

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET) FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

Bangladesh is a populous country. Yet its population could be transformed to human capital from much perceived idea of burden. As per Labor Survey, only 2% of our work force is professional, 33% are skilled, 15% semi- skilled, 48% are less skilled (LFS 2017). Further, our diasporas around the world is poorly paid due to lack of skill. We are facing the challenges of unemployment while an enormous amount like, billions of dollars is siphoned from the country by the foreign employees. While our development is cog mired by skill shortage, only 14 % of our students are enrolled in TVET. Neither we have enough TVET institutions, nor could technical education quality meet global standard. On the contrary, TVET is often viewed as less accepted streams of education in the society. To meet the gap of the demand and supply of TVET graduate at home and abroad, there is a need to analyze the TVET system in Bangladesh. The paper focuses on the existing skill development scenario in Bangladesh, it also analyzes the challenges on skill building and its impact on the work places, and finally it recommended few policy options. This is a qualitative study, carried out with secondary data analysis to focus on the training and education of the potential workforce. The study identifies that, besides meager resources allocation and lack of available facilities, there is also a need to integrate TVET based curriculum in other streams of education to allow maximum students to go for participation in the nationwide skill development program.

Keywords: TVET, Skill Development, Workforce and Education System

INTRODUCTION

In Bangladesh, highly educated students remain unemployed, while at the same time organizations find it difficult to fill vacancies for demanding positions. Such mismatches have been created as the existing education systems do not fit student in different levels in respect to the demand and requirement in manpower market, which ultimately results in a large economic loss. It is quite alarming to note that,

38% of our students drop out at secondary level, amongst them, 86% being from general education background who join job market with inadequate skill (BANBEIS, 2017) and consequently become unemployed. It is observed with deep concern that, existing general education system does not have much job orientation. While educational qualification is the essential pre-requisite to find a job, a generalized format of education with no job focus can only add to the list of unemployed graduates. At present the total unemployment rate of higher secondary graduate has moved to 17%, which was 10%, in 2010 (ILOStat Database, 2017). To generate potential skilled manpower, lean towards TVET is a prerequisite for the existing education system. To prepare our youth as potential workforce, it is time for policy makers to reform education system through incorporating skill development oriented curriculum in all streams of education. Moreover, this kind of blend of TVET and education would help enhance the competency by resolving the problem of our age old educational system. The end state might be having an efficient work force for tomorrow. With this backdrop in mind, the study has tried to focus on the challenges of TVET for skill development of the youth, especially for the students at secondary level in Bangladesh and suggest remedial measures.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

General Objective

To identify the prospects and challenges of the TVET for skill development in Bangladesh and recommend policy options.

Specific Objectives

To attain the general objective the specific objectives are:

- i. To analyze the current skill development initiatives in Bangladesh.
- ii. To identify the prospects and challenges of TVET system for skill development in Bangladesh.
- iii. To recommend remedial measures to overcome the challenges of TVET for skill development in Bangladesh.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study followed a qualitative research methodology. To achieve the objectives of the study secondary sources of data were used. For the purpose a list of secondary data from related government offices, web sites, research journals on the issue of TVET was reviewed. However, for analyzing collected data an interpretative qualitative technique was applied.

KEY CONCEPTS DEFINED

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

TVET is education and training which provides knowledge and skills for employment. TVET uses formal, non-formal and informal learning. TVET is recognized to be a crucial vehicle for social equity, inclusion and sustainable development. It serves multiple purposes. A key purpose is the preparation of youth for work. It takes the form of learning and developing work related skills and mastery of underlying knowledge and scientific principles. Work is broadly defined and therefore refers to both formal employment and self-employment. However, TVET curricula often include entrepreneurship training to support self-employment.

Skill

Skill is an ability and capacity acquired through deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively carryout complex activities or job functions involving ideas (cognitive skills), things (technical skills), and/or people (interpersonal skills) (www.businessdictionary.com).

Skill Development

Skill Development is defined as the full range of formal and non-formal vocational, technical and skill-based education and training for employment and or self-employment (Bangladesh Skill Development Policy, 2011). For the development of skills, there is a need to think beyond TVET systems and emphasize on integration of technical education with general education.

Development of the Skill could be measured through:

- Level of understanding and application of the acquired knowledge.
- Level of difficulty/ ease of performing task.
- Consistency and accuracy of the task accomplishment.
- Time taken to perform a task.

