

# Employment Linked Skills Training for Underprivileged Children and Youth in Bangladesh

Silvia Zaman\*

Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

## Abstract

Skill development and vocational education have to be aligned to ensure better employment opportunities for the Bangladeshi labor force, in both local and overseas job markets. In the country the lack of relevant skills of the underprivileged youth group and a mismatch between supply and demand in the market leads to very poor employability and lower wages for them. Children's welfare should always be the priority of a country. Bangladesh has also taken various efforts at national and regional level to promote health, nutrition, education and socio-cultural interests of children. A national action plan is also being drawn up for children's development. In this research it has been emphasized that necessary education, training and skill development programs are very necessary for disadvantaged group to have a better life. Education and training are crucial to ensure sustainable economic and social development. Investment in the skills and employability of workers contributes to the improvement of productivity and competitiveness. But a great number of destitute children are not getting the basic needs like education and skill development training which is leading them to poverty, insufficient nutrition and illiteracy. A complete strategy for Skills Training Programs Linked to Employment (STDLE) will need to be developed so that underprivileged group can have access for skills training leading to employment. Skills are vital for productivity and growth and are in fact at the core of improving people's employment outcomes. Many training providers administered by public, private and NGOs run skills training programs that address skills needs of industry. Government and development partners strongly feel the needs of skills development programs wherein underprivileged group should have access.

**Keywords:** Underprivileged children; Employment; Training; Technical and vocational education

## Introduction

The population of Bangladesh is rising fast and currently the country is in the stages of urban transition.<sup>1</sup> At present, underprivileged youth and adults constitute the majority of the workforce in different industries (such as the garment business, light engineering, electronics, construction, services and transport)<sup>2</sup>. The underprivileged working group frequently underperform and remain underemployed because they lack the requisite skills. The experiences of Bangladesh's children are becoming increasingly urbanized, just as elsewhere in the world. In order to adopt policies and practices of the new changes for urbanization, the children and youth group need to be trained and educated in a proper manner [1,2]. The underprivileged children get poor formal education and when they grow up they don't get enough vocational industry-specific skills, often face severe job insecurities in the youth stage. They are usually the first to lose their jobs as the economies. They also fail to avail themselves of the better jobs that require higher skills.

Bangladesh is obliged under both national and international law to protect and promote the rights and interests of children. The Constitution of Bangladesh and the Children's Act 1974 guarantees basic and fundamental human rights and ensures affirmative action for children. Although children under the age of 14 are banned by law from working, an estimated five million children between the ages of 5 and 14 are involved in child labor.<sup>3</sup> Most of the jobs are high risk oriented and these children have to work in various exploitative conditions. Agriculture is the main sector where rural children get engaged. As families migrate to cities in search of work, children end up living either in overcrowded squatter settlements or on the streets. They are

forced to work as domestic workers, in different factories and touting goods or in shops. As the children do not have the time to attend regular schooling, they end up in the vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty. Bangladesh has introduced a number of policies and plans over the years intended to promote equitable, inclusive and high-quality education and to reduce or eliminate child labor. The rights for underprivileged children and youth are the guiding principles for formulating policies and laws relating to their development. Economics of development sheds substantial light on educating people, since education is fundamental to the broader notion of human capabilities that lie at the core of meaning of development.<sup>4</sup>

Skill development<sup>5</sup> and vocational education have to be aligned to ensure better employment opportunities for the Bangladeshi labor force, in both local and overseas job markets. In the country the lack of relevant skills of the underprivileged youth group and a mismatch between supply and demand in the market leads to very poor employability and lower wages for them. The technical and vocational

<sup>4</sup>Todaro and Smith 2003.

<sup>5</sup>Skills development is defined as the full range of formal and non-formal vocational, technical and skills based education and training for employment and or self-employment.

\*Corresponding author: Silvia Zaman, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka, Business Initiative Leading Development, Bangladesh, Tel: 01733000338; E-mail: [silviazaman@yahoo.com](mailto:silviazaman@yahoo.com)

Received August 27, 2015; Accepted September 25, 2015; Published October 02, 2015

Citation: Zaman S (2015) Employment Linked Skills Training for Underprivileged Children and Youth in Bangladesh. J Socialomics 4: 122. doi:10.4172/2167-0358.1000122

Copyright: © 2015 Zaman S. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

<sup>1</sup>[www.unicef.org/bangladesh/](http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/) (last visited on 27 June, 2015)

<sup>2</sup>ILO Report, 2010

<sup>3</sup>UNESCO Report, 2013.

