

Australia Bangladesh Trade Conference, Sydney, 2019

Date: 15 November 2019
Session: 11:30 hours ó 13:00 hours
Theme: Industry Session: Education and Skill Development

A. Background: Bangladesh will require new and enriched human capital with different skills, critical technology than ever before for continuing her progress and fulfilling the aspiration of becoming a middle-income country by 2021 and a developed country by 2041. Education, training and skill development would be integral parts to achieve it.

In recent decades, there has been an immense emphasis on education in Bangladesh. Parallely, each year a large number of students from Bangladesh go abroad for ~~quality~~ higher education. The World Economic Forum's Global Competitive Index for 2016-17 ranked Bangladesh 109th out of 138 countries for the quality of its primary education, and 84th for the quality of the education system overall which indicates the need for significant improvement.

At present, there is 45 public (including Engineering and medical), 103 private and 03 international universities in Bangladesh (Source: University Grant Commission, Bangladesh). To produce skilled manpower, there is a technical and vocational training system in the country. Among which 449 (49 public, 400 private) polytechnic institutes, 125 Nursing Training Institutes, 24 Nursing Colleges, 64 Technical Training Centres (TTCs), 06 Institute of Marine Technology are conducting training in different trades.

However, with time, a strong demand for higher education in quality institutions abroad with a stable career focus has been developed in Bangladesh. Some indicators act as catalysts for the demand of studying abroad, such as (a) GDP growth has clipped along at an average of 6.5% per year, (b) the middle class is projected to nearly triple ó to roughly 35 million people ó by 2025 and (c) in 2015 a total of 577,087 students passed in Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) exam which has increased to 899,150 in 2017.

UNESCO report shows that there are over 60,000 Bangladeshi students¹ enrolled in tertiary studies abroad in 2017. More than half of those chose to study in Malaysia and other popular, traditional study destinations are the US, Australia, the UK, and Canada. These countries have also welcomed increasing numbers of Bangladeshi students in recent years. An increasing range of Asian, the Middle East, and European countries have also emerged as popular destinations for Bangladesh students.

¹ These, however, appear to be as under-estimation

Fig-1: Top 10 destinations for Bangladeshi Students (2019)

Sl. No.	Destination	Number of students
1	Malaysia	28,456
2	United States	6,492
3	Australia	4,986
4	United Kingdom	3,116
5	Canada	2,028
6	Germany	2,008
7	India	1,526 *
8	Saudi Arabia	870
9	Japan	810
10	United Arab Emirates	637

Source: <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow#slideoutmenu> Data year 2019

- Other counts indicate that Bangladesh students in India is much higher

B. Skill Development :

As Bangladesh is continuing its robust development trajectory, Bangladesh will soon face different kind of expectation, challenges and standards in the post-LDC period. Skill sets, knowledge base and technology employed in our production processes in the present time are likely to be found inadequate to survive greater competition from competitors in the global market. The Government of Bangladesh is refocusing on the education and training system from low skill to medium and high skill. It would be pertinent to mention that every year 2 million young people are added to the Labour Force. Therefore, human resource development through training is a key element for resourceful and modern Bangladesh. The Government has been pursuing many initiatives to enhance skill development.

Skills for Employment Investment Program (SEIP) under Ministry of Finance are ongoing to support Government institutes, private companies, non-government organizations, industry skill councils and industry associations for skilling new entrants and up-skilling existing workforce to enhance productivity and growth of priority industry sectors. Bureau of Manpower, Employment & Training under the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas are playing a lead role in human resource development. BMET is collaborating with Japan Overseas Co-operation Volunteers (JOCV), International Manpower (IM) Japan for sending Intern and caregiver to Japan, South Korea through Employment Permit System (EPS). There are projects about skill development and enhancement run with the assistance of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and Swiss Development Corporation (SDC).

More so, Bureau of Manpower, Employment & Training (BMET), to improve the employability of Bangladesh workers overseas, is arranging international accreditation for the Skill training certification with-

- City and Guilds
- TAFE Australia
- Recognition Prior Learning (RPL) with KSA (through City and Guilds)

C. Australian education sector and number of international students

Australia's onshore international education sector is forecast to grow from 650,000 enrolments now to 940,000 by 2025 (which equates to a compounding annual growth rate of 3.8 per cent). Each year, around 300 thousand international students commence study in Australia, the majority of which are enrolled in higher education. The international education sector's contribution to export earnings is expected to almost double to more than \$33 billion by 2025.

