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Encouraging Education among Higher Secondary Students through Skills Development Programme in Bangladesh

Kawsar Hossain Sojib[1]
Md. Anowarul Arif Khan[2]
Md. Ashraful Islam[3]
Md. Adnan Al Nahian[4]

Abstract: This paper focuses on the development of skills on entrepreneurial activities among the poor Higher Secondary students alongside their study so that they can bear their education cost and partially support their family. To reduce the dropout rate of the students, a2i and Higher Secondary Stipend Project (HSSP) under Ministry of Education have jointly initiated skills development through stipend programme with training for the higher secondary students of 10 Upazilas of 5 Districts in Bangladesh on a pilot basis. An impact study has been done to see the effectiveness of the training programme in reducing the dropout rate of the students and in developing the entrepreneurial skills of the students to be a part of the supply chain. The study was both qualitative and quantitative in nature and the data collection was done using two-stage stratified sampling method though interviews and observation. The training was provided on the area-specific trades like tailoring, beautification, mobile servicing, nursery, poultry farming, computer and office application, sweet making etc. As a result, the students who received the training are found to be engaged in different economic activities with no dropout rate from education. They have now become able to bear their educational cost and also to supplement their family income.

Keywords: higher secondary stipend, skills development training, entrepreneurial skills, dropout, economic activities.

1. Introduction and Background

1.1. Introduction

In Bangladesh, the dropout rate in higher secondary education is more than 30 percent[5], which is significantly higher than the dropout rate in the secondary education level. Female dropout is comparatively higher than male counterparts. The main reason for this dropout is poverty and poverty related factors. Many practical remedial measures have been taken to attract all the students, including female ones to continue their education and be the part of skilled manpower. To keep this objective or goal alive and in action, Higher Secondary Stipend Project (HSSP) under Ministry of Education stranded

[1] Lecturer, Department of Economics, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka.
Email: kawsar.sojib@juniv.edu

[2] Results Management Expert, Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Programme, ICT Division, 14/X, ICT Tower, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka

[3] Programme Assistant, Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Programme, ICT Division, E-14/X, ICT Tower, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka

[4] Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka.

[5] https://a2i.pmo.gov.bd/skills-education/

functioning, providing a stipend at the higher secondary and higher education level. Remedial measures have been taken so that the deprived students do not dropout of higher secondary education due to financial insolvency. Under this project, the government gives stipend and other financial facilities to 40% of female students and 10% of male students admitted in HSC level. So that the poor students have got the opportunity to continue their education.

A baseline study has been conducted entitled "Skills Development of Higher Secondary Students through Stipend Program". It shows that many higher secondary students drop out before and after completing HSC and they become unemployed due to lack of vocational skills and entrepreneurship training. According to the policy makers and experts, besides taking part in general education, a student can take a market oriented short term vocational and technical training with soft and hard skills inbuilt in the training programme. This programme will decrease the dropout rate since students can earn in his student life through self-employment or part time job after completion of the training. Even in the long run the stipend can be provided based on successful completion of vocational training. The Access to Information (a2i) Programme of Prime Minister's Office in collaboration with Higher Secondary Stipend Project (HSSP) of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) has taken an initiative to integrate skills development programme with the stipend of higher secondary students as the pilot. The objectives of this initiative are to provide entrepreneurial skills development for the higher secondary students alongside stipend, to create earning scopes for the higher secondary students alongside their education, to increase the enrollment of female students in higher secondary education and to reduce drop out in higher secondary education.

The piloting of the programme has been completed in 10 Upazillas of the country. The Upazillas are Khaliajuri of Netrokona, Ishwardi of Pabna, Kamarkhand of Sirajganj, Tetulia of Panchagarh, Sadar of Lalmonirhat, Swarupkathi of Pirojpur, Kalapara of Patuakhali, Morelganj of Bagerhat and Batiaghata of Khulna District. This impact study has been done to compare the situation before and after. A sample of 78 disadvantageous poor students along with their parents, college teachers, trainers from 6 Upazilas among the piloted Upazilas have been interviewed in this regard. The study shows that the students have been provided self-employment and income generating skills. The significant trades are Computer and Office application, Computer Servicing, Beautification, Sweet making, Tailoring, Dress making, Mobile Servicing, Nursery, Poutry farming etc. After successful completion of the training, students are earning money by starting their own business or doing part time job alongside of their education and contributing to their family. Since the pilot programme was a successful one, now the Government is planning to expand the programme in all Upazilas of the country.

