

## **Challenges of Career Development in Bangladesh**

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### **Abstract**

Sustainable development is very important for developing countries like Bangladesh for peaceful life of its citizens. For this, it needs planned development process and to materialize this process, skilled human resources are necessary. Therefore, planning for skilled human resource is pivotal and one of the major essential components for sustainable development. It is also a part of individual's career development plan. As planning is very important to run or manage an organization properly, it is also essential for every human being to chalk out a career plan that is needed not only for his or her own but for family, society as well as national development. Moreover, career planning is very important for skilled human resource which is indispensable for development of a country. Presently, Bangladesh is enjoying 'demographic dividend' and it is said that if this opportunity is capitalized, it would bring rapid national development as expected and set by the vision 2021. But is there any formal career planning mechanism in Bangladesh? Is there any specialized institution in the country which can play vital role to design career for human resource development? What are the essential components for career planning? Are the existing institutions playing their proper role for career planning or development in the country? This article explores answers to these questions and finds that there is neither formal mechanism nor specialized institution in the country. Educational institutions are playing limited role in this regard. They provide certificates as a qualification for career development or employment. Some private institutions are offering career planning tips commercially. Methodologically, however, this scholarship is qualitative in nature and both primary and secondary data have been used to prepare this article.

**Keywords:** Career Development, Planning, Education, Bangladesh

### **1. Introduction**

Sustainable development is very important for developing countries like Bangladesh for prosperous and peaceful life of its citizens. For this, planned development process is needed and to materialize this process, skilled human resources are urgently needed. Therefore, planning for skilled human resource is pivotal and one of the major essential components for sustainable development. It is also a part of individual's career development plan. Career planning is not an easy task. It depends on individual's needs, aspirations and skills. Despite such parameters, scope of employment opportunity of territory diktats very much in

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designing career plan of individuals. Besides, it is obvious that educational qualification, in many cases, cannot provide career guarantee. Special training, abilities, skills and so on often appears very much influential indicators in regard to career planning. According to Edgar Schein career planning is a continuous process of discovery in which an individual develops his own occupational concept as a result of skills or abilities, needs, motivations and aspirations (Manolescu 2003 cited in Antonie, E. 2010, 13-14). It can be said that career planning is a dream of individuals which would be accepted as profession in future. But the dream is dreamt in the context of society, territory, economic condition, employment opportunity and state's mechanism. In developing countries like Bangladesh, career planning is simply viewed as future profession which would be instrument of earning for living of an individual.

However, in 1971, Bangladesh was born as war ravaged country. The socio-economic conditions were very miserable. Shortly after independence of the country, people experienced famine. During this period the country was labeled 'bottomless basket.' In addition, the political situation was also volatile. After forty years, however, Bangladesh is now a 'role model' country in many cases in the world. The country has already achieved most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and captured international recognition. In spite of such achievements, the country still lags behind in many indicators especially governance indicator in the world. On the other hand, despite being a small country, it has a huge population. Consequently, it faces multiple difficulties in terms of providing quality education, employment opportunities, skill development, and so on. Yet, with the demand of time, education and employment sectors have been widened. New area of job markets is explored. In this respect, information and communication technology (ICT) plays a great role to expand employment opportunities in the country. Despite such expansion of employment sectors, two types of reality are widely discussed. Firstly, the employers claim that they do not get qualified graduates to be employed, and, secondly, on the other hand, the job seekers demand that they are not being evaluated properly for any employment. They claim, further, that they are deprived of getting job due to various reasons such as nepotism, favoritism, corruption, bribery, and so on. However, scarcity of employment opportunity is another problem. But Islam reveals that in most of the cases, the job seekers do not get jobs according to their own choice owing to lack of their career planning (Islam, 2015). So, this scholarship investigates that when and how the process of career planning is started. What factors are considered as determinants to design career plan. Is there any specialized institution which works for designing career plan for human resource development in Bangladesh?

### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

Career development planning is a very important factor for an individual. So, it should be designed carefully. If it is not done properly, frustration grips

graduates. It is found in the report of The Economist. According to the news of The Economist (cited in the Prothom Alo, 2 March 2014), 47% graduates are unemployed in the country. It indicates that, among many others, it happens due to lack of proper career development planning.

