by the industry. Bangladesh has little experience of strong public-private partnerships in TVET sector. This needs a serious consideration for unlocking private sector resources and its engagement in promoting market driven skills system. ILO's B-SEP project has played a significant role in developing different models of public-private partnerships to promote resource sharing between TVET institutes and the industries and to provide opportunities for the students to gain hands on experience at the enterprises, which provide a pathway to full-time employment after graduation.

TVET institutes also benefit from PPP as they can make use of the facilities at enterprises for teaching purposes while the enterprises may also provide raw materials with which students can use to fine tune their skills. Apprenticeship and dual skills training are other areas of skills development that immensely benefit from PPP. It also helps TVET institutes to keep pace with technological changes taking place in the industries. It is really important to develop skills that keeps pace with technological transformations. We have to continue our efforts in this regard in the age of automation and the fast pace technological changes.

Alexius Chicham, National Project Coordinator, ILO

Technical education and training are the driving force in developing countries like Bangladesh. Currently, various types of industries are being set up all around the country. But we are not getting the adequate number of skilled labour required for these industries. Again, students being educated in the local technical institutes don't have adequate skills to work in high-tech industries.

Bangladesh is going to be a middle-income country. A new kind of industrial revolution is happening all over the world. If we fail to develop skilled manpower, we will not be able to keep pace with the global market. We have to create an adequate pool of human resources so that we can increase our productivity and contribute to the development of the country. To achieve this both the public and private sectors should work together.

We have connected five government run technical

institutes with five private companies under the PPP model: Samatsuk Printers is working with Graphic Arts Institute on printing technology. Similarly, Rangpur Technical School and College is working with Rajshahi Woodpoint Furniture Limited; Panchagarh Gems Jute Mills Limited with Panchagarh Technical School and College; Janani Engineering Workshop with Narayanganj Technical School and College; and Mahin Furnitures Limited with Barishal Technical School and College. Through such partnerships, students are getting practical training along with theoretical education. Students are also getting the opportunity to use the machines and resources of these private enterprises.

We need to keep in mind the benefits of both public and private entities being involved in a PPP project. If we can do more such PPP projects, it will definitely reduce unemployment in the country. It will also help create skilled manpower required for modern industries.

Syed Abdul Aziz, Principal, Jessore Technical School & College

Various initiatives have been taken in Bangladesh to develop professional skills. Coordination among these initiatives needs to be improved. It is important to link certification with training under PPP.

However, in our country, there is no dearth of certificate-holders. Many of them are jobless due to their lack of professional knowledge. Recently, Sheikh Hasina Software Technology Park advertised for recruiting 10,000 freelancers. 33,000 graduates applied but after interviews and practical exams, only 17 were found to be eligible for the post. It shows the poor situation of our education system. To come out of it there is no alternative to technical and vocational education.

Jute has a glorious tradition in Bangladesh. But there is still no short-term training available in the jute industry. Due to the lack of professional skills, many posts remain vacant in the jute industry.

To develop public-private partnerships, we need to expand its scope. In many cases, we find that local institutions can't implement PPP models due to the lack of funds. There should be an adequate budget to implement PPP programmes.

Md Abdul Monayem, CEO, GEM Jute

Jute has a rich tradition in Bangladesh. We have to preserve this heritage. Unfortunately, this industry is operated by unskilled workers. I took the charge of Gem Jute Mill in 2011. I found that most of the jute workers don't have any professional knowledge about the jute industry. They learn by doing. That's why accidents are so common in the industry and jute workers frequently switch their professions.

In 2015, Syed Abdul Aziz gave us a proposal of developing professional skills through public-private partnerships and I accepted the proposal. We employed everyone after they had completed their training. But many left their job after 2-3 months. They are not interested in working as a labourer. They want to be officers. If we don't get any benefits through PPPs, why would we go for that?

Every profession should be respected so that people engaged in a profession don't feel embarrassed about their work. To keep workers focused, there should be a mental counsellor in every factory.

Nihor Ronjon Das, Principal in Charge, Graphic Arts Institute

Through PPP programmes students are getting opportunities of income and practical work along with their studies. These students are also providing training to their juniors. It is really helping students to move forward.