education and training sector is beset by a number of difficulties. These include insufficient quality assurance; lack of autonomy for training centers to adapt courses to local needs; overly rigid traditional school-based curricula and vocational standards; excessively long course durations; lack of continuing professional teacher training; lack of access to skills for underprivileged groups; lack of regulation and certification of informal apprenticeships; and insufficient recognition of existing skills and informal learning, preventing labor mobility. The government recognizes that these shortcomings lead to a serious wastage of skills in the economy.<sup>6</sup>

The vision for skills development shared by government, industry, workers and civil society is that<sup>7</sup>: Skills development in Bangladesh will be recognized and supported by government and industry as a coordinated and well planned strategy for national and enterprise development. The reformed skills development system will empower all individuals to access decent employment and ensure Bangladesh's competitiveness in the global market through improved skills, knowledge and qualifications that are recognized for quality across the globe.

The disadvantage socio-economic background people should get the highest priority in the national skill development policy because economic development is very much dependent on this particular group

### Justification of the research

Education is the most important key to success, this is a very general statement and all people are familiar to this. In this pragmatic world survival and day to day income become impossible to huge number of educated communities. In developing country like Bangladesh only education and pass marks sometimes cannot bring daily bread to numerous numbers of families. Skill is the vital driving force beside knowledge and innovation for social development and economic growth in any country of the world [3]. To respond challenges and to grab opportunities the combination of education and skills is very important. In Bangladesh different initiatives have been taken for the children's primary and secondary education but for enhancing employment linked skills from childhood strong and noteworthy programs have to be formed. Underprivileged children and youth in Bangladesh need the rights, opportunities and environment to improve the quality of their life so that they can have a positive future.

The research will determine and analyze the importance of employment linked skills training for underprivileged children and youth. It will also investigate the prospects so far has been made in this field. This study also aims to find out the short and long run impacts in society. And this research will also show for underprivileged children and youth that there is only positive correlation between skill development training and employment.

### Objectives of the research

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

- To find out the skills for the underprivileged children and youth that will lead to employment in future;
- To determine the scopes for enhancing employment related skills training in the schools and colleges;
- To analyze the challenges faced by the underprivileged children

and youth while taking education and training;

- To demonstrate the relation between skill training and employment in a positive way;
- To find out the conditions of different technical and vocational schools, training centers, those already exists in Bangladesh for underprivileged children and youth.

### Research question(s)

Main Question: How underprivileged children and youth will be benefited through employment related skills training?

Sub Question 1: What are the skills needed to facilitate the underprivileged children and youth for getting employed?

Sub Question 2: How the training can be conducted for the disadvantaged group to get better outcomes?

Sub Question 3: What can be the role of policy makers and government to improve the conditions of underprivileged group?

### Issues of ethics

The research has followed strict ethical standard. All the respondents and interviewees were informed that all questions and queries will be based on the research topic and no monetary benefits will be provided for their answers. Respondents were ensured about maintaining confidentiality by not disclosing their name and address at the time of report writing; pseudonym had been used in this paper. Respondents had freedom to withdraw from the interview at any time; he/she had the right not to answer any questions if unwilling and participation had been voluntary. No personal or irrelevant questions were asked during the time of interview and survey. The answers of the respondents had been recorded with a tape recorder as this assures accuracy to transcribe and translate interviews but before that permission was taken from the respondents so that there does not prevail any objection. The notes and interviews were taken considering their response and positive attitude.

### Field Work and Research Methods

#### Research locations

The research study was conducted in different areas of Dhaka like-Mirpur, Mohammadpur Beribadh and outside areas near Dhaka (Savar, Gazipur, Tongi, and Narayanganj). As my research is self-funded, financial constraint has not allowed me to conduct my field work beyond these above mentioned areas. The identified locations have been suitable for me and it was suggested by one Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector specialist

#### Research methodology

The research is based on skill development of underprivileged group. The focus was children and youth group who are deprived from different training for employment. The research study will be based on combination of primary and secondary data. The whole research would be conducted using qualitative methodology and the epistemology of research would depend on several secondary sources. The secondary data will be collected from different organizational reports, government reports, newspapers, journal articles.

#### Approach

The approach of this investigation was purely Qualitative in nature. Different qualitative research techniques were employed to address the assessment questions of this research since the purpose of qualitative

<sup>6</sup>Ministry of Education, 2011.  
<sup>7</sup>National Skill Development Policy 2011.

research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participant's perspectives ref. Both primary and secondary data were analyzed to produce outputs from the study. Primary data were collected directly from the study areas. Secondary data were sourced from online web-resources, libraries, projects documents etc.