Current TVET Initiatives in Bangladesh

Approximately 24 percent of the annual budget is indirectly related to HRD sectors. Of all the efforts, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is directly related to HRD, the TVET being distributed between 23 ministries. A total of nearly 13000 institutions run the program where as only 35% of them are under the Ministry of Education (Aktaruzzaman, 2018). TVET facilities are distributed over the urban and rural area.

Policy Strategy relating to TIVET in Bangladesh

Different policy and strategy have been taken by the government of Bangladesh for TVET which is appended below:

National Skill Development Policy 2011

National Skill Development Policy formulated in 2011 provides the vision and direction for skill development for future. The aim of the skill development system in Bangladesh is to support rapid and inclusive economic growth through (National Skill Development Policy, 2011):

- Provide a clear statement and strategy for skill development in Bangladesh.
- Improve the quality and relevance of skill development to job market in Bangladesh.
- Establish more flexible and responsive delivery mechanisms for better service as per the growing needs of labour markets at home and abroad.
- Improve access to resources for skill development for all including women and people with disabilities.
- Establish mechanism to enable more effective planning, coordination and monitoring of skill development activities by different ministries, donors, industries, and public and private providers.

The National Skills Qualification Framework (NSFQ)

The National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), notified on 27th December 2013 (NSDC, 2017), is a competency-based framework that organizes all qualifications according to a series of levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude.

Vision 2021

Vision 2021 of the government aims at transforming its low and semi-skilled workers to skilled and vocationally trained workers who can serve fast growing domestic market as well as various emerging markets at home and abroad. The vision aims to achieve the following targets to help create an educated population and a skilled workforce by 2021 (GED, 2012):

- Required infrastructure to be developed to ensure quality of technical education.
- Education system to promote analytical and creating thinking by the youth.
- TVET facilities will be provided to the Secondary education graduates.
- Enough opportunity will be given for the research and development.
- All to be provided with computer literacy.

7th Five Year Plan

The core theme of the 7th Five Year Plan (Ministry of Planning, 2016) is 'accelerating Growth, empowering citizens' with strong emphasis on creating more jobs in the economy and accelerating gross domestic product (GDP) growth to 8.0 per cent for faster reduction of poverty (GED, 2015). The goals and targets of the 7th Plan relating to technical education and skill development are:

- Effort for decent job creation for under-employed and new labour force entrants by increasing the share of employment in the manufacturing and industrial sector.
- Technical and vocational training institutions would be established in the remotely located districts to create opportunities for the people to be semi-skilled.
- The human capital base will be prepared in such a way that, they are able to respond to the demand generated by the dynamics of domestic and global market needs through skill development training.
- Enhancing the quality training for building efficient workforce.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

Bangladesh SDG paper highlights following strategy to develop skilled workforce for Bangladesh (GED, 2015):

- Emphasize on science and technology education and promote research, development, extension and utilization of science and technology.
- Improve the link between training and job markets.
- Ensure proper utilization of public training institutes through coordination of all the training institutes of a district and other means.
- Improve teachers' training, qualification and attach teachers to industries as part of training.
- Expand vocational and technical education to provide skills with market demand.

National Skill Development Council (NSDC)

The National Skill Development Council (NSDC) is the apex authority on skills in Bangladesh. It is headed by the Honorable Prime Minister and is responsible for setting the national skill development agenda. The NSDC provides an important tripartite forum where representatives of government, employers, workers and civil society can work together to provide leadership and clear

direction to skills development in Bangladesh. The NSDC is introducing specific mechanisms to improve coordination of skills development across the Bangladesh. This includes establishing Skills Development Consultative Committees in each division. These committees are formulated to promote public/private partnerships and support the NSDC Secretariat to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the NSDC Action Plan (NSDC, 2017).

Prospects for TVET in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is now already in the transition phase to become developing nation by 2024, but this goal will remain unfulfilled if we fail to develop skilled manpower at global rate. In this backdrop, to generate potential skilled manpower, it is imperative for us to lean towards skill development program in all levels and streams of education. A bird’s eye view of the prospects for skill development and skill diversification in different sectors is given below.