1.2. Literature Review

A bunch of theoretical and empirical efforts has been made to assess the impact of technical vocational education and training in various settings. This section of the paper discusses the literature related to the impact of entrepreneurial training on skills development among students. It particularly focuses on the effectiveness of the training programme, modes, and trades of the training programs for students and the importance of entrepreneurial training for students.

It has been considered worldwide that vocational education and entrepreneurial trainings are the major driving forces to engage the youth population in productive lively hoods. This type of training and education in other sense make the youth confident enough to be self-employed or viable to career option as innovation, technical skills and entrepreneurship is highly demanded by the present world economy. Considering this urge, the International Labor Organization (ILO) has emphasized to engage the youth population in some specific vocational areas like automobile mechanic, metal work, electrical electronics, carpentry, tailoring etc. On the other hand, the growing potential the youth people carry as human capital is always appreciated and required by the society for overall development. Thus, developing saleable skills and competencies from educational institutions can foster the way of self-employment for the youth (Kikechi, 2013).

Ibrahim, Wan and Ab (2015) on their paper have illustrated that salaried workers are being produced by the schools rather than job makers and that's why the entrepreneurship education should start in school. In developing entrepreneurial skills and competencies among students, vocational education programs are the best way. Because, these skills and competency last longer among the students that make them aware about their career from the beginning and force them to continue their study. In another study of Daluba (2013) investigated the need of entrepreneurial skills among the students. According to the study the entrepreneurial skills like creativity, innovativeness, practicals, communication, administrative etc. were identified as the need of the students that ultimately become helpful for them to be self-employed.

Studying the vocational education and training system in the Western Balkans and the EU neighborhood countries, Bartlett identified that inadequate vocational school system need to be strengthened that may lead to the higher education for the students. On the other hand, women can be highly benefitted form her schools based vocational training that may reduce their dropout rate and encourage them to avail higher education. According to Rodrigues (2012), entrepreneurial training can attract the students to develop and entrepreneurial career. This in one hand, can lead to the greater success for the students and on the hand can encourage them to enroll in higher studies.

1.3. Objectives of the study

The broad objective of this study was to see the impact of the training provided under "Skills Development of Higher Secondary Students through Stipend Program" initiative among the higher secondary students of the piloted area.

The specific objectives were:

a. To understand the effectiveness of the training programs
b. To identify whether the training could enable the students as skilled enough to be a part of the supply chain
c. To find out the dropout rate of the students and plan regarding higher study
d. To know the present socio-economic condition of the students
e. To draw recommendations to increase the acceptability of the initiative.

2. Methodology of the Study

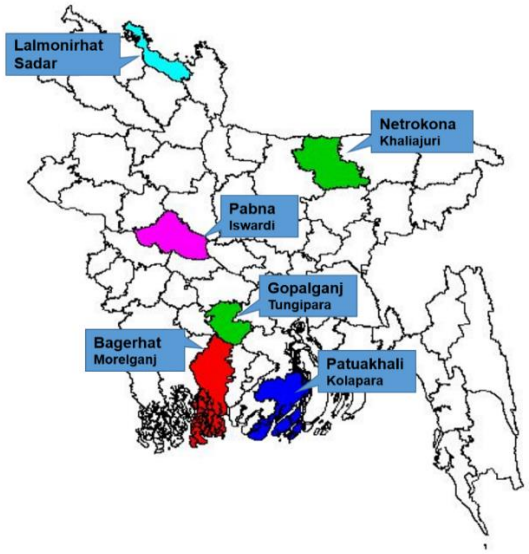
A multi-method research strategy was developed that supported the **qualitative and quantitative** nature of the research to address the purpose of this impact study. The main objective of the study was to ascertain the impact of the initiative 'Skills Development through Stipend Programme' that will enable us to assess its sustainability. A **survey** was conducted to a selected sample from specific population determined for the study along with some key informant interviews.

