

Can Bangladesh turn its youth into its greatest economic strength?

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Our higher educational structures and university systems have been lagging behind the demand for newer knowledge and skills. Given that in tomorrow's world, the Bangladeshi youths will have to compete not only with their peers inside the country, but also with the youths of the outside world, the following issues must be stressed. First, an assessment profile must be prepared as to what kind of skills are currently being developed in Bangladesh, with an identification of where there are opportunities and where deficits exist. In preparing such an assessment, the

ongoing and upcoming human resource demand of domestic entrepreneurs must be kept in mind. A comprehensive list of future job opportunities that may be coming up in the outside world, needs to be prepared. In that context, the incidence of digital evolution must be kept in mind. Along with that, it should be identified as to what kinds of skills would be needed for those job opportunities. Taking all these factors into account, a human resource plan for the country should be formulated and aligned with the overall national plan.

Second, an evaluation must be done on the educational structure of the country - academic programmes,

syllabuses, teaching and learning methods, physical and educational facilities and so on. The objective of this assessment would be to determine whether the current educational system of the country can meet its human resource demand as outlined in the human resource plan.

Third, in light of this background, the entire educational system must be overhauled, in which information technology as well as artificial intelligence should be included. In developing such an educational structure, on the one hand, the focus should be on the history, culture, and heritage of Bangladesh, but on the other, it should also draw on the

KEY POINTS

1. Map current and future skills demand, aligned with global digital shifts.
2. Reform education to match labour market needs and absorption capacity.
3. Integrate technology and AI while grounding learning in national context.
4. Invest in lifelong training for workers, teachers, and trainers.
5. Increase education and health spending to build competitive human capital.



To make human resource development effective, necessary training must be pursued continuously.

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experiences and achievements of other countries.

Fourth, in order to make human resource development effective, necessary training must be pursued continuously to ensure that the knowledge through education, and skills built so far are up to date, modern, timely and relevant. Such training is necessary not only for those who are in jobs, but also for teachers and trainers. In education, the academic programmes, educational means and equipment have been rapidly changing. Therefore, the knowledge and experiences of the outside world can also play an effective role in these areas.

Fifth, specific programmes may be undertaken to improve skills. These include strengthening industry-academic partnerships, developing on-the-job mentorship, organising affordable inhouse training, offering skill-based incentives and bonuses, offering language training programmes, utilising government skill development programmes, and partnering with local NGOs and training providers. Special attention must be paid to persons with disabilities.

Sixth, the above framework for human resource development requires regular monitoring, close assessments and objective evaluations. On the basis of the results obtained, the human resource

development framework needs reviews from time to time. Such a review may lead to and result in changes, extensions and refinements of the framework.

Seventh, over the past 25 years, the education budget of Bangladesh has always been less than 2 per cent of GDP, and in 2025, it stands at 1.7 per cent of GDP. Similarly, during the same period, the health budget of the country has always been less than 1 per cent of GDP. In contrast, India spends 5 per cent of its GDP on education and 4 per cent of its GDP on health. In Vietnam, the education expenditure GDP ratio is 4 per cent and the health GDP ratio is 5 per cent. Bangladesh should spend 4 per cent to 6 per cent of its GDP on education and 5 per cent to 7 per cent of its GDP on health.

The world has been changing, and so are societies and humans. Changes have also been occurring in human aspirations and expectations. As a result, the demands for human resources and their supplies have also been changing. Bangladesh must be ready so that in those changed contexts, it can effectively use its one and the unique wealth - its young human resources. The country should seize that opportunity, as its young people hold the key to our future progress, achievements, and development.

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