Agriculture

Agriculture sector account for 43% of the total labour force and contribute approximately 14% of GDP. Bangladesh has slowly moved from being an agricultural economy to a service and industry driven economy (Rashid, 2018). This equation of GDP contribution with labour consumption has to balance out slowly and will have to move out to high pay off sectors. Bangladesh’s pool of agriculture workers can be a good capital to invest outside the country – as is found in South East Asia and Middle East. Agriculture can be a TVET undertaking.

Expatriate Labour Market

Bangladesh today has 9.2 million expatriate workers in different skill category - with highest concentrations in the Middle-East. The representation at the skilled and professional categories is less than 0.5%. In order to secure higher proportion of the global market, skill building in the sector is a precondition (BBS, 2017).

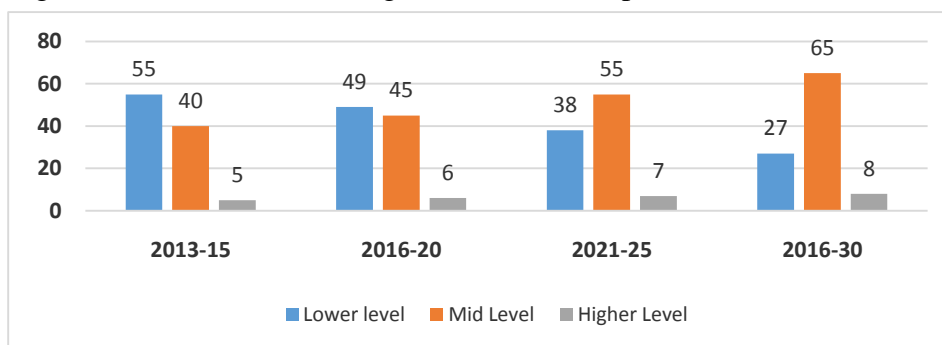


Figure 1: Trends of Workforce Employment in Bangladesh (Level of Job)

Source: BBS (2017)

There are TVET institution working to this end, but the effort is far short of the ever-growing need. Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) has skills development training in 45 trades in 38 Technical Training Centres (TTCs). It trains close to 100,000 entrants every year (Aktaruzaman, 2018). The major contribution of the GDP comes from service sector and Industry where as our workers is mostly engaged in agriculture sector.

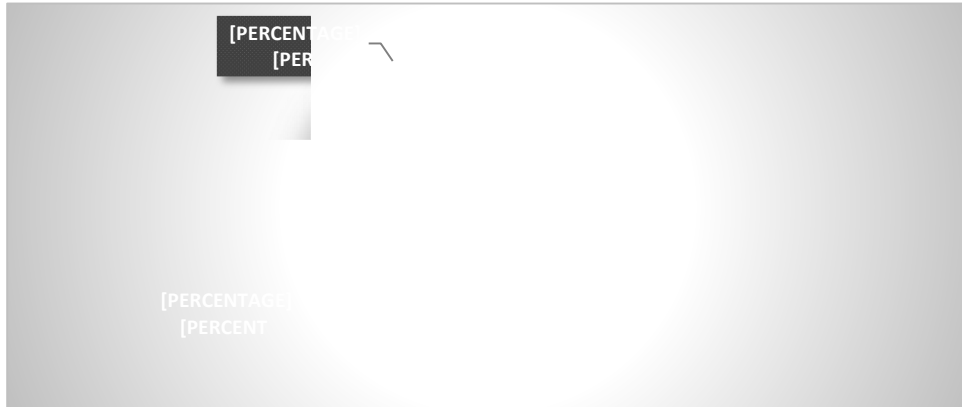


Figure 2: Composition of GDP

Source: Rashid (2018)

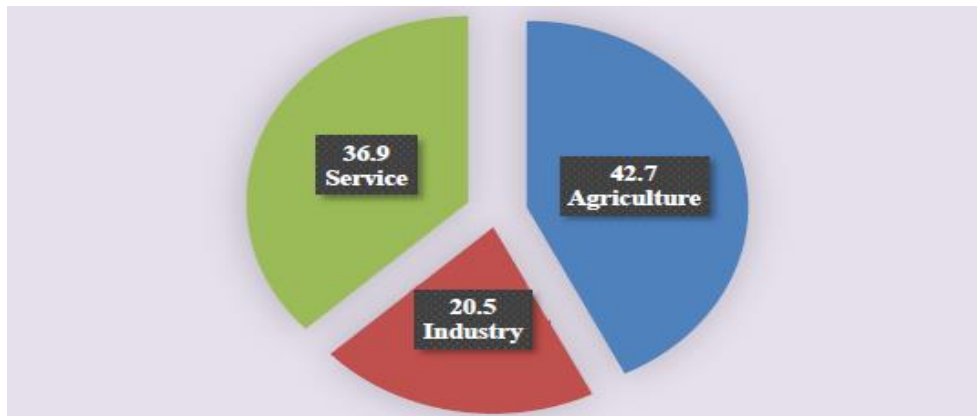


Figure 3: Composition of Work force

Source: Rashid (2018)