## **1.2 Significance of the study**

Training is very important to make human being as skilled human resources that lead the country towards sustainable development rapidly. It begins during undertaking formal education as pre-service training. This leads proper guideline for future career development plan of an individual. For this, proper initiatives should be undertaken based on aspiration, skill and capability. This scholarship, it is believed, would contribute to take policy initiatives in this regard.

## **1.3 Objective of the study**

The fundamental objective of this article is to explore to what extent career planning is important for human resource development in Bangladesh. The specific objectives are to:

- Know the career planning process
- Explore the career planning problems

To materialize these objectives, some research questions have been set. These include:

- Is there any formal career development planning mechanism in Bangladesh?
- Is there any specialized institution which can play vital role to design career plan for human resource development in Bangladesh?

## **2.0 Methodology**

Methodologically, this scholarship is qualitative in nature. The logic for the choice of a qualitative study lied with the research problems dealing mostly with 'why' and 'how' questions. This research explored the specific case as a whole and was able to manage the systematic control over the sources of variation and make an understanding of the process of career development challenges in Bangladesh. It is, however, an output of a study which was conducted in 2015 to know graduates' perception about their career development plan. Participants of this study were graduated from Dhaka University and Rajshahi University. A total of 40 graduates, 20 from each university, were interviewed, administering close-ended and open-ended questionnaire. Moreover, four FGDs (two in Rajshahi University and Two in Dhaka University) were

conducted to explore career development phenomenon in Bangladesh. The selection of sample size is made on the basis of cost and time frame limitation. The sample selection has been done simply randomly and purposively to get information easily.

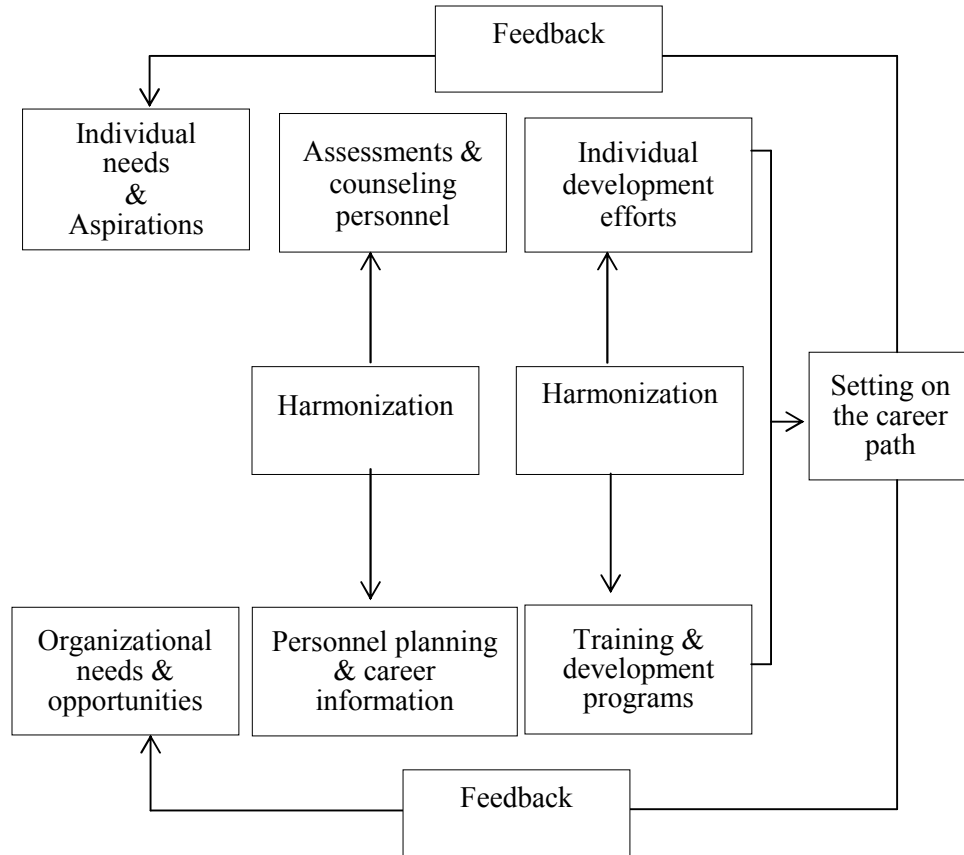
However, as it is mainly based on primary data, different methods have been used to collect primary data. These are: (a) Open-ended and closed ended questionnaire survey (b) In-depth Interview (c) Focus Group Discussion, and (d) Observation. These data collection techniques are used to get quality and qualitative data. Open-ended and closed ended questionnaire techniques have been used to collect general information easily. On the other hand, in-depth interview is very important to explore and get the real information about the research issue. Through this interview, researcher can realize the intensity, insight story, degree of untold history or so on of respondents and research issue. So, for qualitative research it is very much effectual. Besides, focus group discussion makes a clear conception about ambiguity of data and it also paves the way of cross-check of data. Nobody can deny or ignore the scene that has been seen by own eye. Observation does the same. Moreover, gestures of respondents reveal much information. So, researcher cannot keep eyes closed during his/her research or field visit to collect primary data. Therefore, it can be said that these data collection tools are very convenient for getting and collecting qualitative data. In addition, secondary data and experiences have also been accounted to prepare this piece of reading.