2.1. Study Area and Sampling Distribution

The survey is based on a two-stage stratified sample of beneficiaries. The 10 Upazilas of 10 districts of Bangladesh are stratified into 6 strata according to geographical locations. In the first stage, 6 Upazilas are selected from 10 Upazilas randomly, with 1 Upazila from each stratum. A complete list of beneficiaries of the selected Upazilas comprises the sampling frame. In the second stage of sampling, a systematic sample of 13 beneficiaries are selected per Upazila.

Table 1: Study Area

Sl. no.	Division	District	Upazila
1.	Dhaka	Gopalgonj	Tungipara
2.	Mymensingh	Netrokona	Khaliajhuri
3.	Rajshahi	Pabna	Ishwardi
4.	Khulna	Bagerhat	Morrelgonj
5.	Barisal	Patukhali	Kolapara
6.	Rangpur	Lalmonirhat	Lalmonirhat Sadar



Picture-01: Study Area

According to this design, 78 beneficiaries who have received skill development training through stipend program are selected and interviewed by using semi structured questionnaires. Also, 30 KIIs (Key Informants Interviews) were done among relevant stakeholders.

Table 2: Sampling Technique

Sampling Formula	Value
Probability (p)	0.81
Margin of Error (e)	0.05
Standard Normal Distribution Statistic (z)	1.96
Population Size (N)	120
Initial Sample Size (n0=z^2*p*(1-p)/e^2)	236.488896
Sample Size (n=n0/(1+n0/N)	78

2.2. Research Method

Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used in the study considering the merits and limitations of them. This study is descriptive in nature. The questionnaire has followed a mixed method (both qualitative and quantitative in nature). The basic method used in this study is survey. Key Informant Interviews (KII) of the relevant stakeholders have also been done for the study purpose.

Table 3: Stakeholder Analysis

Sl. no.	Stakeholders	Research Method Used	Number
1.	Beneficiary	Survey	78
2.	Guardian	Key Informant Interviews	12
3.	College Teacher		6
4.	Education Officer		6
5.	Trainer		6
		Total	108

2.3. Data Analysis

After completing data collection, all the information has been cross-checked and cleaned. Re-interview helped in this regard. The qualitative data has been quantified through coding mechanism and then processed through tabulation with the help of SPSS software before analysis. Exporting the output into excel, visualization with graphs has been done.

2.4. Limitations

Budget constraints has not allowed to conduct survey throughout overall pilot area. As a result, the study approached a systematic sampling process and covered 6 Upazilas among 8. Additionally, most of the respondents were running students who usually stay busy with their classes and other regular jobs. It was difficult to complete the target within a short time.

3. Study Findings

This section provides findings based on the survey and KIIs conducted and analyzed as a part of the impact study. The qualitative data has been quantified for analysis purpose.

3.1. Demographic Status of the Respondents

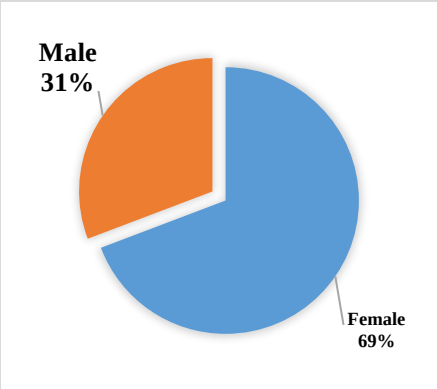


Figure 1: Gender of the respondents

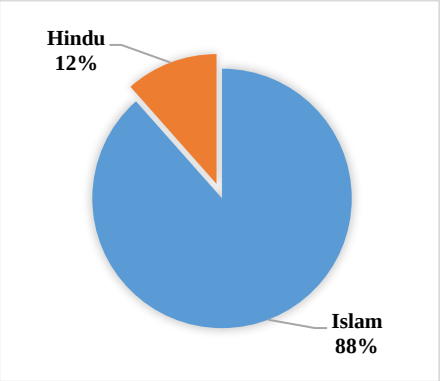


Figure 2: Religion of the respondents

The initiative aims to reduce female dropout in the higher secondary education. As such, female students are found to be received stipend more than male students, the respondents have been selected accordingly. It has been observed that (see figure 1) 69% of the respondents of this impact study are female students. Figure 2 depicts the religious identity of the respondents of this study. From the graph we can see that most of the respondents (88%) are Muslim. There is a very little portion of Hindu women which covered 12% of the total sample size.

