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## SSC (vocational) to be introduced at 640 schools, madrasas next year

Mohiuddin Alamgir

The government is going to expand technical and vocational education at all general stream schools and madrasas for developing skilled and efficient human resources.

Towards that aim, the education ministry is set to introduce Secondary School Certificate (vocational) at 640 schools and madrasas from next year.

The government will provide teachers and workforce and their monthly pay order facilities if schools and madrasas willingly come forward to introduce SSC (vocational) by setting up laboratories and classrooms.

It is also planning to introduce a compulsory technical course for students of class 6 at all 30,000 schools and madrasas from 2021, top officials of Technical and Madrasah Education Division (TMED) said.

They added that such courses will be offered to students up to class 8 gradually in the following years.

TMED officials said they will also introduce a 100-mark compulsory technical course for all SSC students of science, humanities and business groups so that they have knowledge of at least one technical field.

“We have decided to introduce SSC (vocational) at 522 non-government schools, 100 madrasas and 18 government schools from next year,” TMED Secretary Md Alamgir told The Daily Star.

“We intend to introduce technical course for students of class 6-8 at all general stream educational institutions,” he added.

Alamgir also said introduction of technical course for secondary level students of general stream will be discussed at a meeting today.

“We will not put added pressure on students by introducing new courses,” Alamgir said while answering a question on whether the new subjects will burden students.

He said they are planning to reduce the number of subjects by merging several of them into one or two.

Technical and vocational education would play an important role in creating more skilled manpower, Alamgir explained.

A section of TMED officials, however, were sceptical about introduction of technical course for students of class 6 in 2021, claiming that it would require huge funds.

“These schools and madrasas will need new teachers and have to set up laboratories, classrooms,” said a top official.

Alamgir said they are now estimating how much money will be required and hoped that money will not be a hurdle for the plan.

According to the TMED officials, they will introduce 100 marks for Class 11 students at one go. Students will be given three options and will need to pick one.

Students of classes 9 and 10 will be given 10 options and will need to pick one.

They said the country needs more skilled manpower, and technical education is important to meet that need. Many developed countries have more than 50 percent students under technical education.

Madrasa and technical education officials have said that currently 16 percent students are availing technical and vocational education in the country; the ratio was one percent in 2009.

The government has set up a target to have 20 percent students under technical education by 2020 and 30 percent by 2030.

Many guardians are reluctant about their children receiving technical education as it was traditionally considered for academically weak students and there is a stigma associated with that.

SSC vocational courses at general schools and colleges were introduced in Bangladesh in 2004. Currently 2,30,395 students are enrolled in SSC vocational at 2,711 general schools, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) data.

BANBEIS also said that 10,67,484 students were enrolled in 16 types of 6,865 technical and vocational institutes in 2018.

The numbers of such educational institutions and their students are increasing steadily. Total institutions were 1,137 in 2000, 2,317 in 2003, 5,790 in 2015 and 5,897 in 2017. Total students were 1,16,055 in 2000, 1,88,686 in 2003, 8,72,658 in 2015, 8,75,270 in 2016 and 8,91,964 in 2017.

An overwhelming 95 percent of the institutions are privately managed.

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