The total mid-level work force has increased from 40 million to 45 million in 2020 and it is expected to reach 65 million by 2030 (UNFPA, 2015). But the present trend of skill enhancement could not significantly improve the generation of the high level work force in the country which is likely to hover around 06 million for next 10 years (BBS, 2017).

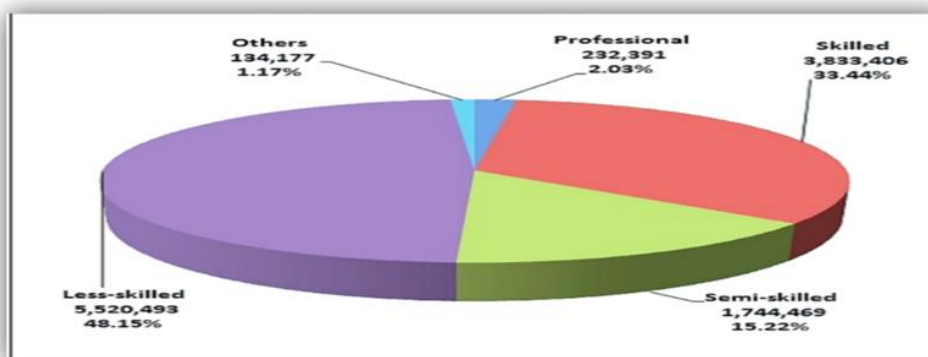


Figure 4: Trends of Workforce Employment (Skill level)

Source: BBS (2017)

Demographic Pattern

In Bangladesh the population in the labour force ages (15-59) is increasing relative to other age groups, provides a one-time “window of opportunity”, for investing heavily in human resource development. As a population ages further, however, the dependency ratio increases again, the “window” gradually closes and the demographic dividend will no longer be available. The dependency ratio is projected to continue falling for another 10-20 years before rising again as the population ages. The two decades from 2011 to 2031, then, represent the optimum period for investing in human resources and establishing other enabling conditions for economic growth in Bangladesh and the period may continue up to 2050 with a slowly declining rate of producing working age of population (UNFPA, 2015). Taking advantage of the demographic dividend is an urgent imperative for Bangladesh. The dividend is not automatic; it is achieved only if the appropriate policies for skill development strategies are pursued.

Geo Economic Advantage

Bangladesh is already having a good labour market in Middle East, at present the geo- economic scenario is in favour for Bangladesh to grab more foreign labour market especially in Japan and Europe, as their new foreign policy would welcome recruiting more skilled labour forces from outside (The Japan Times, 2018). The trade war between United States and China also can open up a better opportunity for availing western garments market. The trend of growing working aged population is to be synchronized with the window of opportunity opening around the world through developing skilled workforce in Bangladesh.

CHALLENGES OF TVET IN BANGLADESH

The challenges identified in the current TVET program in Bangladesh are discussed below:

Coordination for Implementation

Government's commitment to technical education has been clearly stated in its policy and development plans, where TVET is being given the importance in the public sector investments. It is quite disheartening to state that, having so much of focus on TVET; so far no significant coordination and action plan have been projected for materializing the stated vision. As a result, in the process of implementing her policy, actions like: development of new curriculum, resources allocation and TVET administration could not play any dominant role in developing skilled manpower for the country.