### Sources of data

As stated already, both Primary and Secondary data sources were utilized for collecting data for analysis.

### Literature Review

Bangladesh has an immense opportunity in terms of labor force. And this country has great probability to turn the population into highly educated and skilled to compete in the global economy. To ensure better employment opportunities in both local and abroad, government has initiated different projects for the labor force. According to World Bank's: Skills and Training Enhancement Project: Implementation Status Results Report, Skills and Training Enhancement (STEP) is one of the effective and grand projects which aim to strengthen public and private institutions to improve the quality of skills training and employability of the people. The project approved in 2010, 69,000 diploma students from 93 polytechnic institutions received stipends. Another report published by International Labor Organization (ILO) on TVET Reform Project explains that the Government of Bangladesh is committed to working with ILO and European Union (EU) to develop a flexible, responsive and market oriented training system. Bangladesh: Skill Vision 2016 report described eighteen visions have been developed to form strategies and framework to develop people and institutions. National Skills Development Policy is a major milestone in the country's history approved by Government of Bangladesh which will focus on the flexible, market-oriented training system.<sup>8</sup>

According to a journal of World Health Organization (2008) and Centre for Public Health (2010 Vocational training aims to provide disadvantaged youth with skills to find jobs, earn more income and avoid involvement in crimes. Developed and developing countries alike have implemented vocational training programmes and studies have shown that they can have positive effects on participants' employment prospects.

Underprivileged Children's Educational Programs, UCEP-Bangladesh which has been listed in the UN ESCAP's "Compendium of Centers of Excellence in HRD Research and Training" is working with the distressed urban working children over 42 thousand working children striving to inculcate marketable skills and provide employment support service through general education and vocational training in close collaboration with industries and employers throughout Bangladesh.<sup>9</sup>

In Bangladesh some projects and initiatives have been started recently but most of them are not purely for underprivileged children and youth group [4]. Gordon surveyed socially disadvantaged children and found that their home environment is more overcrowded, noisy, disorganized and lacking in books, art, and a variety of toys and less verbal than that of their more advantaged peers. According to Borman, Goetz and Dowling out-of-school summer learning rates of disadvantaged students tend to be "markedly slower than the growth of their more advantaged counterparts.

### Skills Training for Underprivileged Children

Children's welfare should always be the priority of a country. Bangladesh has also taken various efforts at national and regional level to promote health, nutrition, education and socio-cultural interests of children. A national action plan is also being drawn up for children's development. Many children leave school before completing Grade 8 of general education, and as a result are not able to enroll in formal skills programs<sup>10</sup>. In order to overcome this barrier, different reforms have been introduced to remove the Grade 8 prerequisite from formal courses and replace it with course-specific entry requirements and challenge tests in which workers are challenged to demonstrate what they say they know with respect to the courses they expect to be admitted into.

There is a wide array of large- and smaller-scale skills development programs, provided both through governments and donors. But still many underprivileged children are inaccessible to quality educational system, including technical and vocational education (TVET).

### Skill Development of Youth for Employment

The youths are potentially the most productive force in Bangladesh. The number of young people is about 47.6 million<sup>11</sup>. The availability of such a huge workforce is surely a demographic dividend for Bangladesh. But in almost all countries youth unemployment is recognized as a significant impediment to poverty reduction, growth and competitiveness. A trained and educated youth can make a noteworthy contribution to the development process of a nation. Particularly disadvantaged group cannot get the facilities which are provided in a bulk manner to the youth. Rural youth development, skill development training, self-employment program and community development program are necessary to be provided. Government has expanded youth development program through increased training and credit facilities for the socio-economic uplift. It is very important to equip the youths with working skill and suitable training in technical, vocational and professional fields and organize youth groups to motivate them to assist in community. The institutional framework of youth skills development and training frequently appears broad and uncoordinated. In Bangladesh, a number of different actors are providing skills training. Government ministries and agencies, along with the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), keep working towards the expansion of technical and vocational education and training (TVET). These should be available and accessible to the underprivileged youth group of the country. The quality of training programs and training providers should be improved. Good quality will increase the return to industry and the community. The skill development and TVET programs should be more attractive for learners and employers in Bangladesh.

