

PROPOSED SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT MODEL AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES OF BANGLADESH

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***Abstract:** Soft skill deficiency of tertiary level graduates in Bangladesh remains one of the major constraints to the continued growth of employment sector. This paper proposes human capital development in the university level education through implementing soft skills element as communication skills, critical thinking and problem solving skills, team work, lifelong learning and information management skills, entrepreneurial skills, ethics and professional skills and moral leadership skills. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with University Grants Commission may introduce the discussed soft skills to all tertiary level Higher Education Institutes (HEI) in Bangladesh. Suggestions on how these elements are to be integrated in the program of all disciplines are also put forward.*

***Keywords.** Soft skills, Tertiary Education, Graduates, Communication and analytical skills, HEI*

Introduction

Connecting education to economic development is not recent. Forty four years ago, “Human Capital Theory” initialized the link between education, productivity and growth. As Denison (1967, 78) points out, “Education background is a crucial determinant of the quality of labor. It conditions both the types of work an individual is able to do and his efficiency in doing them.” He states elsewhere (1962, 67) that “... additional education increases an individual’s ability to contribute to production and his earnings”. Education quality, as measured by the cognitive skills of the population, also has a strong impact on individual earnings and economic growth (Hanushek and Wößmann 2007). In the twenty-first century, human capital has become more valuable because knowledge has become a key resource for development and competitiveness. (Wang, Yidan. 2012).

Education at all levels contributes to development and a country’s competitiveness. Basic education provides a solid foundation in reading and writing and successful entry to secondary education. Secondary education including vocational and technical education and training - can develop specific competencies, skills, behaviors and attitudes, together with a sense of cooperation and the social responsibility, that enable young people to participate in the knowledge economy, contribute decisively to social cohesion, and be responsible citizens. Tertiary education can impart people with

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the ability to innovate, disseminate, and apply knowledge that supports the knowledge economy (see World Bank 2002, 2005).

Globalization and new technologies have allowed India, China, and other developing countries to become part of the global supply chain for manufacturing and services (Friedman 2000). Less developed countries will need to tailor their education and learning system to respond to changing demand for human resources and compete in the global economy. Much recent research has focused on the links between education, the labor market, and skill development.

The World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation (World Bank 2006), for example, emphasizes that investing in young people can improve development. Education investments broaden opportunities; develop young people's capacities by recognizing them as decision making agents, and provide effective second chances through targeted programs

A related study, The Knowledge Economy and Education and Training in South Asia (Riboud, Savchenko, and Tan 2007) focuses on how skills affect labor market outcomes. This study highlights the importance of upgrading skills; diminishing the gender gap; and expanding secondary and tertiary education, vocational education and training, and in-service training in order for South Asia to catch up with developed regions.

It is estimated that the current value of the contribution of soft skills to the United Kingdom (UK) economy is worth annually over £88 billion (2011 prices) in terms of gross value added. The annual contribution of soft skills is expected to grow strongly over the next five years. By 2020, the annual contribution of soft skills to the economy is expected to grow in real terms to £109 billion, and to just over £127 billion by 2025.

Bangladesh's Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2014 is 0.570 – which put the country in the medium human development category – positioning it at 142 out of 188 countries and territories. Between 1980 and 2014, Bangladesh's HDI value increased from 0.338 to 0.570, an increase of 68.7 percent or an average annual increase of about 1.55 percent. (Human Development Report 2015, United Nations Development Program (UNDP)).

The present government reinforced that the development of human capital and the upgrading of the mentality and intellectual capacity of a nation must be a priority if Bangladesh is to be in a level of middle level income country. Highlighting on these areas will enable the country to raise its capacity for knowledge, creativity and innovation, which are fundamental ingredients in the context of globalization.

Bangladesh has already developed the structure of relevant skill development body in the name of "National Skill Development Council (NSDC)", headed by the Prime Minister. National Skill Development Policy (2011) aims to establish more flexible and responsive delivery mechanisms that better serve the needs of labour market. It aims to (a) improve access to skills for various groups including women and people with disabilities. (b) encourage participation in skill development by industry, organizations, employers and workers. Inspired by an initiative in Penang, Malaysia, the Chittagong Skill Development Centre is an industry-led non-profit initiative in Bangladesh, with a mandate to deliver training to its corporate members and other organizations. Members pool training

resources, share technologies and input into the curriculum, thereby benefitting from enterprise-led training without the overheads incurred by conducting this in-house.