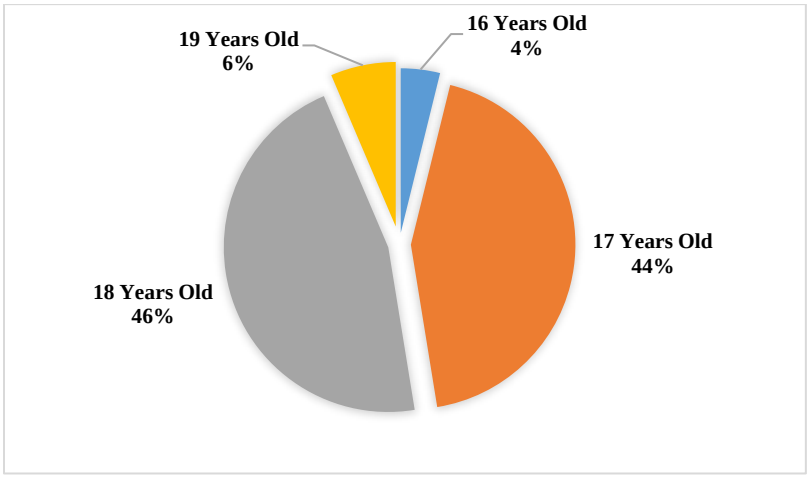


Figure 3: Age of the Respondents

Study has revealed that **(see figure 3)** the major portion (46% & 44%) of the informants is between 17 to 18 years old and a little portion (6% & 4%) is of 19 and 16 years old who received training under skill development through stipend programme. It is also important to note that all of the respondents were unmarried.

Number of family members	Percentage
2 Persons	3%
3 Persons	6%
4 Persons	19%
5 Persons	31%
6 Persons	17%
7 Persons	10%
8 Persons	10%
10 Persons	1%
11 Persons	1%
14 Persons	1%

4: Total Number of Family Members

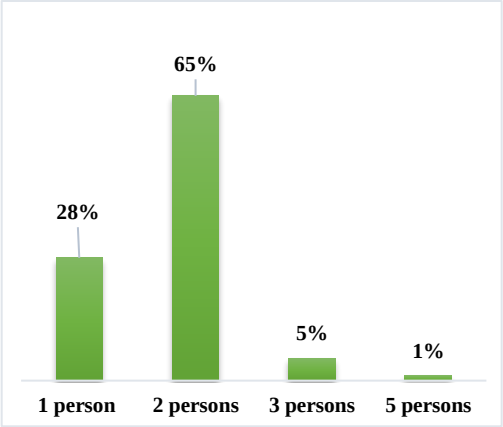


Figure 4: Total Number of Earning Members

Table 4 and figure 4 show respectively the total number of family members and the total number of earning members in the family. Thus, it has been observed that a great portion (31%) of respondents' family have 5 members (see table 4) whereas the maximum number of earning person in most of the families is 2 (see figure 4).