### **3.0 Definition of key term: Career development planning**

Career planning is perceived as self-generated career development goals of individuals that are spiritual in nature. However, the following figure 1 shows us career planning process. It is a general perception about career planning process. The figure illustrates that:

'the career planning process involves both the organization and the individual responsibility. Thus, the individuals must identify their aspirations and abilities, and through assessment and counseling to understand their needs of training and development; the organization needs to identify its needs and opportunities, to plan its employees and to ensure its staff the necessary information and appropriate training for career development (Antoniou, E. 2010, 14)'

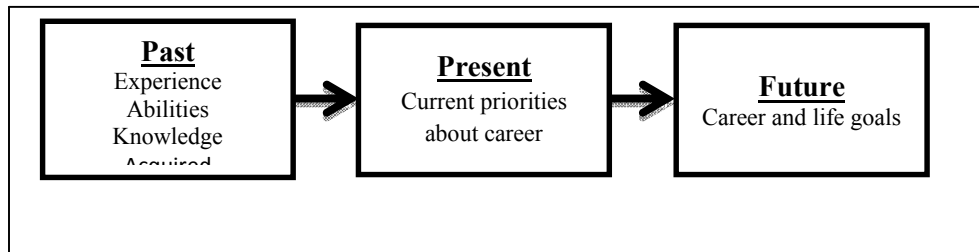
Figure1. The career planning process



Source: Adopted from: J. M. Ivancevich and W. F. Glueck, in AurelManolescu- Human Resource Management (cited in Antoniu, E. 201, 14).

Moreover, there are two approaches to career planning (Manolescu, 2003 cited in Antoniu, E. 2010, 16), depending on the emphasis on the needs of the organization or on the individual objectives. According to Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2005, individual perspective on career is determined by the status of the individual professional and personal life, age, family circumstances, financial expectations, desired lifestyle, etc. (Cited in Antoniu, E. 2010, 16). It can be shown in the following figure 2.

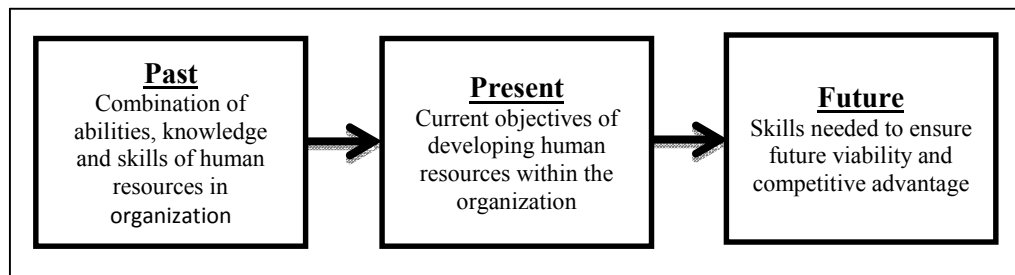
Figure 2 Individual's perspective on career



Source: Adopted from Antoniu, E. 2010, 17

On the other hand, organizational career planning has a critical role in attracting, developing and maintaining the staff (Antoniou, E. 2010, 17). It depends on organizational structure, economic strength, technological advancement, and so on. Many employers offer numerous opportunities, including promotion, to its employees for better achievement of the organizational goals. The following figure 3 shows the organizational perspective on career.

