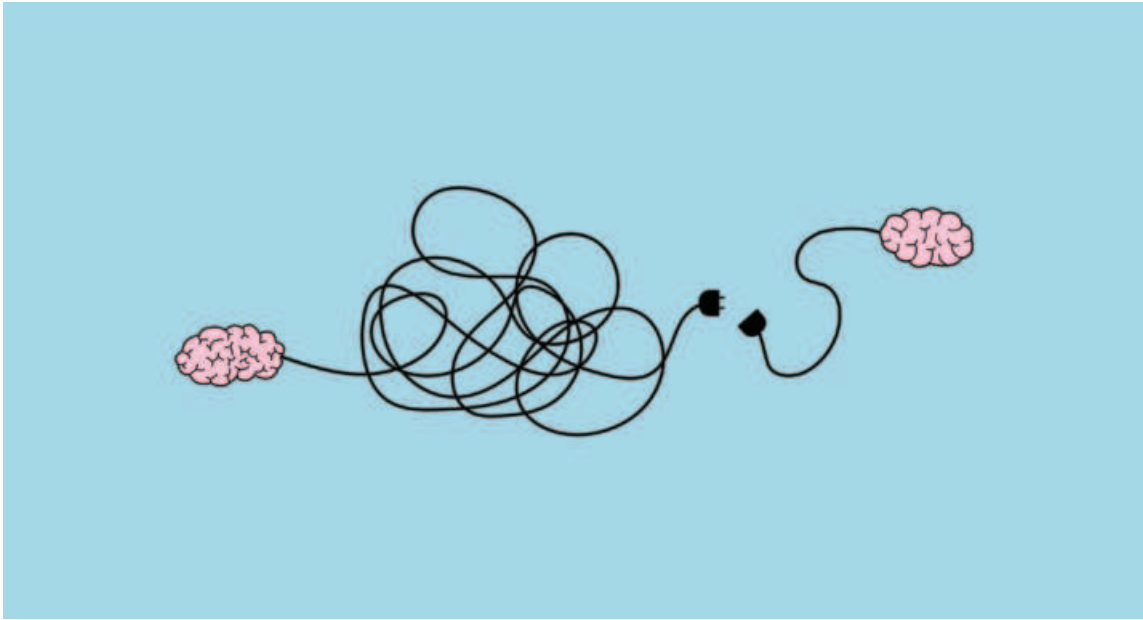


The human curriculum in THE MACHINE AGE

Why soft skills matter more than ever



BY E. RAZA RONNY

Two years after the pandemic, many children walked back into classrooms as if stepping into a foreign country. They could solve algebra but couldn't start a conversation. They knew how to mute microphones but not how to make eye contact. Somewhere between Zoom links and exam scripts, we forgot to teach them how to be human again. In Bangladesh, this loss runs deeper. Our schools have long been wired for grades and memorization instead of growth and communication. But as automation and AI reshape the global job market, it's not the students with

the highest GPAs who will thrive but rather those who can listen, lead, adapt, and connect. And those are the skills we still treat as optional.

THE GLOBAL CASE FOR SOFT SKILLS

Around the world, educators are redefining what it means to prepare students for the future. Finland, Singapore, and New Zealand have embedded social and emotional learning (SEL) into their core curricula. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development notes that SEL programs, especially those focused on collaboration, empathy,

and resilience, improve both academic results and life outcomes. Likewise, the World Economic Forum (2020) lists emotional intelligence, adaptability, and creativity among the top skills of the coming decade.

These education systems treat soft skills as measurable and teachable through group projects, reflective learning, and community work. The result: students who emerge not just as test-takers but as communicators, problem-solvers, and empathetic citizens.

BANGLADESH: THE MISSING LINK

Bangladesh's education reforms acknowledge character development, but practice often lags behind policy. The National Education Policy 2010 mentions moral values and civic awareness, yet classrooms remain dominated by exam routines. Students

The World Bank (2022) warns that adaptability, teamwork, and communication will define employability in South Asia. Soft skills are no longer “nice to have”; they are survival tools in a technology-driven world.

memorize information but rarely practice teamwork, negotiation, or presentation.

According to the British Council (2021), employers in Bangladesh consistently identify gaps in communication, problem-solving, and interpersonal confidence among graduates. This isn't a failure of intelligence but rather a failure of exposure. Without structured opportunities to speak up, debate, or collaborate, students enter adulthood fluent in theory but hesitant in conversation.