There are at least two discerning reasons underpinning the need in strengthening undergraduates' soft skills in all tertiary level Education Institutes of Bangladesh. First, graduates are generally academically acceptable but lack in soft skills such as communication and analytical skills. Second, the increasing globalization of the work force and job market imposes much more competitive skills on recent graduates. Globalization can be described as the increasing integration of various sectors in today's world resulting from the revolution in communication technology and progressive lowering of trade barrier leads to a demand for higher level skills and techniques (De Lange 2002). Due to the accelerated improvement in communication and Information technology sector and the increasing tendency in trade amongst countries, more large companies have now turned as international. Many private sector organizations are also turning international. Hence companies/non-government organizations such as these are continually seeking employees who, apart from being highly quailed technically, also possess soft skills.

Defining skills and competencies for the twenty first century

The International Labour Organization (ILO) proposes the concept of "portability of skills." The idea is that skills should be transferable between jobs and easily recognized by employers. The ILO defines a broad body of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable individuals to access jobs and adjust to the changing labour market, grouped into the following two categories (ILO 2007b).

I. Core skills

Cognitive/problem solving: the ability to analyze and solve technical and/or business related problems effectively, using high level thinking skills, and by applying methodologies.

Social: the ability to interrelate with others, work in teams, motive and demonstrate leadership, and manage client relations.

Communication: the ability to read, write, and handle information.

Personal behavioral/ethical: appropriate personal and professional attitudes and values, the ability to make sound judgments and take decisions.

Learning: the ability to acquire new knowledge, learn from experience, and be open to innovation.

II. Vocational/technical skills

Possession of appropriate, technical, vocational and/or business knowledge, as well as the ability to apply this knowledge in practice.

Manpower Group (formerly known as Manpower Inc.) is an American multinational human resource consulting firm, on the other hand identified four categories of "teachable fit" skill (table 1), a framework that predicts whether a candidate's skills gaps can be filled and then capacities developed. The four categories are (fixed) knowledge,

skills (including hard and soft skills), values and mindset, and personality and intelligence. Capabilities are considered flexible, in that each profession has its own job specific requirements. Manpower notes that most knowledge and skills are not only important but also highly “teachable.” Table 1 shows an example of a software engineer.

Table 1: Manpower Inc.’s “Teachable Fit Framework” for a Software Engineer

Category	Capabilities	Notes	Important? 1 (low) – 5 (high)	Teachable? 1 (low) – 5 (high)
Knowledge Business or academic disciplines	Computer systems	Computer science, engineering, or math degree/experience required	5	1
	Engineering principles	Takes lots of practice if not schooled	5	3
	Engineering technology	Learn as you go	4	4
Skills Demonstrated aptitudes and practices, both “hard” and “soft”	Technical design	Can earn a lot from existing configurations	5	3
	Systems analysis/ complex problem solving	Takes lots of practice to develop.	5	2
	Diagnosis/ testing/ Trouble shooting	Methods can be learned quickly, but they don’t cover all cases	5	4
	Active listening/ collaboration	Need to work with customers, vendors, and colleagues	4	3
	Programming	Includes operating systems; teachable, but some experience is essential	4	5
	Documentation	Precision needed here as well	3	4
Values and mindset Attitudes that people bring to jobs and jobs need in people	Likes to build		4	2
	Likes to learn		4	2
Personality and intelligence Basic character and mental traits	Systematic thinking/ pattern recognition		5	2
	Deductive reasoning		5	2
	Inductive reasoning		5	1
	Curiosity		4	1