Figure 3 Organization's perspective on career



Source: Adopted from Antoniu, E. 2010, 17

After aforesaid discussions it is evident that career development planning is mainly a combination of individual's needs and aspirations along with the objectives of an organization.

#### 4.0 Data analysis

Career development planning is designed with the needs, aspirations and motivations of individuals. It is also influenced by existing circumstances of an environment. To know the career development planning process in the context

of Bangladesh, a study was conducted and it revealed that in many cases, especially it is found among the graduates of Rajshahi University, there is no specific career plan. It happened due to lack of clear perception about job markets or employment sectors. However, data gathered in this regard are presented below.

Table 4.1 Number of participants in the study

University	N	M	F	Business graduates	Social Science graduates	Arts/Humanities Graduates
Rajshahi University	20	10	10	6 (F-3, M-3)	8 (F-4, M-4)	6 (F-3, M-3)
Dhaka University	20	10	10	6 (F-3, M-3)	8 (F-4, M-4)	6 (F-3, M-3)
	40	20	20	12	16	12

Source: Author, field survey, N=total number of respondents, F denotes Female, M refers Male.

Table 4.1 presents that total number of participants under this study was 40. Among them, 20 were male and the rest 20 were female. Of them, 16 graduates belonged to social science, 12 were business graduates and the rest 12 were arts/humanities graduates. Under this study, graduates under science faculty, agriculture faculty, fine arts faculty, and engineering faculty were not included due to time limit and cost-involvement.

The study was conducted to know general perception about career development planning and job market in Bangladesh. It is qualitative in nature. For this four focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted to understand deeply the perception of graduates' about their career development plan and employment opportunities in the country. It was also tried to know the level of awareness of graduates about different categories and status of employment opportunities in Bangladesh. However, graduates from Dhaka University are more conscious about their career than the graduates of Rajshahi University.

However, this study reveals a comparative scenario about career development planning. Primarily, career development in Bangladesh is like a 'bread for living. It is not like a 'chocolate' for pleasure. So, individuals plan their career but it does not happen in a planned way. Moreover, there exists central and peripheral phenomenon in designing career plan. Graduates from Dhaka University are in better position in terms of career development planning

compared to Rajshahi University. In addition, groups of secondary school certificate (SSC) and higher secondary certificate (HSC) are very vital to determine the career plan in Bangladesh. However, when interviewed, graduates of Dhaka University seemed more confident compared to their counterparts of Rajshahi University. Why has it happened? Replying to this query, graduates of Rajshahi University argue that all sorts of career development oriented facilities are available in Dhaka. They (Rajshahi University graduates) enjoy such types of facilities very limited. When asked about technological advancement and facilities in the job market and employment opportunities, graduates of Rajshahi University again claim that they lag behind their counterparts in Dhaka University due to shortage of practical opportunities.

On the other hand, female graduates of Rajshahi University are more vulnerable compared to Dhaka University. Because, although the female graduates are allowed to pursue higher study at Rajshahi University, their parents are not interested to allow them to build their career based in Dhaka, they assert. However, in designing career plan, the graduates of Rajshahi University seemed to be indifferent. The study reveals that they are very much interested to complete their graduation and post-graduation degree first. Then, they think about career and try for job. When asked about future career one of my students said after completion of his honours graduation he wanted to be a sub-inspector (SI) of police. It reveals that they do not have clear idea about employment sector or status of job. Generally, graduates of Rajshahi University know about Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS), primary school, secondary school and college, bank and company jobs. But they do not know details about status or position in terms of rank, gazette, non-gazette, cadre, non-cadre jobs in the government services. Due to lack of such type of knowledge, graduates of Rajshahi University, in many cases, cannot design proper career development plan. Besides, they just want job after completion of their graduation. It happened as most of the individuals come from middle class of the society, it revealed.

Graduates of Dhaka University, however, seemed smart in terms of their career development thinking. During FGD, it is revealed that they all have fixed their future career plan. Now they are trying to materialize it. It is revealed that many graduates designed their career plan that can be achieved before completion of their master degree. They appear at BCS examination and many of them managed to get their expected jobs before leaving their hall (residential hall of university). The graduates belonging to arts and social science, start their career plan from the very beginning of their university life. Surrounding environment motivates them to do so, it is observed. It is also observed that many graduates plan for higher study abroad which is generally absent among the graduates of Rajshahi University. To pursue higher study abroad, Dhaka University graduates take extra preparation for getting scholarship. They complete IELTS, TOEFL, GRE, GMAT and so on. Besides, they engage in



different activities such as tuition, part-time research, part-time job, and so on. Such types of opportunities and facilities are not available in Rajshahi.