We have signed seven agreements with different organisations on graphic arts. We have a good relationship with Samatsuk Printers. We are continuing our efforts to foster good relations with other organisations through the PPP model.

PPP programmes can help develop skills of the workers. In recent times, young Bangladeshis have been doing very well in outsourcing. If they get support through PPP programmes, they will do better. It will also help earn foreign currency and strengthen the economy of the country.

In our institute there are 95 computers in four computer labs. Last week we conducted a survey and found that more than 100 students are earning through various outsourcing jobs. If we keep the timing of outsourcing work through PPP between 7pm and 6am it will encourage many students to get involved in those activities. On the one hand, it will provide an income opportunity for students and on the other the country will earn foreign currency.

Farid Ahmed, Head of Department, DTP Section, Samatsuk Printers

We provide diplomas on printing technology. The demand of printing work is here to stay for a long time. We face a common problem which is that most of the machines are not used properly. Most of them are damaged

and out of service. We don't see much of an effort to repair these machines. We need to keep these machines in working condition. When a problem occurs in a machine it should be repaired immediately. Otherwise the learning process of students will be hampered.

Currently, our students are engaged in various PPP programmes and they are getting benefits from these programmes. Many students are getting opportunities for permanent jobs during training.

Tasmiah Tabassum Rahman, Head of Programme Skills Development, BRAC

Through the Apprentice project of ILO and Unicef, 40,000 students have been provided technical training in the last three years.

After being trained in technical education many students do not feel interested in working as labourers. Parents also don't want to see their children working as labourers. Young students can't take decisions independently. The problem becomes more acute in the case of girls. There are already various types of barriers in employing women in industries. Industry owners feel that to employ women they have to provide them with special facilities including ensuring security of the women workers. We need to come out of this mentality. When the owners feel that their organisation is benefitting from employing women, they will be interested in recruiting more women. There should be a policy for providing incentives to owners to encourage them to recruit female workers. Otherwise we will not be able to bring any change by providing technical and vocational training to women.

We need to find out why workers are leaving their profession. If one does not see a future in a certain profession, he or she will not be interested in continuing the job.

Women have been working for many years in the garment sector. But below 30 percent of women hold mid-level positions. It is often said that women can't get the work done by abusing other workers and that's why their presence is limited in supervisory positions. This is a problematic statement. Such a mentality needs to be changed.

Mokhlesur Rahman, Senior Operations Officer, Education Global Practice, World Bank

Professional skills development should be integrated with the education system. It will help create graduates who are acquainted with professional skills and the gap between the demand and supply of skilled workforce will be reduced.

Many people demean low-paid jobs. We need to change such

mentalities. Organisations have to play a prominent role in providing adequate wages to the employees. The work environment also needs to be improved so that students feel encouraged to work in that industry.

In developed countries there are separate departments in universities for providing technological education. We also need to have such facilities in our universities. Our garment industry has a very good reputation in the global market. We have secured our position amongst global export leaders. But the conditions of our garment workers are not improving due to the lack of professional skills.

We are going to be a middle-income country soon. If we can't increase our productivity and professional skills, we will not be able to become a developed country. Many countries in the world have remained at the middle-income status for more than 40 years because they failed to achieve adequate improvement in terms of increasing productivity through professional skills development.

There is no dearth of workers for low-skilled jobs. But at the mid-level we don't find enough workers. That's why many end up losing their jobs. Effective technical education can help us to get out of this situation. If we fail to encourage people to acquire skills, we will not be able to bring any positive change.

To develop professional skills, industries, policymakers, educational institutions and development partners need to work together. There are 22 ministries that are involved in professional skills development but there is no coordination among their efforts.

Faroq Ahmed, Secretary General, Bangladesh Employers' Federation

We are well aware that there is a negative attitude in society about technical and vocational education. Unfortunately, we are not taking any initiative to change this mentality. We need to work with the World Bank, ILO and other development partners to create a positive attitude towards technical education.