RELEARNING HUMANITY

In 2022, I worked with a school that had just reopened after two years of lockdown. The students, aged ten to thirteen, returned wary and withdrawn. During an enrichment class meant as a break from academics, we began with drawing cartoons, writing funny stories, and discussing online safety. Gradually, a pattern emerged.

Most refused to remove their masks not from fear, but because they had grown used to hiding behind them. They avoided greetings, questions, even laughter. The small rituals of human interaction such as eye contact, humor, confidence had quietly eroded.

It took nearly a year of games, jokes, and trust-building to draw them out. Later, we introduced real-world lessons: how to approach a bank officer, speak to police, stay safe online, and negotiate prices at a shop. Students interviewed the best “bargainers” in their families as homework. Bit by bit, they rediscovered communication, empathy, and courage.

WHY SOFT SKILLS ARE SURVIVAL SKILLS

Bangladesh's youth, nearly one-third

of the nation, is its greatest asset, yet automation threatens many traditional jobs. The World Bank (2022) warns that adaptability, teamwork, and communication will define employability in South Asia. Soft skills are no longer “nice to have”; they are survival tools in a technology-driven world.

Equally, in a hyper-digital society, these abilities anchor digital citizenship. A cyber-literate student is not just one who can use devices but one who communicates respectfully, recognizes manipulation, and empathizes online.

BUILDING THE WAY FORWARD

To prepare students for this future, Bangladesh must place humanity at the heart of education:

- Curricular integration: weave communication, problem-solving, and empathy into core subjects.
- Teacher empowerment: train educators in emotional intelligence and participatory teaching.
- Experiential learning: encourage fieldwork, volunteering, and family-based assignments.
- Modern assessment: replace rote tests with peer reviews and reflective projects.

Bangladesh's classrooms can and must evolve into spaces where students learn not just what to think but how to connect. No amount of artificial intelligence can replace emotional intelligence. And in a world racing toward automation, it is the most human skills that will keep us employed, empathetic, and ultimately, alive.

Building brilliance with balance

BY NAZRUL ISLAM

In today's hyper-connected era, the world has become a borderless platform where talent and opportunity transcend geography. As global competition intensifies, only an education rooted in integrity and international standards can prepare students to thrive.

The late Md. Khabiruzzaman, a visionary educationist and philanthropist, founded YALE International School in 2000 at Uttara Model Town, Dhaka. His sincerity and forward-thinking ideals soon made YALE a trusted name in education. After his passing, his successor, Barrister Muhammad Hasanuzzaman, continues to uphold and enrich that legacy with dedication and innovation.

Recognised by the Ministry of Education and the British Council, YALE offers education from Playgroup to A Level under the British Curriculum. Over the years, the school has built a reputation for consistent academic excellence, regularly achieving outstanding results in Cambridge International Education (CIE) examinations—including multiple 100% scores and Country Highest distinctions. Every year, students from YALE proudly

receive The Daily Star Award for their exceptional achievements. YALE's academic year runs from July to June. Early learners (ages 3-6) begin their journey through programmes focused on language, numeracy, colour, music, and play-

comfort and focus, while teachers use modern, interactive pedagogical methods to ensure a stress-free and engaging learning experience. Examinations assess not only memory but also understanding—emphasising analytical and unseen

“At YALE, education is mainly emphasised on moral value and ethics along with institutional knowledge. It is a lifelong journey that shapes intellect, perspective, and moral character, preparing individuals to become enlightened and responsible citizens. We aim to provide that integral education through an open, inclusive, and progressive environment,

— Barrister Muhammad Hasanuzzaman

based creativity. From Standard I to XII, students receive well-rounded instruction in English, Bengali, Mathematics, Social Science, Computer Science, and other Science and Commerce subjects, guided by highly qualified teachers. Situated in Uttara's Sector 3 and 14, the school offers a safe, aesthetic, and inspiring environment. Classrooms are well-equipped for

questions to inspire genuine intellectual growth. With its unwavering commitment to academic excellence, moral development, and global competence, YALE International School continues to set benchmarks for English-medium education in Bangladesh—offering students not just lessons for exams, but lessons for life.





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