Although they seemed confident, there is some confusion to reach their destination. According to the news of The Economist (cited in the ProthomAlo, 2 March 2014), 47% graduates are unemployed in the country. Moreover, respondents participated in FGD said that corruption, nepotism, favoritism as well as quota system in most cases appear as major problems to materialize their career development plan in the government services. Under this circumstance, many of Dhaka University graduates are now interested in private sector employment as in many cases it is free from corruption and offers higher financial benefits and other facilities.

The study also reveals that graduates from arts group face multiple difficulties in terms of designing their career plan. They have limited career opportunity compared to science, commerce and social science graduates.

It is further observed that as first choice graduates mostly try for class-I cadre service through BCS examination which is conducted by the Public Service Commission (PSC). It is evident to see the increasing number of candidates every year in the BCS examination. According to the official record, a total of applicants were 146167 in the 31<sup>st</sup> BCS preliminary examination against the post of 2909 (PSC annual reports 2012, 10). In 33<sup>rd</sup> BCS preliminary examination, the total applicants were 193059 against the post of 8077 and in 34<sup>th</sup> BCS preliminary examination, the number of applicants was 221575 against the post of 2052 (PSC annual reports 2013, 11-12).

So, it is observed that graduates' first choice is to be BCS cadre officer in Bangladesh. But in many cases they become frustrated for the lengthy process of final selection.

However, ten economic zones were inaugurated on February 28, 2016 by the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (ProthomAlo, 29 February 2016). It is supposed that by laying foundation stones of such kind of economic zones, huge employment opportunities would be created. But it is not clear to us that what kind of employment opportunities would be created. What kind of human resource would be needed? In the seventh five-year plan (2016-2020), it is forecasted that the share of employment opportunities in the manufacturing sector will be increased from 15 to 20 percent during this period (GoB 2015, xxxviii).

It needs, however, specific sectors so that individuals can design their career development plan based on needs, aspirations, skills as well as job security, promotion prospect and so on.

## 5. Discussion and interpretation

### Career Development Planning in Bangladesh: Process and Problems

There is a well-known proverb 'Education is the backbone of a nation.' So, education is the key determinant to design career plan irrespective of any nation or country. However, in Bangladesh career planning process mainly begins at secondary level, Secondary School Certificate (SSC) when students have no idea about their career development without a dream only. So, at this stage they dream only, observing surrounding context, nothing else.

But in the context of Bangladesh this stage is very important for designing career development plan. Because students are divided into different groups such as science, commerce, arts/humanities, technical, vocational and so on from class IX. They are divided either by the choice of their parents or teachers, well-wishers, and most importantly the surrounding environment. Parents diktat their kids, teachers influence their students and surrounding environment motivates them to belong to a particular group i. e., science, commerce, humanities, etc. Basically, the influential actors consider that this is high time for their kids to design career development plan here and it is obviously true in the context of Bangladesh. Because, to be a doctor (physician), engineer, pilot, D.C., S. P. (bureaucrats- although at this stage these concepts are not clear among students, even among many parents and teachers), university teacher, barrister, and so on, foundation stone of career development is laid down at this stage. However, table 5.1 shows the socio-background of the respondents, their groups at SSC level and the actors who took decision to choose their group at this stage.

Table 5.1 Respondents' socio-background, group at SSC and actors for choosing this group

Who did decide to take such group	Group at SSC level			Total	
		Arts/Humanities	Science		Commerce
Teacher	Rural	3	8	3	14
	Urban	3	4	3	10
	Total	6	12	6	24
Parents	Rural	2	0	3	5
	Urban	3	3	2	8
	Total	5	3	5	13
Well-wishers (uncle, elderly people of village)	Rural	0	2		2
	Urban	1	0		1
	Total	1	2		3
Total	Rural	5	10	6	21
	Urban	7	7	5	19
	Total	12	17	11	40

Source: Author, field survey

Later, at the stage of higher secondary (HSC) level, in many cases, the future career plan of students is deviated. Many students belonging to science group go to commerce group and many students belonging to commerce group go to humanities group at this level. But there is very little options of the students belonging to humanities group, to change their group. In most cases, results of SSC appear influential factors and to some extent students are compelled for this result to change their group at the HSC level. Here emotion disappears and reality becomes visible to individuals. But this is the final stage for designing future career development plan of individuals. Here the same factors as in SSC level remain active to determine the group at HSC level for future career. Very few students can take their own decision to choose their group that would lead them to build their career in future. The following table 5.2 represents the scenario.