3.2. Skills Development Training and its Effects

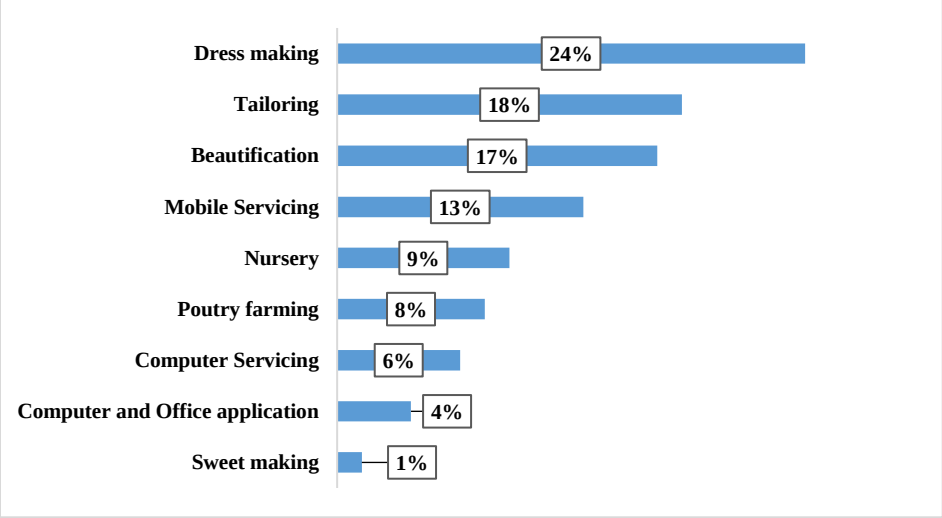


Figure 5: Training Trades

Among the respondents it has been found that most of them were trained on dress making (24%), tailoring (18%) and beautification (17%) as the study shows. Training on mobile servicing is also seen taken by 13% of the respondents (see figure 5). Poultry farming, nursery, computer servicing etc. were also prominent training provided among the students.

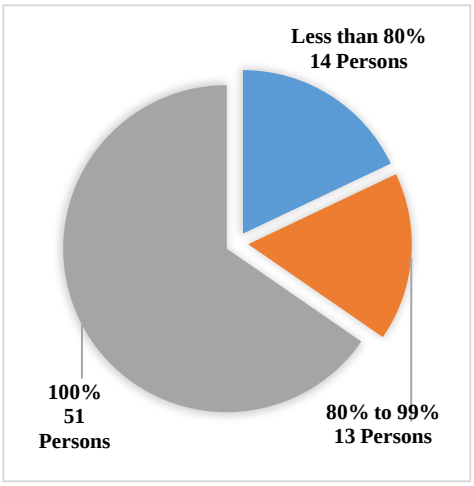


Figure 6: Attendance in the training

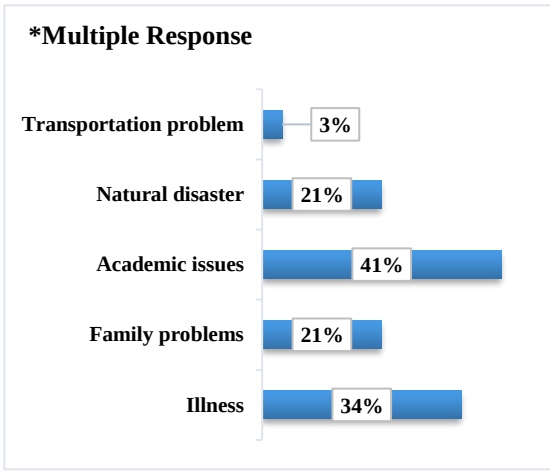


Figure 7: Reasons behind absence in the training

The study shows that the students who attended all the sessions of training are 51 (see figure 6) in number among 78. Only a few of them could not attend all the sessions. The reasons behind their absence were mostly academic issues (41%) and illness (34%) centric (see figure 7). Also, natural disaster, family problems were of reasons behind their absence in the training sessions.

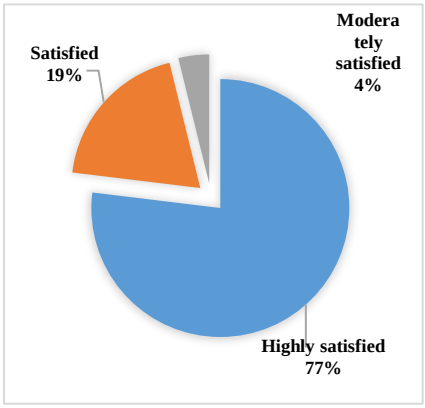


Figure 8: Satisfaction on Training

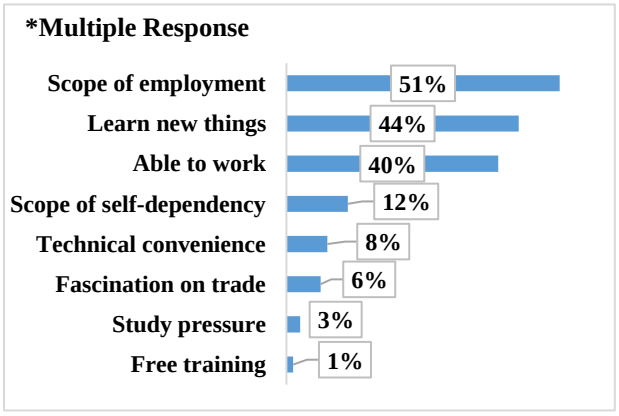


Figure 9: Reasons behind satisfaction

All the respondents were found satisfied with the training. Among them 77% were highly satisfied and the rest were satisfied (19%) and moderately satisfied (4%) [figure 8]. The reason behind satisfaction was mostly for the scope of employment (51%) for them.