While the teaching and learning of “hard skills” are made easier with a common and uniform standard of teacher centered teaching, general syllabus and common evaluation system, the development of soft skills amongst undergraduates remains a difficult task as it involves less measurable or assessment criteria and varies highly with each individual according to their character and background. The lack of soft skills amongst Bangladeshi undergraduates is partly attributed to the “traditional learning” style adopted by Bangladeshi school children who are pressured by their parents, peers, and school to

excel academically as a result of the examination-based education system. Thus, students are compelled to memorizing facts and figures to excel as their success in Primary and High School is constantly assessed by how many A+'s they achieved in their examinations and tests which are carried out on a monthly, semester, and annual basis. In the process, they fail to develop an inquisitive/creative mind and analytical skills as most of their time is spent attending regular/tutor classes, extra classes, and examination to better prepare them for the many upcoming examinations. As a result, these children spent less time entertaining in childhood activities while very few take up sports. It is commonly believe the above factors contributed toward the attitude and learning styles of university students who maintain the same studying patterns. This phenomenon is also common in other developing countries in Asia (Kember and Gow 1991; Kember 2000; Wong 2004).

Another factor that contributed toward the deterioration of communication skills amongst Bangladeshi graduates is related to language proficiency. English has long been the official language in the business and corporate sectors while the national language is Bengali. This concern is well founded considering the attempt of expansion of the Bangladesh economy in the era of globalization where the use of English is universally required for employment. Graduates who are highly proficient in English, for instance, can represent the organization and are able to make presentation to an international audience. These employees would thus have an advantage over their colleagues who are less proficient when promotions exercises are being held.

While the primary and high school education system in Bangladesh is undergoing a major reorganization, Higher Education Institutes in Bangladesh have little choice but to address this issue at the tertiary level. The next section elaborates on the elements of "soft" skills as essential ingredients towards employment and ways to incorporate in the tertiary education.

Soft skills have been recognized as important pre-requisite for employment. However, searching for a common and appropriate definition of the widely used term 'soft skills', we found that there is no consistent understanding of this term but many different definitions: Soft skills are communicative abilities enhancing the efficiency in interactions, "the ability to communicate and work in teams." or "is a sociological term for a person's Emotional Intelligence Quotient". However, within this paper, we have categories "soft skills" into following element.

Communication skills

Communication in English is ranked the most important skill under Communication Skills. This could be explained by English being the preferred language in many economic sectors and firms. Azam, Chin and Prakash (2010) also find that employers demand English skills. Specifically, they estimate based upon a large household survey that English Communication Skills increase the hourly wage of a man by a whopping 34%. The return mainly accrues to young highly educated workers (such as engineers). The main factors of Communication skills are Listening skills, Speaking skills and Written Communication. Students are expected to be eloquent and able to communicate effectively in both Bengali and English language. As graduates they should be able to

convey their thoughts with clarity and reliance both in written and oral forms. They are also expected to be active listeners while providing the necessary response. Graduates should also be capable of giving and using technology during presentations with confidence.

Critical thinking and problem solving skills

With this skill, it is conventional that graduates should be able to think in critical, creative, innovative, and analytical manners which incorporate the ability to apply knowledge in solving real world problems. Elements that graduates must possess under this skill category are the ability to identify and analyze complex situation as well as making evaluations that are reasonable. They should also have the competence to expand and improve thinking skills, to provide ideas, and alternative solutions.

Team work

Team work skills are associated with the ability to work and cooperate with people from different social and cultural backgrounds so as to achieve a common goal. In order to build a good working relationship with his/her peers, it is essential that graduates are respectful toward others' attitude, behavior, and belief. From time to time graduates are also expected to perform the role of a group leader and a group member mutually. Interactions of students in team activities enrich the experiences of all students by engaging them in the sharing of personal perspectives. Students with different background can add cross-national information, an essential skill needed for management of different employers (Cooper & Robinson, 1998).

Lifelong learning and information management skills

In acquiring skills and knowledge, graduates should be able to do self-organized learning. They should have the skills to search for relevant information from various sources and able to manage them efficiently. They should develop inquisitiveness. They should also be interested to new ideas and be able to develop an analytical mind.

Entrepreneurial skill

This skill involves the ability to endeavor into business and work-related opportunities while creating risk awareness. This skill includes the ability to identify business opportunities and be able to prepare, build and explore a business plan which eventually leads to self-employment and create an opportunity of employment for others.