The top eight source markets for onshore international learner enrolments across all sectors in 2025 in Australia are expected to be China, India, Vietnam, Thailand, Nepal, Malaysia, Brazil and South Korea. Much of the growth in onshore learner enrolments will be driven by Asia – in particular, China, India, Nepal, Vietnam and Thailand. Given the similar or even lower economic and social condition, other South Asian countries like Nepal, Pakistan, Sri-Lanka have got higher stake than Bangladesh which can be depicted from the below chart. It also indicates that there are ample opportunities for Bangladesh subject to doing the needful to address the challenges.

Fig-2: Number of South Asian Students in Australia in February 2018

Country of Origin	Students in Australia	Percentage (South Asian Students in Australia)	Top 5 Destination
India	62,910	53.9	1. The United States, 2. Australia, 3. Canada, 4. The United Kingdom, 5. New Zealand
Nepal	29,261	25.1	1. Australia, 2. United States, 3. India, 4. Japan, 5. Finland
Pakistan	10,767	9.2	1. Australia, 2. United States, 3. United Kingdom, 4. Uni Arab Emirate, 5. Malaysia
Sri Lanka	8,502	7.3	1. Australia, 2. United States, 3. Malaysia, 4. United Kingdom, 5. India
Bangladesh	5,192	4.5	1. Malaysia, 2. United States, 3. Australia, 4. United Kingdom, 5. Canada
Total	116,632	100	

D. Bangladeshi Students in Australia:

As far as Bangladesh is concerned, young population with an appetite for education along with strong career focus moves to Australia as a pathway to upward social mobility. However, Bangladesh has only a 4.5% share among the South Asian countries and only 0.9% among all international students in Australia as per the data by Australian Trade Commission statistics as of February 2018. Similarly, the data for Bangladeshi students in VET sector is not much impressive as it has been reduced sharply from 2010 to 2018.

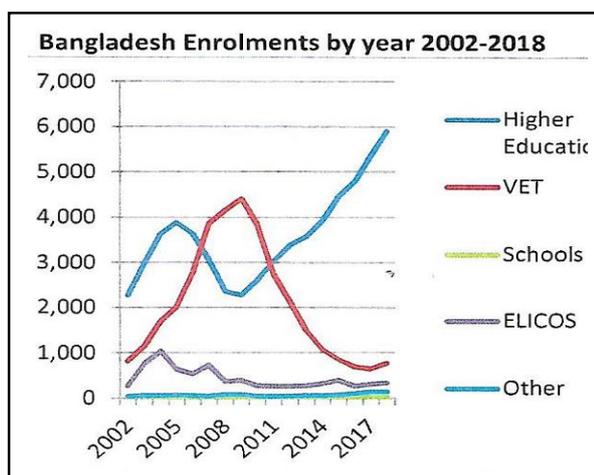
Fig-3: International education data snapshot for Bangladesh



Market Share - Bangladeshi Students in Australia	2017	2018
All international students	622,932	693,750
Bangladesh students	5,698	6,329
% of international students	0.9%	0.9%
Rank in Australian Market	22	22

Sector	Enrolments ^A Jan-Dec 20
Higher Education	5,9
VET	7
Schools	
ELICOS [#]	3
Other*	1
Grand Total	7,2

Source: Department of Education and Training International Student data reports Year-to-date December 2018



Source: Australian Trade Commission, Department of Education and Training

Not having Bank loan facility for overseas students like our other neighbouring countries, e.g. India, visa processing in Delhi, inadequate industry linkage are also identified as major challenges for Bangladesh students getting visas for studying in Australia. Lack of Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) is also found as a challenge for Bangladesh, as in many cases Bangladeshi curriculums/programs are not recognized by the Australian education authorities. Additionally, lower proficiency in English often becomes a factor, in particular for enrolling Bangladeshi students in the VET sector.