Enrolment and Unemployment State

Country has the National Skill development policy, but the skill development of its population could not match global standard. If we take a look at the unemployment statistics relative to the educational attainment, we find the unemployment rate increases with the increase of the level of general education. We have huge number of students of general stream at secondary level that drop out without any skill to face the challenges of world of work

Table 1: Unemployment Statistics

Category	2006	2013	2016	Remarks
Unemployment upto Higher secondary Educated	13.20%	14.20%	16.20%	
Unemployment over Higher secondary Educated	10.40%	15.30%	16.80%	

Source: ILO Stat Database (2017)

Table 2: Completion State of Education at Secondary level

Indicators	Secondary Level		
	All	Boys	Girls
Completion Rate	62.61%	63.85%	61.39%
Dropout Rate	37.39%	36.15%	38.61%
Survival Rate	65.12%	65.24%	64.96%

Source: BANBEIS (2017)

Workforce Mapping

A well-developed strategy should focus towards an achievable policy end state. Unfortunately we have not done a workforce mapping to meet the future requirement. Our skill development policy could not so far focus our work force

need for fulfilling vision 2021 or even for vision 2041. The 38 % dropped out students at secondary level is a huge number of populations who are exposed to the world of work without required skill and competency. We are yet to have a clear idea about what proportion of our presently enrolled student will enter work force after ten years, what proportion of students should go for higher studies or, who will need to go for technical or vocational education. We did not so far work out a plan for diverting different streams of students at secondary level to their destined institutions within prescribed time frame (Iqbal, 2018).

Educational Return

Most of the parents in Bangladesh calculate the cost of the education and its return due to socio- economic reality. This factor is hence projecting a strong influence on the parents’ decision to continue or drop out their children from the education. A poor farmer of the remote area of the Hill District will never engage his children for years in uncertainty of employment, rather he will be happy if the children could learn skills of saw mill work instead of studying general education at secondary level of school (Khisra, 2018).A study by Binayak Sen revealed that, the year of study and the income of an individual is endogenously co related because of the personal ability factor (Sen, 2013). To substantiate the fact, Dr Fahmia Khatun stated, the education and unemployment percentage is negatively correlated as the total unemployment of the country is 4.2% where unemployment of the educated youth is 10.6% (Khatun, 2018).

State of TVET Facilities

Picture of the access to technical education at secondary level is quite bleak. Basing on the secondary data, if we take a look on the available facilities for technical education at secondary level we find, out of 3649 TVET institution only 455 (.05%) are public where the rest are private which can hardly meet will required quality of technical education. As we have meager facility for the quality technical education students are forced to study in general streams of education and ultimately resulting in a frustrating situation in the job market.

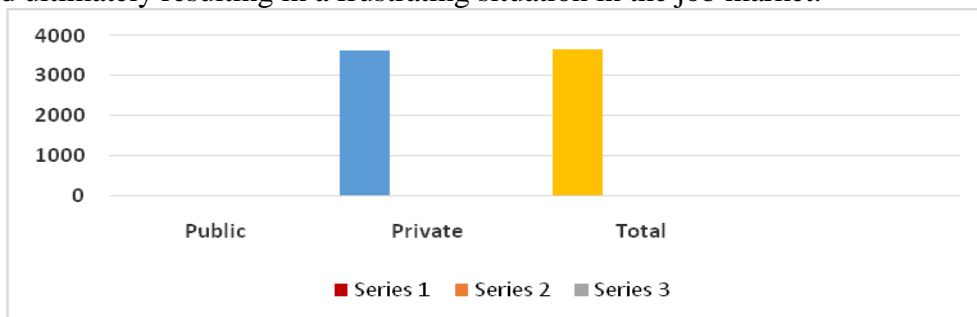


Figure 5: Comparison of the TVET institutions in Bangladesh

Source: BTEB (2016)

TVET Enrolment

Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) revealed that, the number of TVET enrolment is only 13.84 % whereas the overall dropout rate in secondary level is 37.39% (BANBEIS 2017). Hence, a huge number of students after secondary level remaining without any skill stay unemployed after study in general streams in secondary level education.

Table 3: Number Institution and Enrolment in Vocational Institution

Type of Institution	Authority	No. of Inst.	Teacher			Enrolment		
			Total	Female	% of Female	Total	Girls	% of Girls
S.S.C Vocational	Public							
	Private	2556	6667	1747	26.20	199718	50808	25.44
	Total	2556	6667	1747	26.20	199718	50808	25.44
HSC Vocational	Public	15	71	14	19.72	1255	764	60.88
	Private	1078	4852	1122	23.12	138139	38414	27.81
	Total	1093	4923	1136	23.08	139394	39178	28.11
Total	Public	15	71	14	19.72	1255	764	60.88
	Private	3634	11519	2869	24.91	337857	89222	26.41
	Total	3649	11590	2883	24.87	339112	89986	26.54

Source: BANBEIS (2017)

Resources Allocation

The education policy 2010 gave out plans, prospects and aspirations for the nation but without the resource allocation we cannot achieve access to resources for the common people. Thereby compromising with the quality of education total spending declined over the years.