Ethics and professional moral

With the above skill, graduates are able to practice with high moral standards in the relevant professional practice. Graduates should also be able to understand the effects of economy, environment, and socio-cultural factors on their respective professional practice. In relation to ethical issues, graduates should be able to analyze and arrive at decisions in matters concerning ethics. Beyond the working environment, graduates should be able to practice good ethics while having a sense of responsibility toward society.

Leadership skill

Leadership skill brings about the capability to lead in various activities. Graduates should have the knowledge on basic leadership philosophy which will enable them to lead a project. It is also essential that graduates are able to understand the role of a leader and a group member and be able to carry out those roles interchangeably.

Previous Literature

A study was designed and conducted to analyze the job advertisement appearing in two major online job sites (www.bdjjobs.com and www.prothom-alo.com) of Bangladesh in April, 2016. The researcher has gone through 3,996 job advertisements and trace Communication skill (both verbal and writing) is the most desired soft skill attribute among the employees of Bangladesh. More than half of the employers (51.08%) mentioned the skill as requirement for the employment. Being able to work with a team is an added advantage, which were a requirement for 22.98% (95) job advertisement, leadership skill is a desired soft skill attribute for 12.29% (51) job announcement, (Nusrat M, 2016).

A study on 12,000 students by Birrell (2006) of Monash University in Australia showed that more than one-third of foreign students in Australian Universities are not adept enough in English, concluding that despite good work ethics these students are not equipped for professional level work. The study also indicated that while graduates had sufficient command of language in handling day-to-day situation, they were still incompetent to engage in an intellectual discussion which is essential in the demanding work force. Similarly, a biannual survey by the Association of Graduate Recruiters in the UK reported that there is an inadequate supply of applicants as they lack in “soft” skills (Association of Graduate Recruiters 2006).

On a similar note, interviews with the construction industry employees in New South Wales, Australia reveals that these employees believe that people with good “soft” skills are born with them as such skills is part of their personal traits. However, research shows a different story, as employees had been able to improve their soft skills with experience and practice (Hager, Crowley and Garrick 2000). Another study by Rainsbury et al. (2002) on students and graduates from a variety of business studies programs at a New Zealand tertiary institution reported that graduates perceived both hard skills and soft skills to be more important than did their student counterparts.

From the viewpoint of employers, a study on 230 position advertisements in German newspaper during the period of January to March 2000 admits that ability to work in teams and integration is demanded by 75% of German engineering firms (Julliard and Schwab 2000). A number of previous articles have, however, emphasized that students should have a balance of soft and hard skills, where hard skills refer to those associated with technical aspects of how a job is undertaken (Kemper 1999; McMachie 1998; Spencer and Spencer 1993), when some authors suggest that both soft skills and hard skills are essential for a successful performance (Ashton 1994; Caudron 1999).

Considering the circumstances stated above, apart from producing graduates with academic excellence, Tertiary Education Institutes of Bangladesh must ensure that their graduates possess the relevant personal and ethical development. Specifically, besides teaching how one can find technological solutions, students must also be taught on how

to evaluate the consequences of technology and how to be personally and collectively responsible for a technique they develop (Julliard and Schwab 2000). These elements of soft skills are not only relevant to the sales and service industry which obviously requires their prospective employees to possess not only most of the soft skill attributes but also in highly technical based industry such as engineering, information system, and construction.

Implementation of soft skills at Higher Education Institutes of Bangladesh

To promote soft skills, the current examination system and pedagogy must change to reflect the expectations of teamwork, leadership and communication (Wang, Yidan. 2012). The tertiary level Education Institutes of Bangladesh need to developed a framework suggesting the approach that should be undertaken in implementing soft skills. Thus, the Higher Education Institutes may adopt the proposed approach, although the implementation of which is done at Faculty level varies with each Faculty dependent on the type of courses offered. While the Higher Education Institutes of Bangladesh may recommend that tertiary level education institutions in Bangladesh may work within the given framework as shown in Fig. 1, these institutions may be allowed to make variations and additions as needed in the implementation aspect.