Because of poverty and unemployment the underprivileged youth are getting involved into drugs & anti-societal activities. Due to competitive job market and lack of skills they cannot find a job. To solve this problem, there should be immediate actions taken to provide Technical Education for the orphans, unemployed and underprivileged youth. Once their skills get developed, automatically their access to job market will be ensured. The training areas can be: Electrical, mobile servicing, tailoring and embroidery, refrigerator and air conditioning repair, driving etc. The following sectors can provide the trainings [5].

<sup>8</sup>ILO Report 2014

<sup>9</sup><http://www.ucepb.org/>

<sup>10</sup>National Skill Development Policy 2011.

<sup>11</sup>UNFPA 2015

## Linkage of Employment Linked Training with the Particular Industry's Demand

Almost in every country youth unemployment and particularly underemployment is recognized as a significant concern and obstacle to poverty reduction, growth and competitiveness<sup>12</sup>, the degree to which this is acknowledged by the government varies considerably. In some cases one has the impression that governments see this as one concern among many, while others view it as a high-level development priority and risk to social cohesion and stability. In recent time there is a growing need for improved social dialogue and strengthened partnerships on skills development in Bangladesh. It is important that TVET and skills training institutions are aware of the skill needs in industry and understand the latest employment and technology trends. Without this knowledge, the skills produced by institutions will not meet the needs of industry. There are certain projects by government, donor agencies and NGOs which on process and some are on implementation period. The problem is some of them do vague commitments about the equity to all disadvantages youth and children group but usually not backed up with specific strategies, measurable goals or resource allocation commitments. Only very few effective projects are explicitly addressing the constraints to accessing training and skills development that disadvantaged group face. Increasingly, many countries are recognizing a mismatch between the education and skills training offered (particularly in secondary-level technical and vocational education systems), and the demands of the labor force. Many countries are developing policies to address and integrate skills training, broader youth-related concerns, and TVET strategies. However, these are frequently vague in specific commitments and often not implemented.

The planning of pre-employment education and training should align with future employment opportunities and deliver competencies that meet the expectations of prospective employers both here and abroad. Accurate skills and labor market data is also important for assessing new opportunities for workers whose skills sets may be affected by change.<sup>13</sup>

## Findings of the Research

In the research areas Mirpur, Gazipur and Mohammadpur the students of the technical and vocational schools were found some extent satisfied by the different skills they are acquiring but the problem is they are deprived from different facilities they ought to get. The number of such schools is also quite low in the country. Different project based works get started but most of them do not fall under a proper infrastructure which will provide the children facilities from beginning to ending of graduation. In the cities the solvent people send their children to different schools, colleges and universities and their activities, education all go on in a cyclic order but in case of underprivileged group there are many loopholes. If they get primary education they face difficulties to complete higher education.

The employment outcome of training is good but training institute is less in number and far from the disadvantaged group areas. When the students were interviewed they all mentioned one same problem that their schools are far away from their home. Among the employed vocational graduates on average 59.83 percent are self-employed while the remaining 40.17 percent are paid employed.<sup>14</sup> Such high level of

self-employment indicates the great fragility of the labor market, and is mostly the outcome of limited wage employment opportunities. They reflect a survival strategy for the graduates forced to take up small-scale own-account informal activities. Five former students were interviewed and they were asked about the constraints they face while finding jobs. They mentioned that income related problems and community problems are the main barriers like-salary structure is very low for the underprivileged group. That's why they prefer self-employment most. But in case of self-employment there is need of financial support, so if they were able to receive financial support from an "institution, it would aid in establishing a small business tailoring shop or mechanic shop.

The present students and trainers of the vocational school focused on Skill training. It is essential for them to acquire more skills in their respective fields. To get employed in future and to become renowned for their skill they mainly prioritize skill training as the first weapon followed by education. to survive in the society and for getting jobs. In addition if they get financial support from their institutions and government to start their own shop or employment then more successful stories can be achieved.

The respondents specified some particular skills which they find superior to gain better employment or opportunities for generating income. Skills in fashion garments (fashionable wears; clothing design; and market trends), technical skills and trading are important. They demand for these subjects but most of the time there are limited seats for this subjects.

In case of training facilities the schools and training centers need more teachers and trainers. In some schools the learning materials and tools are not that much updated. They need better and modern tools to give the underprivileged group a better and sustainable training. Many children are there who at the same time involved with different works and continue training/education. For them there should be flexible and better schedule for classes. The course design should be upgraded in each year as some of the training centers do not follow it [6].

