TECHNICAL EDUCATION FOR BETTER EMPLOYMENT

Policy note based on Tracking Survey of Graduates of Polytechnics

Bangladesh

Greater access to high quality and relevant technical education and training opportunities is essential to reap the benefits of a growing youthful population and modern technologies. With a bulging youth population – around 40 percent are below 20 years of age - Bangladesh has a once in a lifetime opportunity to reap the benefits of the large and growing working population. This Policy Note provides insights on how technical education and vocational training can promote employability of students in Bangladesh and what more needs to be done to maximize the benefits of an on-going demographic transition.

Who are typical polytechnic students?

Most polytechnic students are academically strong secondary school graduates from rural areas and humble family backgrounds (Figure 1).

![Pie charts showing results and education qualifications of parents of polytechnic students.]

Figure 1: Proportion of polytechnic students by Secondary School Certificate terminal exam results (left); and education qualifications of parents of polytechnic students (right)
What is the job outlook for technical diploma graduates?

Graduates from technical diploma courses are doing relatively well in the job market. Females and those living in rural areas are, however, at disadvantage. Self-employment is extremely rare. Around half of polytechnic graduates who looked for jobs are in employment after one or two years of graduation (Figure 2). Graduates living in rural areas are also faring less well. Only around 35 percent of graduates living in rural areas are employed, which is 20 percentage points lower than those living in urban areas.

**Figure 2:** Employment outcomes among job-seeking graduates by gender

Industries where graduates are employed

- **7%** in ICT business
- **10%** in Utility sector
- **11%** in Education sector
- **15%** in Construction sector
- **29%** in Manufacturing sector

Polytechnic graduates are putting their technical skills to good use in the country’s growing private productive sectors, like manufacturing, construction, utilities, and ICT.
Diploma engineers are making decent incomes in their employment. On average, employed polytechnic graduates are earning the monthly income of around BDT 10,800, which is overall comparable to the national averages. However, on average, female graduates are earning only around 75 percent of what their male peers would be earning (Table 1).

Table 1: Average income earning among polytechnic graduates in Bangladeshi Taka

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<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>10,843</td>
<td>11,088</td>
<td>8,308</td>
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By Location

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<th>Location</th>
<th>All</th>
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<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
<td>11,122</td>
<td>11,280</td>
<td>9,657</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban/Semi-urban</td>
<td>11,066</td>
<td>11,345</td>
<td>7,404</td>
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<td>Rural</td>
<td>8,751</td>
<td>9,204</td>
<td>5,217</td>
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By Industry

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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>11,754</td>
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<td>Construction</td>
<td>10,925</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>10,465</td>
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1 USD = BDT 80

What are the key challenges for diploma courses?

Teaching skills and subject knowledge of teachers, and access to modern facilities and equipment for training are viewed as least satisfactory (Figure 3).

Employers emphasize the need to strengthen problem solving skills, ICT skills, and practical technical skills in TVET curricula. Problem solving skills are essential for professionals who deal with complex technical problems and business challenges (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Employers’ view on skills training that polytechnics need to provide more of

Regular contact and communication to further strengthen and build on linkages with industry remains low. Less than one-fifth of employers have regular contact and communication with polytechnics which can play a critical role to strengthen students’ employment prospects. Most partnerships with industry provide guest lectures and industry visits, whereas engagement in more substantial areas of teaching such as curriculum development and teacher training, would have more lasting impacts on the quality of training (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Types of industry partners in the polytechnics
What can we do to improve TVET at diploma level?

1. **Place graduates’ employment and employability firmly and squarely at the center of polytechnic education, especially for females.** Employability centered approach would encompass the entire spectrum of polytechnic system’s actions, including institutional planning, monitoring, curriculum design, teacher training, industry linkage, facility and equipment, and job placement services; and should gear them strategically towards achieving the result of better employment outcomes. Graduate tracking should be a standard practice. Polytechnics have a bigger role to play to refer their female students to companies which are receptive to hiring of female technical workers.

2. **Invest more in teachers and modern teaching learning facilities.** Strengthening teaching capacity both in terms of number of teachers and teaching skills need to be resolved with utmost urgency. TVET teacher training policies as well as roles of Technical Teacher Training College (TTTC) have to be reviewed. More financial resources from the government are apparently needed to modernize facilities and equipment to keep up with the basic requirements of modern industries.

3. **Provide greater emphasis to higher-order cognitive skills, ICT, and soft skills training.** Focus should be on strengthening problem solving skills, ICT skills, and communication skills in pedagogy and curriculum in polytechnics; embracing fully competency-based training should be a priority to pave the way toward more flexible demand-driven curriculum.

4. **Further strengthen partnership with industry.** Industry partnership are widely known to be extremely useful to ensure the relevance of training programs. Institution-industry partnerships support regular communication with potential employers and may contribute to graduates finding jobs with those employers.

5. **Provide special training programs on entrepreneurship and business management.** Special training programs for entrepreneurship would provide much-needed practical knowledge and skills to manage business operations. Expanding self-employment and entrepreneurship would likely achieve greater job creation and vibrant economy.

6. **Enhance partnerships with international institutions.** Partnerships with globally recognized institutions to learn best practices in skills training and education would support to produce globally competitive technical graduates.