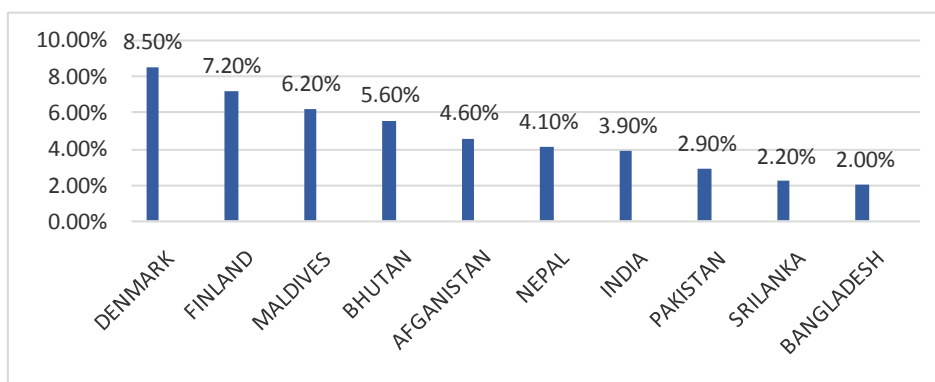


Figure 6: GDP share in Education Budget of Different Country

Source: Escap (2018)

The GDP share of the budget 2018-19 is only 2% which is the lowest in the region and about one third of that of the developed countries of the world. The allocation of the budget to the TVET from the ministry of education is declining every year, in FY 2009-2010 TVET share it was over 8% where as it is reduced to 5.365 in FY 2015-2016

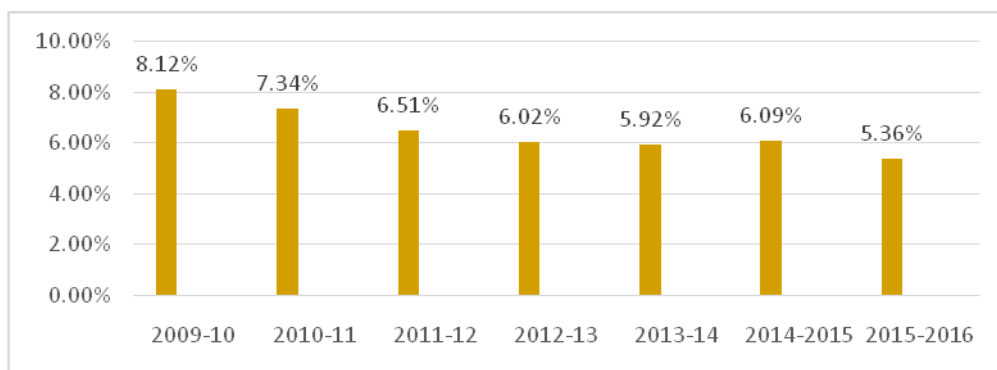


Figure 7: Budget share for Technical and Vocational Education
Source: Escap (2018)

Curriculum Relevance

The curriculum of TVET has not been updated to match with the changing market requirement. There is hardly any relevance between the market demand and programs offered in the TVET institutions. Market perception is that the skills acquired from the vocational system are not meeting their market needs at home and abroad; and the system continues to produce graduates with low and medium level of skill which falls far short of the market demand.

Apathy towards TVET

Lack of awareness about TVET is an alarming matter for skill development. We need skilled force for service agriculture and industrial sector. On the other hand; most of the young people believe that, there is no good job prospect for TVET. They also think that, going for TVET may shrink their job opportunities. There is also a misconception about the TVET that, students those who are weak to continue general education are the appropriate candidate for switching to TVET.

Teacher's Qualification

The picture of the qualification of the teacher is quite frustrating, around 43% of the teachers in different levels of school are not even graduate, and there are also challenges of assigning right teacher for teaching the particular subject.

