



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

By
B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA
bshadrach@col.org

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION WORKSHOP ON BLENDED TVET IN BANGLADESH

Organised by
Bangladesh Open University (BOU), Bangladesh
and
Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (COL-CEMCA), New Delhi

Inaugural Session

5 May, 2025

10:00 AM IST

Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA)
7/8 Sarva Priya Vihar,
New Delhi, 110016
India

Dear Professor Dr S M A Faiz, Professor Dr Shamsheer Ali, our collaborator in this effort, Vice Chancellor Professor Obaidul Islam, Mr Siddique Zobair of the Secondary and Higher Education Division of the Ministry of Education, Dr Kabirul Islam of the Technical and Madarsa Education Division (TMED) of the Ministry of Education, Professor Nazneen, Professor Ferdous, Dr Alam, and all our partners who represent the skilling and TVET ecosystem of Bangladesh!

I am deeply grateful to Professor Obaidul Islam for collaborating with the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia in co-hosting this day-long consultative meeting on Blended TVET in Bangladesh in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Bangladesh! When I first discussed about this event with Professor Islam, he wholeheartedly agreed to host the meeting and work with us and our focal point, Mr A S M Kashem at the Ministry of Education.

I am thankful to Mr Nazrul Islam, who has done the groundwork, assisting Professor Islam and his team in putting together this meeting. My special gratitude to all those who responded to the invitation sent by BOU and CEMCA for your participation. Your presence in huge number today is a testament to your commitment to vocational education in Bangladesh.

This consultation is very important for multiple reasons:

First, the demand for Vocational Education in Bangladesh is very high. The aspirations of the youth in Bangladesh to be in the formal employment sector is too high. With over two thirds of the population (which is more than 120 million) in the active working age of 18-65, Bangladesh is one of the nations that stare at the demographic dividend, and it is important not to see the opportunity go past us without reaping the reward.

Secondly, Bangladesh's aspiration to become a middle-income nation is impossible without the contributions made by the 120 million people, a majority of whom shall need to contribute to the various sectors of the economy, especially the manufacturing sector. This demands a skilled workforce which the TVET sector alone can meet. However, the TVET sector steered by TMED requires multiple actors to lend their hand and support them in deepening and widening their action, especially by scaling up high quality TVET education and training all of the 120 million people.

Third, TVET is essentially the only route for increasing the productivity of Bangladesh's industrial sectors, improving the quality of goods and services, and enhancing Bangladesh's competitive edge in the global market. Bangladesh cannot sustain its economy only by catering to the domestic sector but largely to the international market where quality of goods, products and services cannot be compromised. Bangladesh's aspiration to graduate from a consumer-based economy to an export-oriented economy can only be met by high quality manpower. Therefore, TVET becomes extremely essential for those who are entering the market, those who remain in the market and those who shall otherwise exit the market. Only a high quality workforce with skilling, reskilling and upskilling opportunities can steer the nation's growth.

TVET, therefore, needs to be market-driven, 21st century focused and agile to the changing Volatile, Uncertain, Chaotic (or Complex) and Ambiguous (VUCA) world. Market-relevant and future skills are the need of the hour.

Finally, the government of Bangladesh recognises the opportunity; therefore, has the provision to introspect its National Education Policy 2010 and the National Skill Development Policy 2011. The government can look into its targets and vision, mission and activities in the TVET sector without a doubt.

Where is the TVET sector today in Bangladesh?

One may identify a range of issues, such as the mismatch between supply of skills and the demands of the industry; lack of workplace based learning opportunities, little or no industry engagement and linkages with the training providers, outdated curricula, lack of modern equipment in TVET institutions that the industry uses, negative perception on TVET and add to this the inability to include equal number of women in the TVET sector, let alone their imagination and innovation.

Bangladesh has always shown to the world the power of women and their contribution to the informal sector. The TVET sector needs to step up to embrace a large number of women in its training system. Added to this is the lack of skills – hard, soft and pedagogical, among the vocational educators in Bangladesh.

How about the number of TVET institutions in Bangladesh?

I understand that there are less than 10,000 institutions involved in TVET education in Bangladesh at a ratio of 10:90 in favour of private institutions. This includes a wide range of institutions, including polytechnics, technical schools, colleges, technical training centres and institutions specialising in vocational education.

The total enrollment in TVET institutions in Bangladesh was reported to be over 1.22 million students in the BANBEIS 2022 report. This indicates a significant number of individuals are undergoing training at any given time. The TVET enrollment rate has significantly increased from one percent in 2010 to 15.79 percent in 2021, in other words, from 541,656 in 2010 to 1,370,266 in 2021. This demonstrates a growing number of individuals accessing TVET. And the government's target is about 2.6 million by 2030.