To foster economic development there is no alternative to public-private partnerships. Most of the workforce are engaged with the private sector. That's why there should be a strong partnership between the public and private sectors. A new policy should be formulated for public-private partnerships which will help implement PPP projects effectively. There are many religious organisations all around the country. These organisations should be involved in creating a positive attitude towards

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There should be a specific budget code for implementing programmes under PPP model to get allocation from government.
- More private sector investment needed for creating skilled manpower through technical and vocational education and training.
- To attract more workers, they should be provided standard wage and facilities.
- The curriculum of technical education should be attuned with the needs of industries.
- A good working environment is required for developing skills of workers.
- Certificates should be issued after completion of training under PPP programmes.
- To change the mindset about low-paid jobs, mass awareness is needed.

technical education.

Bangladesh Employers' Federation fully supports PPP projects. We want to bring a positive change through holistic efforts.

Ashoke Kumar Biswas, Director General, DTE

We often see that many successful pilot projects come to an end after the piloting phase. Like B-SEP, the STEP project of the World Bank has also taken up a PPP initiative. We need to take forward such projects which will help create skilled manpower through vocational and technical education. The government has enough budget to carry forward such PPP projects.

Currently, female students get full scholarships during their studies. Various initiatives have been taken to educate differently-abled students. Teachers are being sent abroad for training. Polytechnic institutions should be made the centre of professional skills development. These institutions shouldn't suffer from poor management of machineries.

We have talked about budgets. Polytechnic institutions have no shortage of budget. Sometimes they get more funds than a district commissioner. Every teacher in polytechnic institutes is sent abroad for advanced training. After all this, I don't understand why the machines in these institutions remain damaged for a long time. We need to come out of the mentality that we only work for a salary. We need to fully utilise our talent and work together for the development of the country. Only then will the country move forward. The government has already taken up various initiatives for skills development such as advanced training for teachers and instructors, supply of modern machineries and so on.

Mohammad Alamgir, Secretary, Technical and Madrasa Education Department, Ministry of Education

We need to eliminate every form of professional discrimination from our society. We need to make people aware of the dignity of labour through proper education. Media can also play a big role in this regard.

PPPs will be most effective when both the public and the private sectors realise that the time and effort they are giving to form partnerships are an investment, which will bring good returns for them.

The private sector controls the major part of the economy. That's why without the support of the private sector the government alone can't bring any positive change. We all need to work together to develop professional skills in the country. We also need to motivate those who don't work with full diligence and dedication. Gender differences should not play a role when it comes to employment and promotion.

We need to bring changes to our traditional education system. The curriculum of technical education should be more attuned to the needs of local industries. Otherwise the number of certificate-holders without employment will keep increasing.

We provide training on different skills. But many people don't want to engage in work after getting training. To take the country forward we must increase our productivity.

There are 22 ministries involved with the National Skills Development Council. Different ministries have different approaches to the issue of skills development. There should be coordination among the various government efforts regarding skills development.

Gowher Nayeem Wahra, Consultant, Prothom Alo

Polytechnic institutes should work in contract with different organisations. It will create opportunities of practical learning for students of these institutes. People will also get confidence by taking support from these institutes.

Many trainees don't want to work as labourers. We need to find out what professions they are opting for. We need to work to change the mindset of demeaning blue-collar jobs. I have noticed that blue-collar job-holders are not permitted to be around officers even while having lunch. Such behaviour is unacceptable in an independent country like ours and a change in mindset is required to fix this problem. A true leader does not discriminate among employees; rather he or she makes everyone feel comfortable regardless of their job status. Such examples can be seen in global companies like Toyota. Employees are willing to accept lower salaries and positions in return for more respectful treatment in their jobs. Hence, all employees should be treated with respect to enhance employee retention rate.

Abdul Quayum

In today's discussion we obtained some important suggestions for the development of professional skills through vocational and technical education. The government alone can't bring these changes. Both the public and private sectors need to work together in this regard. The polytechnic institutes and technical schools and colleges also need to go beyond theoretical education and emphasise more on practical learning. Senior students and teachers can create a hub where they can teach young students about practical skills. These hubs can cater to surrounding industries.