Development of soft skills by Embedded Model

This model adopts the approach of embedding the soft skills in the learning and teaching activities across the curriculum. The teacher trainee as student are trained to master the soft skills through various formal teaching and learning activities that are planned and carried out using specific strategies and methods. In this way, the content

and learning outcomes to be achieved for the respective courses are maintained. The

learning outcomes related to the soft skills will be integrated and be part of the learning outcomes of the respective courses. This is the suggested model to be implemented in all courses for the different programmes in institutions of higher

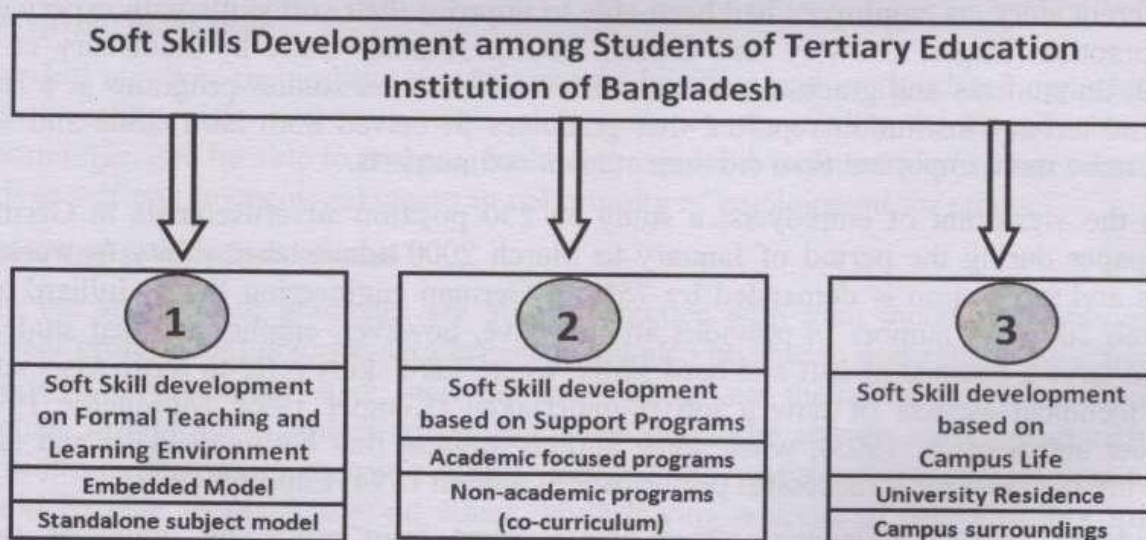


Figure 1. Proposed model for implementation of soft skills in Higher Education Institutes of Bangladesh.

learning. Each element of soft skills is spelled out in the learning outcome and then translated into the instructional plan for the semester. This is followed by implementing several teaching and learning activities such as questioning, class discussion, brain storming, team work, presentation, role play and simulation, task/project, field work and site visits.

In general, the development of soft skills using the embedded model requires the expertise of the lecturers to use the various teaching strategies and methods that are entirely student-centered. It also involves active teaching and learning and students should participate actively in the activities. Some of the appropriate strategies and methods that are practical include a) learning by questioning, b) cooperative learning, c) problem-based learning (PBL) and d) e-learning.

At Curtin Business School, Western Australia, for example, “CBS Professional skills mini project” was developed in a third year Management course to support students in developing their presentation and writing skills where students working in groups are assessed based on 60% skills and 40% academic weight (Soontiens and de la Harpe 2002). To teach for knowledge society, a more effective strategy has to be developed to impart soft skills to students from kindergarten through university via games and projects that encourage teamwork and communication – where student scores do not depend on individual but group work (Wang, Yidan. 2012).

Development of soft skills through Stand-alone subject Model

This model uses the approach of training and providing opportunities to students to develop soft skills through specific course that are carefully planned for this purpose. Usually these subjects are offered as program course (English, entrepreneurship etc) and elective courses.

Stand-alone subjects can be offered by faculties which will provide teacher trainees with the opportunities to develop soft skills on a formal basis. These courses which are offered as elective courses such as English (both written and oral), Entrepreneurship, and others can be offered as stand-alone subjects and can be taken up the student in any semester. Since the subjects are elective in nature, teacher trainees may decline to register for these subjects, as they may have their own preference. In cases such as this, it is the teacher educators’ role as student advisers to advice these student accordingly.

