



## English Education and Unemployment in Bangladesh: A Study at the H.S.C. Level

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**ABSTRACT:** In Bangladesh, students complete their higher secondary level of education at 18 to 20 years. Most of them want to start earning side-by-side with their higher education for various reasons. However, the students need to have the necessary skills in the English language to start their professional life or be successful in earning related activities. This mixed-method study tried to determine whether the English education imparted at the Higher Secondary (H.S.C.) stage in Bangladesh develops students' necessary English language skills to competently involve themselves in professional life. It also tried to find out if there is any relation between English education and unemployment of youth who aspire to earn after H.S.C. The study conducted a questionnaire survey with 25 students from rural areas and 25 students from urban areas and semi-structured interviews with ten (10) students; 5 from those two groups. The participants had completed the H.S.C. level of education and wanted to earn. The study found that most of the teachers did not consider the professional life of the students while teaching English. Instead, they taught English to the tests. At the same time, students remained busy following their teachers' instructions and preparing them for the examinations. The researcher recommends that the government take the necessary steps to develop a career-oriented English language curriculum for the students at the H.S.C. level, train the teachers, and strengthen monitoring and assessment procedures regarding the implementation of the adopted curriculum at the H.S.C. level.

**Keywords-** English education, Higher Secondary Level, Unemployment

### I. INTRODUCTION

The education system of Bangladesh covers primary, secondary, higher secondary, and tertiary levels. English is taught as a mandatory subject in each level of education. English has a high value in every sector for its social and economic merit. Issues related to meeting the increased demand for English need to be addressed. Education is the key factor in leading individuals forward to have access to open opportunities. Ever-growing firm thinking about the power and strength of English has made it more valuable to the policymakers of every field of profession. So, the students need to be skilled enough at all four English language skills. According to Rashed (2012), English has been mandatory in every level of education to make the students skilled to cope with the global job market. As a standard communication tool, English is used in business, tourism, and science (Majanen, 2008).

Although English curriculum at the H.S.C. and S.S.C. levels has been adapted several times to cope with the practical demands of time (Salminen, L., Charles, M., Kankaanranta, A. 2005:404), employers are frequently perplexed about the practical skills of young people because of their school and college education systems are not profession-oriented.

In many cases, they are not eager to train the young people as they usually get trained, unemployed people. So, they think it is a waste of time and recourse to invest for the young unskilled people. In most cases, youth lack information and network for different reasons, including low social and economic background. For those practical reasons, English has taken the highest position as a language to perform better in jobs and business (Hamid, 2011; Hamid & Jahan, 2015).

In this post-modern era of a continuous shift in every sector, the education system, including curriculum, teaching-learning way, etc., is also changing with different theories and technologies. It is the role of the curriculum to integrate the necessary issues so that learners can enrich them with both the practical and theoretical knowledge that will assist them in playing the perfect role in the job market and the arena of entrepreneurship. The curriculum should be equipped with the important aspect of lifelong practical learning engagement. Planners of the curriculum should keep in mind the things that will assist the learners in going forward successfully towards their ultimate goal in their professional life. According to (Sadiq, 2005), Curriculum planners should focus on the necessary, practical, and applicable phenomena for the learners to meet their demand and attentiveness. These phenomena will make the learners be skilled with 'life skills.' UNESCO (2003) referred to life skills to be connected to both the psychological and social skills to deal with the intellectual and rational procedure and act smartly in dealing with social and cultural activities as a part of the society they belong. Life skills have a significant role in transforming gained knowledge, view, and merit according to the actual need. World Health Organization (1999) defined basic/life skills as the potential to meet the continuous challenges they face to lead an everyday life. These skills are connected to social and psychological skills enabling the individuals to act accordingly towards critical thinking and problem-solving in everyday life. So, it is important to arrange equal access to education for all, including young and adults (the Republic of Kenya, 2007). According to World Bank Report (2019), one-third of the graduate students do not get a job just after their graduate study, and nineteen percent of college graduates get part-time or full-time work after finishing college years. The other more significant portion cannot avail of job opportunities after H.S.C. graduation. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, almost half of the college graduates do not get a job for the lack of professional and practical knowledge

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to (The Economist, 2013; World Bank, 2013), several previous studies show that students are not skilled enough to cope with the job demand with their education. Specifically, among the developing and least developed countries, South Asian countries have a more significant number of unemployed youth. In the case of Bangladesh, compared to the youth living inside the country, the semi-educated or uneducated Bangladeshi youth workers are earning more outside the country, which has a significant impact on G.D.P. (World Bank, 2013). According to (U.N., "world Youth report, 2012), almost more than seventy million youth (Aged 15-24) were seen unemployed in the year of 2013. Even, study shows that youth around the age of twenty are marked with the highest unemployment rate compared to twenty-five and above (United Nations Development Program, 2013). Omolo (2010) carried out a study showing that part-time or semi-formal works are not taken as a stable profession by the job-seeker in most cases. Posner (2004) conducted a survey exploring that the traditional education system is confined to formal and theoretical lectures, leading students to memorize rather than become skilled in practical and innovative activities. That is the core reason for their unemployment. According to Kotloff (2004), youth unemployment is a burden or wastage of wealth towards economic growth. It is also unfolded that though there is a high unemployment rate, several employers are looking for skilled candidates. Unfortunately, they are not getting such candidates according to their expectations.