Table 5.2 Respondents' socio-background, group at HSC and actors for choosing this group

Group at HSC level		Who did decide to take this group				Total
		Teacher	Parents	Well-wisher (Uncle, elderly people of village)	Do not know	
Arts/Humanities	Rural	5	2	0	-	7
	Urban	4	3	1	-	8
	Total	9	5	1	-	15
Science	Rural	3	-	2	1	6
	Urban	1	-	0	0	1
	Total	4	-	2	1	7
Commerce	Rural	7	0	-	1	8
	Urban	5	5	-	0	10
	Total	12	5	-	1	18
Total	Rural	15	2	2	2	21
	Urban	10	8	1	0	19
	Total	25	10	3	2	40

Source: Author, field survey

At tertiary level, i. e., university level, graduates finally design their career development plan. But in many cases, students again deviate from their future career plan. Because, limited students get admitted to medical colleges to be future physicians, limited students also get admitted to engineering universities, to be future engineers, although many of them are compelled to choose general job instead of engineering jobs. But a huge number of students get admitted to general universities under different faculties such as science, social science, arts, law, engineering, agriculture, fine arts and so on. At this stage, it is assumed that every individual designs his/her career plan. At this point, parents cannot dictate

their sons and daughters to choose or select their career. At best, they utter or encourage them saying that 'select such type of profession as career or choose it which you consider 'good''. Here teachers cannot influence their students other than encouragement and motivation to design career plan. But the most influential factor is surrounding environment where an individual live, and that leads an individual to design or redesign career plan in Bangladesh. The following table 5.3 presents the factors that dictate to design career plan of the graduates for their future.

Table 5.3 Subject choice at university and Factors dictate for career design plan

Who decided your subject choice at university?		Factors dictate for career design plan			Total
		Family needs	Surrounding environment	Family needs & surrounding environment	
	Teacher	1	3	1	5
	Parents	8	2	3	13
	Own/considering job market	0	2	7	9
	Surrounding environment	3	0	4	7
	University elder brother/sister (known during admission)	1	1	1	3
	Well-wisher (uncle/local elites)	0	0	3	3
Total		13	8	19	40

Source: Author, field survey

The foregoing discussions make it clear that foundation stone of career development plan is laid down by the choice of parents, teachers and well-wishers. And it happens at the early stage of an individual when he/she has no idea about prospects and problems of future career. When an individual realizes it, he has nothing to do to choose as per his choice but to search alternative options of career only. However, the educational institutions can play a vital role to design career plan of an individual. It is found, for example, in the Princeton University. Princeton University under its career services department publishes 'career guide' as a resource for its students to assist them in developing their career plans (Career Guide 2013-2014, available at <http://careerservice.princeton.edu>). Staff of career service department presents more than 250 career-related programs every year, including skill-building workshops, panel events and networking socials, career fair, and visits by graduate and professional schools.

But in Bangladesh, there is no such guideline for students studying in public universities. The higher educational institutions mostly public universities only provide 'graduation, post-graduation certificates after completion of a four-year or one year academic calendar respectively. Obviously, it denotes qualification of an individual for getting or applying for employment. There are student advisor's offices both at Dhaka University and Rajshahi University. But unfortunately it has now become an office of 'political advisor office' and in most cases it deals with political issues with the existing 'political student front' belonging to power party, opposition party and so on. It is very much visible in the campus of Rajshahi University.

On the other hand, some commercial organizations occasionally arrange some events such as job fair in public university campuses for their commercial purposes. However, the private universities in Bangladesh are more advanced in this regard. They often organize such type of program like job fair, career counseling, and so on. It seems that they do that as part of their publicity which ultimately goes to profit making objectives of these institutions.