Besides, according to them, they have learnt many newer things (44%), become self-dependent (12%) and able to work (40%).

Figure 10: Sufficiency of training

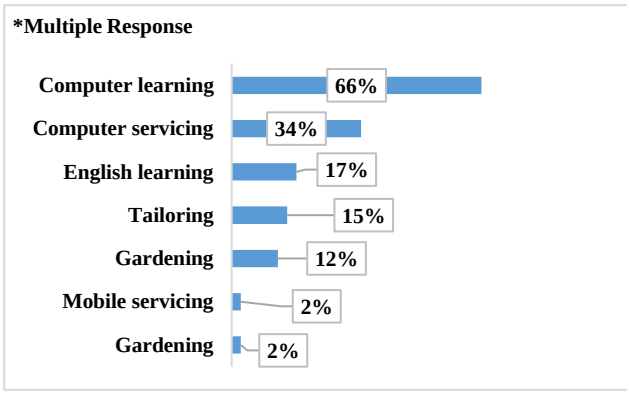


Figure 11: Further training demand of the students

The respondents were also asked whether the training was sufficient or not. 63% of them said that the training is sufficient and 37% said as not sufficient. As such, they demand few more trainings that would be helpful for them. Computer related training (see figure 11) was more prominent among the training demands.

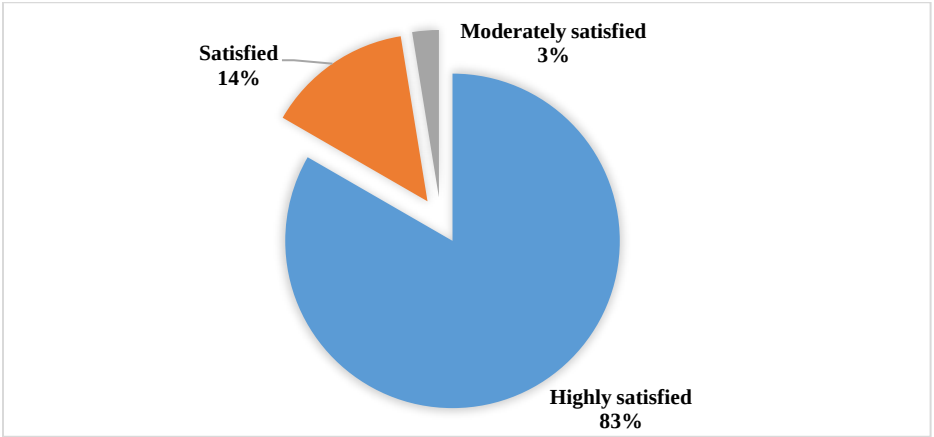


Figure 12: Satisfaction on Trainer

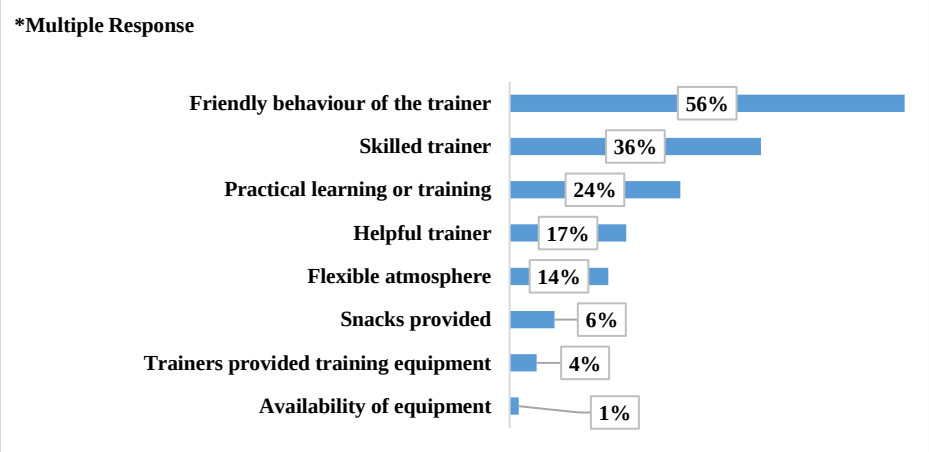


Figure 13: Reasons behind satisfaction

Along with training satisfaction, the respondents were also asked whether they were satisfied with their trainer. Most of the respondents (83%) were found satisfied mostly because of the friendly behavior of the trainers. Also, the trainers were skilled enough (36%) according to them. They said that the way of the training was very practical and learning oriented.