E. Possibilities given recent developments in Australia

Given preponderance of Chinese students in Australian Universities, concerns have been growing in Australia recently. Many Australian Universities demand score of 6.5 or 7 for IELTS for direct admission but are amenable to lower scores if foreign students come through foundation or pathway programs (diplomas and advanced diplomas). Many students, particularly from China, with much lower language proficiency enter Australian higher

education through this way. However, visa-related difficulties often faced by Bangladesh students stand in the way of Bangladeshis students getting into the pathway stream to higher education in Australia.

As Australia seeks to balance number of students from China with students from other countries, Bangladesh could offer significant numbers of students for higher education. Australian Universities may seek to enter into special arrangements with Universities in Bangladesh for programmes, conducted both in Bangladesh and Australia, but following Australian curricula.

As far as technical education and skills development is concerned, labour market in Australia is unique and is generally filled up through skill-based arrangements for sectors and at terms decided by Australian authorities from time to time. According to the Department of Job and Small Business of Australia, over the five years to May 2022, the construction sector will be growing by 8.3%. There is prospect for number of occupations such as plumber, welder, electrician, bricklayer, roof, floor and wall tiler, air-conditioning and refrigeration mechanic, automotive mechanics, Lift Operator, Truck Driver/crane operator but subject to the required communication skills in English (IELTS score) and professional skill assessment set by Australian authority. Similarly, Health care and Social Assistance industry will grow by 16.4%, and there are prospects for Doctor, Nurses, child-carer/age-carer subject to having the same requirements. There are opportunities for professionals as well like physiotherapist, sonographer, electrical engineer, software engineer etc. Provisions are reviewed each year by the Australian Government.

However, Australian Government new policy of lowering the number of migrants from 190,000 to 160,000, to disperse migrants into the regional area away from the big would remain as the formidable challenges as regional areas have differing and narrower sets of skill demand in comparison to big cities. Therefore, skill matching would be another major challenge. The Government already declared that new skilled regional visa categories subclass 489 and 887 are being introduced, and migrants would have to live in the regional areas for at least three years if they want to secure permanent residency.

Despite the challenges as mentioned above, collaboration with Australian training providers like TAFE (Technical and Further Education), Retraining and Re-employment could be one of the ways for entering the Australian Labour market.

Recently, a delegation from TAFE (South Australia) has visited the Technical Training Centres run by BMET. The purpose was to assess needs and scoping analysis for skill development and to produce a summary report based on the outcomes of the scoping visit. The report includes key findings and recommendations on the next steps of potential or proposed engagement with BMET, for possible improvements in the curricula to meet higher standards of skills in developed economies. In this context, training of the trainers (ToT) such as sending TAFE lecturers to Bangladesh for 10-15 weeks followed by 10-15 weeks program in Australia by Bangladesh trainers could be possible models for cooperation.

Similar kind of engagement with TAFE (NSW) was in place in 2012, however, it did not work as policies in Australia with regard to VET had been changed at that time focusing non-accredited courses instead of accredited courses for conducting International program. Now, High Commission intends to remain engaged with TAFE (NSW) authorities to review the

previous MoU and also to explore the best suitable model for Bangladesh in the present context.

Similar, kinds of cooperation could be envisaged in case of technologists or polytechnic education. A few Polytechnic institutes in Bangladesh could be identified to be upgraded as per Australian curricula and necessary laboratory facilities. Australian aid could be utilised for such skill enhancement initiatives.

F. The organisation of the session on Education and Skill Development (09:30–11:00 hours)

1. **Moderator/ speaker to introduce the topic and discussants** 05 Minutes

2. Lead Discussants (names or entities represented)

a. Representatives from Macquarie University/RMIT/Swinburne University/Studynet/TAFE)- 6 minutes each 24 Minutes

b. A representative from Bangladesh ó 6 minutes each 12 Minutes

3. **Open discussion** 35 Minutes

In the open discussion, the discussants may deliberate on the above or other relevant points and difficulties, but not exclusive to:

- Potentials for Bangladeshi students to come to Australia for technical and higher education
- Collaborative arrangements such as Joint Ventures on technical education and higher education in Bangladesh
- Challenges for Bangladeshi students and professionals to come to Australia such as lack of accreditation, recognition of licenses, industry linkage, language proficiency, visa difficulties etc.
- Opportunities for Re-training & Re-employment in Australia who have 5-10 years work experience in other countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and countries in the Middle East.

4. **Summation by the Moderator/ Chair** 05 Minutes