## **6. Findings**

After foregoing discussions, it is clear that there is no formal career development planning mechanism in Bangladesh. With the needs and aspirations, individuals design their career plan and it is shifted from time to time.

So far as it is known there is no specialized institution in the country which can play a vital role for career development of individuals. The educational institutions which are deemed as formal institutions play limited role in designing career of graduates. It provides graduation certificate which is the foremost requirement for applying and getting jobs. Extra programs like skill development, short course on technical issues, training programs on different matters are not possible alongside the formal education in higher educational institutions in the country.

Human resource development encompasses many issues along with the formal education. It seems the country lacks in this regard due to manifold problems such as huge population, lack of quality education, lack of technical know-how and so on.

In Bangladesh the career planning process begins at the early stage, secondary level, of an individual in which period one cannot take one's own decision in regard to his or her choice. They are compelled to go to a particular section such as science, commerce, arts and so on which ultimately indicates one's future career development plan. However, science graduates have manifold scope in designing career development plan whereas graduates from humanities or arts have limited scope in designing their career plan.

Except few government services such as Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS), at present, educational qualifications are not enough to get jobs. Most of the private employers offer employment opportunities with many extra qualifications such as experience, alongside formal educational qualification. In this regard, the study reveals that the graduates especially of Rajshahi University lag behind of their counterpart Dhaka University graduates.

All educational institutions are considered as career planning institutions in the country. Individuals graduated from these institutions obtain 'certificate' which is deemed basic requirement for getting jobs or designing career in future. Except providing graduation certificate, these institutions have nothing to do in designing career plan of individuals.

Individuals graduated from Dhaka University are smarter than that of Rajshahi University. In many cases, the study reveals, individuals have no clear career plan before completion of their graduation. On the other hand, individuals graduated from Dhaka University design their career development plan from the very beginning of their university life. An individual, for example, graduated from arts group plans to do his or her post-graduation from business group (Master of Business Administration) as this qualification would facilitate to get job or design career plan. This concept is found absent among the graduates of Rajshahi University.

Thinking about future career among the graduates of Rajshahi University is far behind of their counterpart graduates of Dhaka University. It is observed that most of the students of Rajshahi University first plan to complete their honours graduation and master degree. Then they try for getting jobs and get themselves engaged in 'job preparation coaching' either in Rajshahi or in Dhaka. On the other hand, graduates of Dhaka University plan to get job or build their career after completion of their honours graduation as it is terminal degree. Moreover, many graduates of Dhaka University plan to go abroad for higher education which is almost absent among the graduates of Rajshahi University. That means graduates of Dhaka University are highly ambitious in regard to building their future career development whereas this passion is not usually found among the graduates of Rajshahi University.

## **7. Conclusion and recommendation**

### **Conclusion**

Managing jobs and getting employment opportunities are not achievement of career development plan. Not only self-creating employment opportunity but also providing jobs are also achievement of career plan. All these go hand in hand. For this it is needed to design career plan. In the context of Bangladesh, huge employment creation by the government alone is not possible. Private

sectors should come forward with diverse opportunities so that individuals are interested to build their career in this sector. In addition, self-employment opportunities should be created and individuals should be motivated and encouraged to be self-employed. Because, lack of career development planning can lead to frustration that may bring negative consequences on individual's life, family life and so on.

### **Recommendations**

To overcome the limitations regarding career development planning in Bangladesh, revamping of institutional set up is very important. For this, career counseling unit or human resource development unit should be set up at all the higher educational institutions in the country. From this unit, career guideline as like Princeton University as should be published every year. They should arrange different types of career counseling programs. Besides, the government should have a clear target of employment creation for a certain period so that individuals can take decision on the basis of government plan. It is needed because individuals of the country still prefer government jobs to private sector ones for job security and other benefits. Not only government sector but also the private sectors should have job security so that individuals can design their career plan in this sector. Moreover, many career counseling oriented specialized institutions should be set up in different parts, especially at divisional town of the country. Individuals should be offered psychological, managerial, behavioral counseling with respect to career plan. Most importantly, individuals should be encouraged and motivated to build self-employment oriented career. For this, they should be offered different types of facilities such as credit, training, etc .It is needed because only through employment creation it is not possible to meet the growing demand.

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