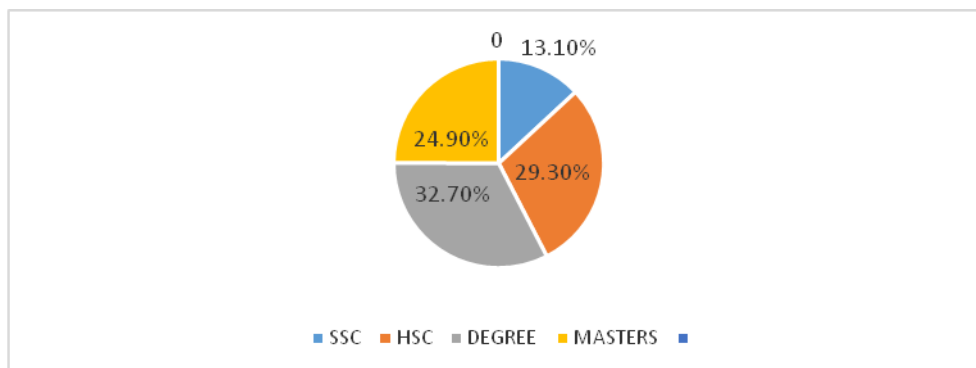


Figure 8: Secondary School Teachers Qualification State

Source: BANBEIS (2017)

It is difficult to expect the proper grooming of our students under such grim picture of the allocated facilities at secondary level. Majority of the teachers of private TVET institutions are not properly qualified and trained; large number of teaching positions are vacant in the most of the TVET institutions particularly in public TVET; Lack of sufficient teacher training facilitator face the challenges of the TVET system to identify the basic concepts of improving the quality of TVET delivery.

Gender Issues, Barriers and Gaps

There is a social stigma and lack of gender friendly environment in TVET institutions and workplace. Our parents often view that, technical jobs and training programs are better suited for males. Lack of social safety and security at the institution, lack of female-friendly structures (separate accommodation, Toilets, Common room) and safe transportation are the barriers for the females to pursue TVET.

RECOMMENDED REMEDIAL MEASURES

In the light of the study on the prospects and challenges of TVET for skill development in Bangladesh; following recommendations may be considered in order to foster skill development in Bangladesh.

- Allocation of the education budget is to be increased substantially for ensuring quality education. It should be raised immediately to at least 3% and gradually increased to 6% of the GDP. A substantial share can be allotted to TVET and educational research.
- TVET is to be integrated with the all streams of education through necessary modification of the curriculum. Hence, mapping on work

force needs assessment to be carried out to introduce area wise skill building strategy for the students.

- Government should take necessary steps to attract brilliant graduates for technical teaching profession with attractive salary, scholarship and increased facilities.’ At the same time government should ensure a free and fair recruiting procedure for selecting the best teachers for TVET.
- Government should initiate a campaign for creating public awareness on the benefit of technical and vocational education and attract students through seminars, classes, electronic and print media. A strategy for better job opportunity and a promising future is to be created for the technical education graduate through NSDC.

CONCLUSIONS

The population density in Bangladesh is one of the highest in the world today. Further, less and poorly skilled population is the major constraint for achieving economic growth for the country. It is evident that, with the present trend, job market will not be able to create sufficient opportunity for job-seekers due to insignificant supply of skilled manpower in the market. Besides, the quality of technical education in all levels is seriously compromised. Moreover access to resources is limited for attaining quality technical education and training. It was evident that, the absence of skill development focus in educational curriculum is the key reason for the unemployment and low economic growth for the country. Lack of suitable technical ‘education administration’ to maintain quality learning environment is affecting the skill building program of the country to a great extent.

In Bangladesh, most of the working aged population is having the educational qualification less than secondary stage of education with poor skill and competency for the modern job market at home and abroad. Moreover, the demographic pattern (Maximum number is 15-59 years of aged population) and its forecast for next 30 years indicates us to invest prudently for its heavy working age population, as this situation may not prevail after 2050 or so (UNFPA, 2015). Government should utilize this opportunity and extract demographic advantage by applying right kind of strategy forthwith. Further, in order to harmonize the demand and supply side of the issue, government needs to make sure that the knowledge acquired through education does not become wasteful. In this backdrop it is imperative for all to understand the importance of integrating general education with skill building programme under a sustainable work force development strategy for fulfilling the dream of ‘Developed Bangladesh’.

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