## Recommendations

To increase the capacities of the underprivileged group and to increase the employment opportunity of the underprivileged youth it is very important to take some important measures and modification of the policies. The following options can be effective in improving the status of disadvantaged group and upgrading the systems of the vocational and technical schools/training institutes:

### Increasing capacity of training institutes

Increase of institutional capacities in technological applications is necessary and at the same time new technologies should be incorporated into both the school/institute management programs and curricula of the students. The institute should have a capacity for maximum students and it should fulfill the target in inspiring more underprivileged students.

### Enhancing course content and up gradation in every year

Skills-based training should be enhanced on the basis of demand and existing courses should be modified focusing the skills and current situations centered on skills in demand. The curricula should be developed in collaboration with national skill level, as well as industry standards. Certifications should be linked with national competency-based standards and assessment tools.

<sup>12</sup>Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work, UNESCO Report 2012.

<sup>13</sup>National Skill Development Policy 2011.

<sup>14</sup>BIDS Report 2014

### Linkage between private and public sector

Substantial linkages should be facilitated between the programs and both the public and private sectors. The existing training systems in the five study ministries call for better adaptation to the needs of the labor market and employment system. Public private dialogue has to be created for better systems and better outputs.

### Trainers and their competency have to be increased

There exists acute shortage of trainers across the board suggesting the pressing need for increasing the number of existing trainers. New demands for trainers: none of this can be put into practice through simply using traditional teacher's presentation and textbook based methods. It is important that trainers help students to develop basic competency skills, e.g. initiative taking and teamwork abilities, as well as communication, decision-making, and problem solving capabilities, amongst others. In order to do this, trainers must have a complete "methodological toolkit" at their disposal to be used in the transmission of wide ranging areas of competency. Regular payment of salary of the trainers should be ensured to maintain the spirit, tempo and quality of training.

### Policymakers for the underprivileged youth and children

Policymakers should carefully weigh the efficacy of disadvantaged group's policy against other potential uses of funds. Emphasis should be put on the achievement of specified objectives relating to the quality and effectiveness of training courses in terms of increasing the number and quality of trainers and introducing modern training, machinery, equipment and toolkits. In the existing traditional training system different training centers of various ministries are providing the same training to same areas and same people. These need inter-ministerial coordination, cooperation and regular interaction in order to deliver better quality of training.

### Adequate fund for underprivileged children and youth

Additional and adequate fund should be allocated to purchase new and sufficient number of training equipment and toolkits. Bangladesh is a country where the population is high and unemployment rate is also high. Therefore if underprivileged children and youth get employment linked skill training they will not only be allocated in different industries of the country but also will be absorbed in different foreign countries as legal labors and employees, which will obviously boost our economy and will increase the gross domestic product.

### Conclusion

Skills are vital for productivity and growth and are in fact at the core of improving people's employment outcomes. Many training providers administered by public, private and NGOs run skills training programs that address skills needs of industry. Government and development partners strongly feel the needs of skills development programs wherein underprivileged group should have access. It is now important to impart skills training linked to gainful employment or self-employment through different training providers. The project may be designed to implement a targeting strategy to address the special needs of disadvantaged groups prioritized by the National Skills Development Policies 2011 (NSDP 2011) and ensure their participation according to NSDP targets and requirements. Targeted group may be supported under the project with stipends. The project may also develop mechanisms to introduce vouchers. Target group may include working children, women and youths from rural and remote communities, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

A complete strategy for Skills Training Programs Linked to Employment (STDLE) will need to be developed so that underprivileged group can have access for skills training.

Leading to employment Strategy document should include the following i) Implementation mechanism of government policies and plans to ensure access for the underprivileged group into skills training; ii) Effective mechanism for mobilizing children and youths for enrolment in Skills Training Programs, for example advocacy and social marketing, in the form of briefings, active consultation, seminars, conferences and road shows may be carried out to bring the group; iii) Implementation mechanism for Skills Training Programs Linked to Employment (STDLE); and iv) Development of employment matching services.

### References

1. Cottle TJ (1977) Private Lives and Public Accounts. University of Massachusetts Press 1: 23-40.
2. Kirk Patrick D, Craig RL (1976) Evaluation of training. In Training and development handbook. (1stedn) New York: McGraw Hill.
3. Lynton RP, Pareek U (1990) Training for development. (2ndedn) West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press 4: 333.
4. Mc Ghee Thayer PW (1961) Training in business and industry. NewYork: John Wiley and Sons.
5. Nussbaum MC (2001) Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach. USA: Cambridge University Press.
6. Patton MQ (1990) Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods. USA: sage publications 1: 169-186.