

Mid-level management skills in RMG sector

Dr. Md. Nurul Islam
Director
Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training

The readymade garments industry has become one of the major working wheels of Bangladesh economy. The industry has been making crucial contribution to building the country and its economy which is now the single biggest export earner for Bangladesh with value of over \$25.49bn of exports in 2014-15 financial year. The sector accounts for 81% of total export earnings of the country. Despite many difficulties faced by the sector over the past years, it has carved a niche in world market and kept continuing to show robust performance. Since the early days, different motivation contributed to the development of the industry at various stages. The industry that has changed lives of millions of people has undergone significant transformation in terms of workplace safety and worker's rights.

On its way to success the RMG industry faced a number of challenges. Ready-made garment sector is lacking skills required to make better quality cloths that could give higher revenue and it is high time to address the shortage of skilled manpower particularly at the mid-level managers. Bangladesh supplies mainly basic low-cost garments with low value addition. The high-end market niches, which demand high value addition and high quality, are still beyond the reach of the RMG manufacturers due to the lack of managerial skill in this sector. At the industry level, the production efficiency is as low as 20% to a ceiling of 40% at a few factories and efficiency can easily be increased to 50% through some fundamental training. The lack of qualified mid-level managers is a key constraint to the growth and diversification of Bangladesh's export oriented RMG and textile sector. Shortage of skills holds back productivity and consequently, workers' incomes, and as such needs to be urgently addressed.

At present, about 20,000 foreign nationals mainly from India and Sri Lanka are working in the country's RMG sector at various managerial posts ranging from mid-level management to top level executives.

A few approaches have been taken to provide skill-building training to the mid-level managers of the ready-made garment sector through the donor assistance. BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology (BUFT) aimed to produce technically competent human resources for the RMG sector of the country. BUFT is offering 2 year MBA degree course in Apparel Merchandising and 4 year B.Sc courses in Apparel Manufacture & Technology, Knitwear Manufacture & Technology and Fashion Design & Technology, Textile Engineering, Textile Management, Bachelor of Business Administration along with 1 year Diploma courses in Apparel Merchandising, Apparel

Manufacture Technology and Apparel Engineering & Production Planning. 6 months certificate courses in Woven Garment Merchandising, knitwear Merchandising, Sweater Merchandising, Fashion Design Technology, Quality Control & Compliance in Apparel Industry, Production Management, Enterprise & Resources planning and 3 months short courses in Sewing Machinery Maintenance, Computer Aided Design, Modern Dying-Printing & Finishing Technology, Pattern Cutting, Production Management.

The issue came up frequently in meetings during the scoping mission of Dr. Ron Titus was the large gap in management and supervisory skills, particularly in the RMG sector. It was stated by many stakeholders that management training was missing in TVET Institutions resulting in a lack of efficient human resources management in Bangladesh industry at the managerial level.