Development of soft skills based on support programs

Soft skills can also be developed indirectly through support programs such as co-curricular activities. Activities such as these are non-academic in nature, but indirectly assist teacher trainees in developing their personality and character. These programs allow the students to explore their interest which can be nurtured by enrolling them in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that is reflective of their interest.

Development of soft skills based on campus life

A sizeable number of university teacher trainee or students reside in the residential hall. The provost/warden of the hall could take this opportunity to plan activities that will involve the participation of all the students living in the residences. Activities such as debates, drama competition, sports carnival which includes tally match, charity bazaar,

and music competitions are amongst many activities that could be carried out. Besides increasing social interaction among students, leadership qualities, teamwork, and entrepreneurship can be encouraged through such activities. These informal activities should be carefully planned and carried out continuously throughout the semester, and to improve teamwork capabilities they should encompass all races and gender.

Development of soft skills based on formal and informal activities at faculty levels

Faculties can also play a significant role in enhancing soft skills amongst teacher trainee on formal activities such as in organizing seminars, workshops, and conferences. Although these activities will most probably benefit those students who are already active, the less active ones can be requested to assist. In a more informal approach, the Faculty could organize activities during weekends for social activities such as visits to historical places, games between departments, and the like. While the Faculty is not taking the role of head of institutions, informal activities at Faculty levels can involve all students regardless of whether they are hall residence or not.

“Soft” finishing in university level

In a more formal approach before the end of the semester, every department in the Faculty should identify teacher trainee/students who lack soft skills to register for a formal “soft finishing university” offered by the Faculty. The formal soft skill course can be carried out by professional trainers or by trained faculty members. The progress of these students can then be monitored during the following semester and if they fail to achieve specified soft skill levels, they are requested to enroll in the following “soft finishing university.” Through this process, students who really lack in soft skills even after undergoing all the models specified as above can be “treated.” This is due to the nature of the soft finishing university that will target those students with the very least soft skills with a ratio of one facilitator to 20 students. The drawback of this approach is that it will be costly and time consuming. However, this specialized training with a low facilitator to student ratio will enable the facilitators/teachers to monitor the progress of the students while building their confidence on a progressive manner. At the end of the course, the students will tend to have a bond with the facilitators/teachers, as these facilitators/ teachers are aware of their level of confidence and the students would naturally confide in the facilitators/teachers at a later stage if they still feel their soft skills level is not at the required level. Hence, the process is much easier if the facilitators are full time faculty members. If the number of students who lacks soft skills in a Faculty is too small whereby it is not economical to run the “soft finishing university,” a few Faculties can combine to organize the finishing university.

Soft skill integration in teaching professional training

It is necessary to reviews curriculum to ensure soft skills are well integrated through lecturing method and co-curricular activities. For example, teacher educators are the role model to teacher trainees. Therefore, teacher educators must possess high soft skills before they are able to train their trainees. Soft skill integration is very much depending on the efforts of teacher educators themselves.

In order to use the soft skill development model, teacher educators themselves should plan and apply the soft skills in their syllabus as well as conduct their obligations ethically. Soft skills are necessary to be embedded in all program or curriculum which will enable teacher trainees to see the relationships and relevance of those courses that they studied in their teaching professional program through embedded model. Soft skills cannot be taught but must be practiced by showing them examples. Teacher trainees' soft skills should be assessed by teacher educators through classroom observation and tutorial session. An appropriate assessment system must be created to measure teacher trainees' soft skill development. In addition teacher trainees should be given autonomy so that this will enable them to think critically. Teaching practicum can be an important mechanism to develop their soft skills.

Practical/industrial training

In a rapidly changing world, collaboration between education institutes and industries are the major concern in many developing countries like Bangladesh. Students should undertake their industrial training at the end of the final year of their studies. Students should be encouraged to undertake an informal industrial training at the end of year 2 of their studies or 50% completion of their credit courses. This is, however, an addition to the formal industrial training at the end of the course. Apart from gaining practical experience, students will realize the importance of possessing a certain level of soft skills as they have an "early preview" of what is expected out of them.