There are recognised challenges in collecting comprehensive and regular data on enrollment, graduation, and training capacity across all TVET providers in Bangladesh. Different government bodies (BANBEIS, BTEB, DTE, BMET) and other organisations collect data, but a centralised, real-time system is still developing, I guess.

I wish to interject a global data point:

170 million new jobs will be created globally by 2030. 92 million jobs will be displaced. Net gain: 78 million new roles – many of them requiring advanced digital and AI-related skills.

In Bangladesh, while the government target might be about 2.6 million learners by 2030 in TVET system, as stated earlier, the demand is to skill, upskill and reskill 120 million people. The demand could well be 50 times over!

How do we meet the demand?

No single provider can scale up dramatically unless we kick in some innovation. This is where we advocate for Blended TVET. To kill two birds with one stone – the lack of numbers and lack of quality. Any technical education, especially vocational skills require three things to learn – theory, practice, measurement

and design. When one masters all the three, s/he is ready to continue to explore new concepts, practice new ideas and come up with new designs and measure the dimensions and accuracy of the product very well.

And, our study in India, dissecting the level 3-4 of National Skills Qualifications Curricula for Electrician trade and cosmetology reveal exactly this. It is indeed not necessary for a learner to be in the classroom to learn electrical trade or beautician trade for all the 2400 learning hours. It is good enough to be in the classroom for a mere 800 hours while the rest can be carried out online and in the workplace.

In other words, only a third of the time needs to be spent in our TVET institutions while the other third could be spent in the industry and the remaining third at home – anytime anywhere during the learning journey. This model allows for one to be already in the workplace, requiring attending classes only to reinforce the concepts learned online.

What is Blended TVET?

Blended Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) can mean many things to many people and can be viewed as suiting individual cases. For the majority, it is an educational approach that combines traditional face-to-face instruction with technology-mediated learning. It strategically integrates in-person classroom or workshop activities with online learning experiences to provide a more flexible, accessible, and effective learning environment for vocational skills development.

Integration of methods and multimodal learning are gaining popularity in many geographies. Traditional classroom lectures, demonstrations, hands-on workshops, and practical lab work combined with digital learning materials, videos, online discussions, e-learning platforms, virtual simulations, and online assessments make it a compelling methodology in many nations.

Not only Blended TVET offers greater flexibility in terms of time, space and pace – anytime anywhere and anyhow, it helps to gain a different learning experience through interactivity and repeated assignments, collaboration and preparing for assessments.

The National Council for Vocational Education and Training recognises, in fact, seven forms of learning and Blended TVET. These include:

- Theory/Lectures imparting theoretical and conceptual knowledge
- Imparting Soft Skills and Life Skills/Employability Skills
- Mentorship to learners Showing Demonstrations to the learners
- Imparting Practical Skills for working with Hands-on Lab Work
- Tutorial, Assignments, Drill and Practice
- Proctored Monitoring/ Assessment/ Evaluation/ Examinations
- On the job training (OJT), Internship, Apprenticeship Training

Blended TVET in Practice may include, but not limited to: Flipped Classrooms, Online Modules Supplementing Workshops, On-the-Job Training with Online Support, Simulations and Virtual Labs and Hybrid Courses.

COL-CEMCA has come up with a national Blended Learning Policy and an institutional level blended learning policy template. Our two-week long course on AI in TVET with NITTTR, Chennai, was popular among all Asian nations including Bangladesh. Our Micro-credential consultation met with participation by NSDA and UGC, Bangladesh. Our Technology-enabled Learning Policy Template is well used by institutions. And, our skill pedagogy course has just been launched.

There are guidelines for Blended Learning in TVET issued by the University Grants Commission and the National Council for Vocational Education and Training in India. There are also guidelines for Micro-credentials in post-secondary education, which may be a big boost to TVET and for industries where just-in-time skilling and purpose-oriented skilling can be offered as micro-credentials, leading to accumulating credits for redemption. There are guidelines for recognition of prior learning (RPL) and apprenticeships, including eRPLs and eApprenticeships.

I am sure TVET stakeholders gathered today shall deliberate upon all innovations possible in TVET and find solutions to the two-pronged challenge:

- Scaling up of TVET for 'all,' including women and persons with disabilities and those who are already in the industry requiring reskilling and upskilling.

- Enhancing the quality and relevance of TVET education, with the help of industry and the marketplace, including that of curricular and institutional reforms.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your participation in this important national consultation on Blended TVET. I look forward to the outcome statements at the end of the day.
