



# POLICY BRIEF

## Integrating best practices into TVET sector of Bangladesh: Findings from the TVET Graduate Tracer Study

### EXPANSION OF BANGLADESH TVET SECTOR

Bangladesh aims to achieve an Upper Middle-Income Country status by 2030 and a High-Income Country status in around 2041. "For reaching high-income status in two decades, there is no alternative to investing in human capital development by raising education quality and deepening skill development programmes to support innovation-driven knowledge society of the future."<sup>1</sup> – this is the Vision 2041 of Government of Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina emphasises, "A competent manpower is the main tool to carry out the development activities. So technical and vocational education should gradually be streamlined in the education system to build manpower for development, production, and prosperity."<sup>2</sup> The 8th Five Year Plan, 2020 -2025 (8FYP) of Bangladesh notes that the technical education will be promoted through expansion of the TVET system with emphasis on development of hard as well as soft and cognitive skills.

With such commitment and actions from the government, Bangladesh TVET sector is expanding. The number of TVET institutions more than doubled between 2008 and 2018 and the enrolment rate in TVET increased from 1% of the total enrolment in 2009 to over 17% in 2019.<sup>3</sup> In 2018-19, there were nearly 11 thousands TVET institutes with about 51 thousands teachers and over one million students.<sup>4</sup>

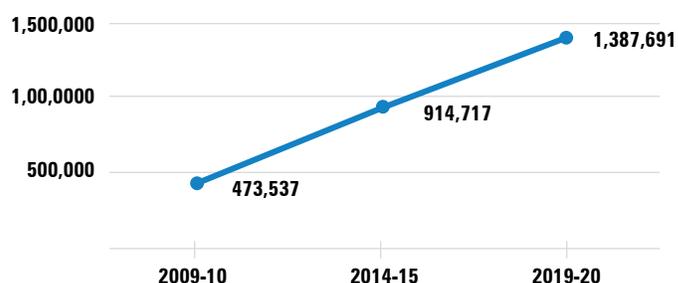
1 <http://southasiajournal.net/bangladesh-vision-2041-alignment-with-other-macro-plans/> (accessed on 21.07.2021)

2 <http://www.skillreporter.com/2017/07/international/bangladesh-prime-minister-sheikh-hasina-ordered-massive-restructuring-vocationalization-education/> (accessed on 21.07.2021)

3 8th Five Year Plan, Bangladesh, and BTEB Enrolment Projection Report for 2020.

4 DTE HCDDP-21 SBS Report 2018-19.

Trend of TVET enrolment



Both access to and interests in TVET are increasing. Classes have been increased from one shifts to two shifts a day. Constructions of more public (government-run) TVET institutes have been approved. This includes building polytechnic institutes in each of the remaining 23 districts where there are currently no polytechnics and building at least one Technical School and College (TSC) and a Technical Training Centre (TTC) in every sub-district (upazila). The government also has a plan to establish one Engineering College for girls in each of the eight divisions<sup>5</sup>

While benefits and impact of such expansion are known and expected, research is needed to confirm that the expected benefits could have been realised or to identify measures for supporting further actions. The results of the expansion of TVET needs to be probed in respect of employment outcomes of the TVET graduates or their successful transition to the next level of education.

5 8th Five Year Plan, Bangladesh

## TVET GRADUATE TRACER STUDIES IN BANGLADESH

The National Skills Development Policy (NSDP) 2011 emphasises on accurate skills and labour market data for planning and monitoring, and it specifically proposes to increase the use of tracer studies to track the employability of graduates.

TVET graduate tracer studies are not new in Bangladesh, but examples are very limited. Most of the TVET graduate tracer studies were carried through independent researchers/organisations, focused on employment outcome rates for basic or short courses supported by the respective projects.

In 2020, the EU funded HCDP-21 supported DTE and BTEB in designing a pilot Institutional Tracer Study, for the first time in Bangladesh TVET sector, to be carried out by the public TVET institutes on their TVET graduates.

The Institutional Tracer Study, conducted by the academic institute itself, is a relatively new type of study that has emerged during the last 15 years and practiced mostly in European countries such as Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, and Romania.

### STUDY OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The pilot initiatives aimed at capacity building of the TVET institutes in conducting institutional tracer study following international guidelines.<sup>6</sup> The study was designed to measure the employability of graduates and to understand their pathways to further education, develop a database of graduates and their employers, and facilitate policy dialogue on emerging issues derived from the tracer studies to feed into the Knowledge to Policy (K2P)<sup>7</sup> process for ongoing sectoral reforms.

The pilot institutional tracer study was conducted on the TVET graduates<sup>8</sup> of previous two years (2018, 2019). The study was being led by DTE and BTEB and implemented

6 European Training Foundation / European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training / International Labour Office, 2016. Carrying out Tracer Studies: Guide to Anticipating and Matching Skills and Jobs, Volume 6.

7 Knowledge to policy (K2P) is a popular term to describe the way research and other types of knowledge inform policy making. K2P approach aims to support decision-makers to create good policies that make a difference to people's lives.

8 SSC (vocational), HSC (vocational), Diploma in Engineering.



by five public TVET institutes.<sup>9</sup> Quantitative data from 1,792 TVET graduates (92% of the target population) was collected through questionnaire. Based on the findings from the studies, reports and infographic have been prepared for publications.

In addition to the quantitative data collection and analysis, the pilot study also conducted several Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with employers, graduates, students, guardians, and teachers at respective institute to gather qualitative data. Altogether, 62 graduates, 39 employers, 72 students, 39 guardians, and 53 teachers along with DTE, BTEB and HCDP TA experts participated in the 25 FGDs in five cities. Practical recommendations were made by the key stakeholders at the FGDs.