According to (Hamid, 2006; Hamid & Jahan, 2015), while Bangladesh emphasizes English education from primary to secondary levels, the curriculum and teaching strategy vary from medium to medium

(English Medium, Bangla Medium, Madrasha, English Version, and so on), and thus the outcome varies. Bangladesh is still facing a significant challenge in youth employment, as revealed by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' Labor Force Survey (2015). (B.B.S.). According to the survey, the youth unemployment rate in Bangladesh is the highest (B.B.S., 2015). The study also revealed that the traditional education system, including English education in Bangladesh, is not effectively preparing the youth to play their proper roles in the professional sectors. According to (Basak, 2013), the labor market is not being enriched by skilled youth despite increasing numbers. Khan (2007) researched how the English curriculum should be designed. They keep in mind that our students are non-native speakers who must learn the language through a sophisticated learning process to use English for its intended purpose.

### III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i. To determine the need for the potential for H.S.C. passed students to earn money
- ii. To look into the significance of starting to make money
- iii. To see if classroom education helps students build the English language abilities they'll need in the workplace.

### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study chose the Mixed Method Approach, including qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The qualitative procedure included a semi-structured interview, and the quantitative procedure included a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire survey was conducted with 25 learners from rural areas and 25 from urban areas and semi-structured interviews with 10 students; 5 from those two groups. The participants had completed H.S.C. level of education and wanted to start earning. The questionnaire participants had already completed the higher secondary level of education and wanted to start earning. Among them, ten students were chosen for an interview. The researcher ensured that the participants' economic, social and academic backgrounds were identical. The questionnaire included eight items covering the most important issues regarding English education and unemployment. The questionnaire was set to have data indicating the opinion of the participants varying from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Data was collected using technological means. The researcher conducted interviews that included key questions and follow-up questions for deeper insights into the issues. The interview was semi-structured. SPSS 24.0 was used to analyze the data obtained by the questionnaire survey, and content analysis was used to analyze interview data.

### V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 5.1 Findings from Student Questionnaire

The researcher conducted a questionnaire survey for collecting quantitative data. The analysis result has been shown briefly in the table below.

Statements	Percentage		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Having expectation of Earning	86%	2%	12%
Having earning opportunities	76%	12%	12%
Achieving adequate language skills at the H.S.C. level	28%	14%	56%

Poor English language skills causes my unemployment	66%	10%	24%
HSC English textbooks include professional English	8%	12%	80%
Tests included four language skills	12%	10%	78%
Teachers teach to the tests	56%	26%	18%
Workshops/seminars on professional development in colleges	12%	6%	82%

The first statement of the questionnaire attempted to determine whether or not the students completing H.S.C. intended to begin working. According to the analysis, 86 percent of the students had earnings expectations/necessities. The second statement asked if the students had many opportunities to earn money. A significant proportion of 76 percent of students agreed that they had a chance to earn money. On the other hand, the following statements were about their high school English skills and their unemployment. The analysis of those statements reveals that most students believe they did not acquire adequate English language skills at the H.S.C. level, which is a major barrier to earning related activities.

Statement five tried to determine whether the NCTB English Textbook for Class 11 & 12 included professional English covering all language skills. The majority of the students said that the English Textbook had nothing to do with developing their professional language skills. The students opined that the English language tests did not include speaking and listening, which is a problem.

Statement seven was related to the teaching techniques of the teachers. In response to this statement, 56% of the students agreed that the teachers taught only the tests. The test statement was related to arranging workshops/seminars/other professional development activities during college life. The majority of the students said that they did not have any experience attending any professional development activities during their academic life.

## 5.2 Findings from Student Interview

The researcher interviewed ten students who also participated in the questionnaire survey. The majority of the students were from low-income or middle-income families. They had motivation for learning since their families' low income. They wanted to start earning side by side with their higher education. Most of them explored which job or earning opportunities were available for them. They found that they could begin freelancing data entry, online business independently for earning. They could also find a tourist guide, waiter, receptionist, salesperson etc. They found that English skills were essential for those mentioned above. However, they lacked in English skills that resulted in low confidence level for starting professional life. They were always anxious about their English language ability and demotivated to face any job interview. Some of them faced interviews but were rejected for their poor English language proficiency. As a result, they believed that their unemployability resulted from their inadequate English language skills. Most of the students believed that the NCTB English Textbook for Classes 11 & 12, teachers' teaching techniques, testing, and curriculum should be professional-oriented. They also suggested that the authority of the H.S.C. level colleges should arrange workshops, seminars and conferences on employment and profession-related issues.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i) English language Textbooks at the H.S.C. level should be adapted according to the professional needs of the learners.

- ii) College authorities should regularly arrange different workshops/seminars and other relevant co-curricular activities on professional development.
- iii) English curriculum at the H.S.C. level should be designed considering the professional needs of the students.
- iv) English language assessment for the H.S.C. level students should include all four language skills.
- v) The college authorities should create opportunities for the students to get connected to the people who are successful in different professions.
- vi) College authorities should arrange job fair at college campus on regular basis.
- vii) College authorities should send their students to different business organization/factories/companies to have real life experience of professional life.
- viii) Authorities should improve overall monitoring and assessment of English curriculum implementation.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Education in the twenty-first century is progressing toward ensuring Sustainable Development (S.D.G.). Curriculums, materials, and tests should be designed to ensure that students develop 21st-century skills. In countries where English is a second/foreign language, things become more complicated because most jobs and professional activities require English skills. English curriculums, syllabuses, materials, testing, and should include real-life skill development activities in this globalized world. The current study attempted to determine the current relationship between unemployment and H.S.C. English language skills. The study's findings are somewhat discouraging, indicating that the English education system is still not professional friendly.

**Data Sharing:** The datasets analyzed during this study are available from the authors on reasonable request.

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