

# GOOD PRACTICES, REPLICATION STEPS AND WAY FORWARD

## Apprenticeship programmes to boost productivity and employability



Apprenticeships are an age-old and effective means of employer-led delivery of training at the work place. They provide occupational skills and typically lead to a recognised qualification. Apprenticeships also combine learning in the workplace with school-based learning in a structured way. The ILO skills programme in Bangladesh is supporting the expansion and scaling up of apprenticeship training for both the formal and informal sectors. The aim of the apprenticeship programme is to increase the supply of skilled workers in occupations as required by companies and respective industry sectors. The model is a supplementary scheme to existing training programmes for improved employability, faster school-to-work transitions, personal and professional development and better access to jobs programmes. Given its flexible approach, however, it is expected to expand according to the labour market's occupation specific skills requirements.

Though it is a well-proven method of skills delivery, apprenticeships are not well established as a recognized system in Bangladesh and little known to employers. The potential is clearly great as the public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system is inadequate to cope with the number of young people joining the labour market. Moreover, the formal training system often fails to meet the needs of industries.

*“Apprenticeship means a system of training in which an employer undertakes to employ a person and to train him or have trained him systematically in an apprenticeable trade or occupation for a period fixed in advance and in the course of which the apprentice is bound to work in the employer’s service”.*  
(Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Section XVIII)

*The National Skills Development Policy 2011 (NSDP 2011) also emphasises the importance of apprenticeships. Section 12 “Strengthened Apprenticeships” highlights the promotion of both formal and informal apprenticeships as a means to develop skills for job creation and productivity improvement.*



## What has been done so far?

Through its European Union-funded TVET reform project, ILO supported the inclusion of apprenticeships as an element of the National Skills Development Policy (NSDP) adopted in 2011. It also demonstrated ILO's approach to apprenticeship training in the informal sector, and in two formal sectors: leather and ship building.

ILO's Canadian-funded Bangladesh Skills for Employment and Productivity (B-SEP) project has worked with industries and government to strengthen, expand and popularize apprenticeships in the skills system. This publication looks at the steps taken so far, how the initiative can be scaled up as well as steps that still need to be taken to ensure sustainability.

### The B-SEP project achievements:

#### Apprenticeship strategy:

ILO's B-SEP project subsequently supported the National Skills Development Council (NSDC) Secretariat to develop an apprenticeship strategy for Bangladesh under the current TVET reform agenda.

#### Computerized data entry system at BMET for registration and monitoring:

The project has supported the strengthening of the Bureau of Manpower Employment Training (BMET) Apprenticeship Cell by helping establish a computerized data entry system to keep track of apprenticeships. All those undertaking apprenticeships in both the formal and informal sector are registered on the system so that they are able to obtain a nationally-endorsed certificate from BMET on completion of their training.

#### Up-scaling of ILO's Quality Apprenticeship Model:

With the project support, BMET developed training courses for apprentices in five key formal sectors namely agro-food processing, ceramics, furniture, pharmaceuticals as well as tourism and hospitality. Collaboration with Industry Skills Councils helps ensure that the competencies included in the apprenticeships meet the needs of employers.

#### Introduced a systemic approach to apprenticeship training:

Each registered apprentice now receives a log book in which their step-by-step progress is documented. As apprentices work, they master various competencies under the direction of a master craftsperson or supervisor who assesses their ability to carry out the specific tasks. In addition, apprentices also receive classroom-based training on soft skills such as numeracy, literacy and occupational safety and health. Supervisors and master craftsmen have also been given training on how to carry out training delivery and competency assessments. The resources have been aligned with industry approved BTEB standards.



## Piloting an apprenticeship programme in the formal and informal sectors:

The pilot programme has seen 6,000 young people ( 27% female) receive formal workplace-based training at more than 90 companies in five sectors in collaboration with the Bangladesh Employers Federation and Industry Skills Councils. Meanwhile, informal sector apprenticeships launched in collaboration with the Access to Information (a2i) programme and a partner organization Bace in 55 upazilas (sub districts) have seen a further 6,000 men and women (29% female) trained in 25 occupations including motorcycle repair, beauty care, electronics etc. The project also trained more than 100 supervisors / Master Craftsperson in the formal sector and more than 2,000 in the informal sectors in almost 1400 Micro and Medium enterprises.