### KEY FINDINGS FROM THE PILOT TRACER STUDY

Key findings of the pilot TVET Graduate Tracer Study 2020 are summarised below:



Over 98% of the graduates participated in the study are young i.e., within the age group of 15-24 years. 71% of the total SSC (voc) graduates were 18 years old and below in age at the time of the tracer study.



13% of the graduates participated in the survey were female and 87% were male. Female enrolment in TVET are still low and concentrated to few trades/technologies.

9 Barishal Technical School and College (BTSC), Cox's Bazar Polytechnic Institute (CBPI), Dhaka Graphic Arts Institute (GAI), Manikganj Technical School and College (MTSC), and Rangpur Polytechnic Institute (RPI).



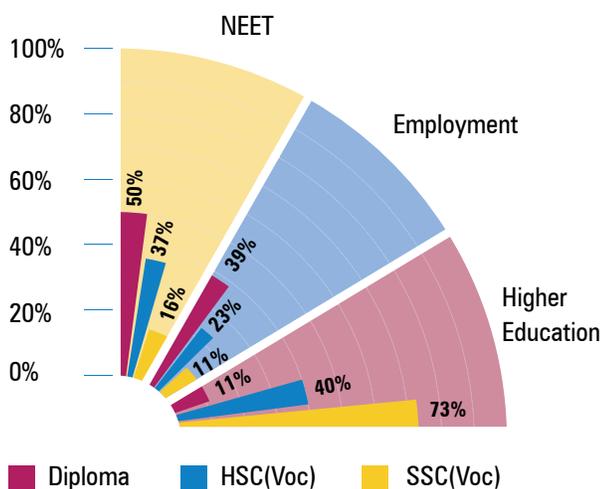
The average Throughput Rate (TPR) was 66% of the enrolment. In some cases, the TPR is as low as 39%, which means that more than half of the students enrolled for the course could not successfully complete it.



Student teacher ratio (STR) is very high, ranging from 30:1 to 130:1, in the participating TVET institutes.



Employment outcome is not good enough and percentage of these young graduates not in education, employment, or training (NEET) is high. Although, it is very likely that these graduates have been seriously affected by the negative impact of ongoing Covid-19 pandemic on the employment and education sector.



The following figure presents the course-wise status of graduates as of December 2020.

The study provided practical experience to the institutes, DTE and BTEB research cells in conducting institutional tracer studies.

The pilot study also provided a digital database of the graduates and employers for revitalising the function of the Career Counselling Office of TVET institutes regarding the provision of local employment information to TVET students and management.

The institutional tracer study created opportunities for

the institutes to be engaged with its key stakeholders (employers, graduates, students, guardians, and teachers) to get direct feedback on the course, curriculum, syllabus, teaching quality, equipment for practical classes among others. Both employers and institutes found that this initiative brings them together for their mutual interest and this should be continued.

## RECOMMENDATIONS DERIVED FROM THE PILOT TRACER STUDY

A brief list of recommendations derived from the pilot study includes:

- I. For the TVET courses, more emphasis should be given for practical technical training. Graduates should have good understanding of the digital machineries currently used in the industries.
- II. Both education and career counselling should aim to develop the soft skills (abilities such as communication skill, problem solving, work ethics, interpersonal skills, team management, creativity, time management, adaptability etc.) of the students before they are ready for the job market. This has been emphasised on the 8FYP as well.
- III. TVET teachers should be equipped with practical experience in the relevant industry following the guidelines of the NSDP. Based on the NEP, the 8FYP targets to bring down the STR at 12:1 by 2025.
- IV. Partnerships with the industries should be promoted in TVET. This has also been emphasised in the 8FYP. If institutes have the delegated authority to make local level decision making on certain things, this could facilitate the industry partnerships to have better access to new technologies, organise industrial tours, manage industrial attachments, promote job placements etc.
- V. Institute should be engaged with the employed graduates and employers regularly through career fair, picnic, alumni etc. and invite them as guest lecturer to provide career counselling.

- VI. Review of course syllabus and curriculum should be based on the need of the industry. NSDP suggested to conduct regular research to understand market need to revise the TVET course and curricula. The 8FYP has also suggested revising the curriculum in the context of the 4th industrial revolution. 8FYP proposes that the curriculum will be updated by including new courses, which can train the workforce with the higher order cognitive skills needed.
- VII. Actions should be taken to document and disseminate success stories (impact stories) of the TVET graduates to motivate the ongoing and future students.
- VIII. Good practices like “Industry Tours” should be expanded and regularised. The effectiveness of the other good practices like “Industrial Attachment” should be improved.
- IX. Government should develop strategies to integrate the young graduates not in education, employment, or training (NEET), particularly those affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, into further education, skills training or employment.

Lastly, the institutional tracer studies should be institutionalised and regularly conducted. This provides the opportunities to the institutes and the stakeholders to work together in improving TVET quality for the mutual benefits.

## CONCLUSIONS

Human capital development including expansion of the TVET has been prioritised by the government of Bangladesh in its strategic documents, particularly in NEP, NSDP, Vision 2041/PP2041, and 8th Five Year Plan. However, the gaps between supply and demand of skilled workforce remains high. Therefore, the quality of the TVET needs to be improved and market responsive.

The recommendations derived from the pilot TVET graduate tracer study to improve the quality of the TVET ask for policy dialogues among the key stakeholders and policy makers. Open discussions are needed to agree on the way forward. Emphasis should be given on practical and feasible actions, ownership of the responsible bodies to implement the actions, costed and time-bound action plan, and institutionalisation of the best practices for longer term sustainability of the action.

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