Mapping stakeholders for cooperation

Collaborating with established institutions and integrating the most important stakeholders are key success factors for organizations when setting up a program. Potential partners should be identified and evaluated on the basis of their likely contribution and relevant soft skill expertise. One useful way of securing an overview of potential participants is by means of a stakeholder map. The stakeholders are clustered into group, such as education authorities (public/private) or NGO's. For each group, its potential contribution is analyzed in several categories, ranging from project management to the certification and evaluation of the program. The technique for a stakeholder map was used for example, in setting up a Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for the Bangladesh Ready-made Garments (RMG) sector.

Under the auspices of the ILO TVET reform project, vocational education has advanced considerably in Bangladesh, mainly owing to the following factors: the implementation of the national skill development policy; the development of national training and vocational qualification frameworks that detail the requirements for each qualification level; the introduction of competence-based learning; and the establishment of centers of excellence and registered training organizations. Ministry of Education and the Technical Education Board oversee TVET and serve as knowledge hub for curriculum development and can help to promote the training program. Other important potential partners in setting up a TVET program are: the existing technical training institutes, the newly established Centre of Excellence for Bangladesh Apparel Industries (CEBAI); and the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET). All these institutions

can provide training infrastructure, teachers, approved curricula that could be used directly to the organizations need.

Discussion

There is a discrepancy between the current curriculum and soft skill development in the education systems of most developing countries. Schools are organized according to disciplines, while the labour market demands not only subject – area skills, but also soft skill for all profession and/or occupation (Chang 2007).

Given the long duration that teacher trainees are exposed to rote learning styles and examination-oriented education system in their formative years of elementary and secondary education upon which their personal characteristics were formed, it is not an easy task to undo these traits during their four years of tertiary education. Embedding soft skill components in the curriculum design will probably a better solution. In line with this, all the tertiary education institutes of Bangladesh need to be instructed by University Grants Commission (UGC) to review their existing curriculum where soft skill components have to be reflected in every course design

To reduce the graduate level unemployment rate in Bangladesh, the tertiary education establishments of this country should focus on developing curricula and teaching material, restructuring of education and assessment policy, modernization of infrastructure facilities, linkage program between education and society, co-opt scheme for industry, training institutions for faculty members in tertiary level, etc. Further suggestions are made towards the need for development of effective presentation skill among the students as better communication increases the likelihood desired employability. It also suggested that the graduate should be sound in analytical/ problem solving ability to prove their worth of employability (Kazi Khaled Shams Chisty, Gazi Munir Uddin & Suntu Kumar Ghosh (2007).

A flexible structure enables education systems to be responsive to changing demands for skills, such as the demand for soft skills and teamwork in today's economy. Flexibility also allows “outsiders”—that is, employers and the business sector to be involved in curriculum development and internship opportunities. Skills development ensures that learning content is relevant to the labor market and employment. Thus, maximizing learning opportunities, providing updated skills, and ensuring an effective school to work transition are essential for preparing a skilled workforce (Wang, Yidan. 2012).

Given the belief that graduates often over rate themselves in believing that they are well qualified and do not lack any necessary skills coupled by the belief that soft skills are part of personal traits that is not possible to be enhanced, Institutes of Higher Learning must create awareness to graduates on the needs and expectation of the globalized job market. Acknowledging the fact that these traits should be part of the students when they leave high school, the lack of these skills amongst students is largely attributed to the education system in Bangladesh that focuses on rote learning. Thus, graduates must be made aware of their shortcomings so that they are able to identify their weaknesses and limitations and take the opportunity to acquire as much good traits as possible while in University to prepare them for the demanding job market.

The effort to enhance soft skills amongst Higher Education Institutes on Bangladesh students to prepare them for the globalized job market should be a joint effort among the students, faculty member, residential halls, and universities above all the UGC. More importantly, students must be made to realize the importance of enhancing their soft skills so that they are able to compete in the world without boundaries. While suggestions on infusing soft skills have been deliberated by the authors, the evaluation of these elements is left to the academics. At present, there are no clear guidelines on how to assess the level of soft skills amongst students. Future research should thus focus on the appropriate assessment method to facilitate the effective implementation of soft skills development.

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