## How can this approach be replicated?

ILO's apprenticeship initiatives have proven successful in terms of skills development as per industry demand, partnerships, job placements and decent work. If there is willingness between enterprises and training institutes apprenticeships can be initiated relatively easily. The steps that industry can take to replicate this model include:



> Companies which wish to learn more about how to run an apprenticeship programme should contact the BMET apprenticeship cell.



> Companies should actively seek to forge links with TVET institutes which will be able to provide support on many aspects of running apprenticeships.



> Companies should advertise apprenticeship positions widely to recruit new workers and efforts should be made to ensure opportunities for all – men and women including people with disabilities.



> Companies should assign designated supervisors for the selected number of apprentices. Ten to 20 apprentices would be trained by each designated supervisor.



> Certified apprentices can be offered to continue work in the respective workplace or provided the chance to explore further training or employment opportunities.



> Companies need a clear plan on how they will incorporate apprenticeships in the workplace. The plan should take into account issues such as equipment, raw materials, trained supervisors, training facilities and materials and safe working conditions.



> Companies need to have staff such as supervisors and master craftsmen who are able to support apprentices to follow competency-based learning materials. BTEB and BMET officials can provide support to companies in this regard.



> The names of workers hired as apprentices must submitted to BMET for registration.



> Companies should follow-up and monitor progress of training both on the job and off the job (for soft skills) on a routine basis and also support BMET and TVET authorities to monitor training progress in workplaces.



## What needs to be done for up scaling and sustainability?

While apprenticeships offer excellent potential to meet skills shortages, provide practical route to skills training and help forge links between institutes and industries, a number of challenges still need to be addressed if the model is to be scaled up. These are as follows:

### Skills governance for apprenticeship programmes:



Amend the apprenticeship act and rules through social dialogue engaging the government, industry and trade union to design an apprenticeship system; provide adequate incentives and determine relevant government authorities for administering and monitoring apprenticeship programmes, certification and job placement as per nationally agreed recommendations and strategies.



Include informal sector apprenticeships while amending the rules and institutionalize apprenticeship programmes in informal economy.



Determine the government authority who will (a) motivate and mobilize industries for introducing an apprenticeship programme, (b) provide technical support to industries for training the supervisors/Master Crafts Persons, develop learning materials/log books and (c) provide handholding support to industries implementing apprenticeship programmes.



Introduce a funding mechanism in the recently set-up National Human Resource Development Fund for apprenticeship programmes and provide financial support to TVET institutes to cover the cost of soft skills training that is an integral part of an apprenticeship.



Establish a system for creating awareness among TVET graduates and employed workers to join apprenticeship programme for skills up-gradation to promote lifelong learning.

### Apprenticeship programme operation:



Set-up a mechanism for creating awareness or social marketing the apprenticeship programme among new market entrants and the existing workforce to direct them to industries offering apprenticeship programmes.



Sensitize and motivate industries in all industry sectors so they are more aware of the benefits of running an apprenticeship programme for both new and existing staff.



Engage social partners promoting apprenticeship programmes among new market entrants.



Create a sector specific classified directory of industries promoting apprenticeship programmes.



Continue the social dialogue with Government, employers and workers organizations to ensure their involvement and support.



Promote inclusion of women, persons with disabilities, indigenous communities, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups by engaging social partners and relevant government departments such as Directorate of Women Affairs, Directorate of Social Services etc.



Formal training institutions should make provisions for short term training in skills areas suitable for apprentices already engaged in informal employment, so they can upgrade their skills and raise their productivity.



Stronger coordination between BTEB, TVET institutes and Industry Skills Councils should be promoted so that new apprenticeship competency standards can be developed in areas that meet industry needs.

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