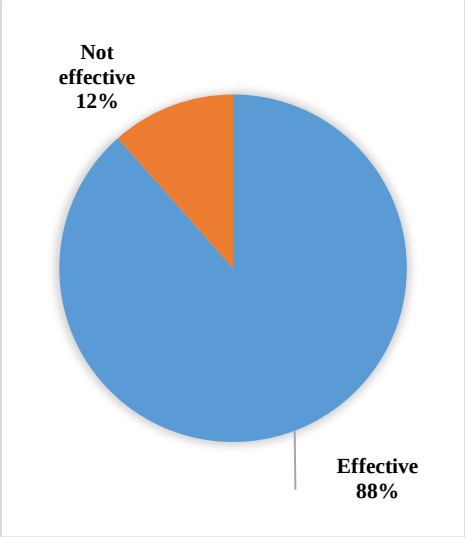


Figure 14: Status of the training being effective in work

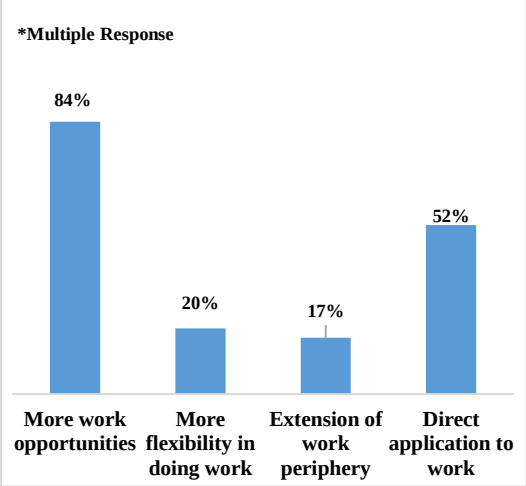


Figure 15: The way training being effective in work

The students think that the training was effective (88%) according to their working necessity. Because, the training has created more work opportunities (84%) for them. Besides, they feel more flexible in doing their work than before. They said that they can directly apply the learnings from training in their workplace.

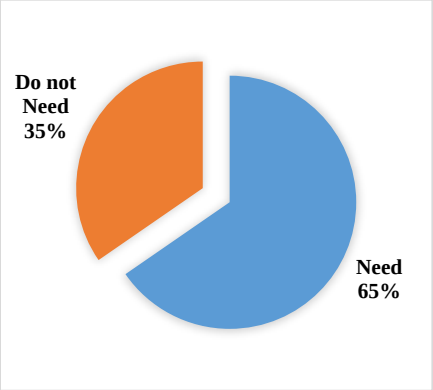


Figure 16: Need for favor to work after training

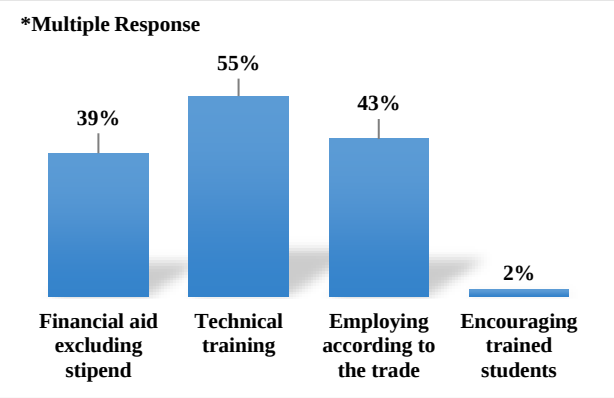


Figure 17: Type of favors need

The students were also asked whether they need any further favor after completion of this training and 65% of them agreed that they need favor. They emphasized mostly on technical training (55%), employment according to trade (43%) and financial aid except stipend (39%). They also said about promotional activities to engage more students in this type of training. They also identify their expected authorities whom they think able to provide the favors they mentioned.

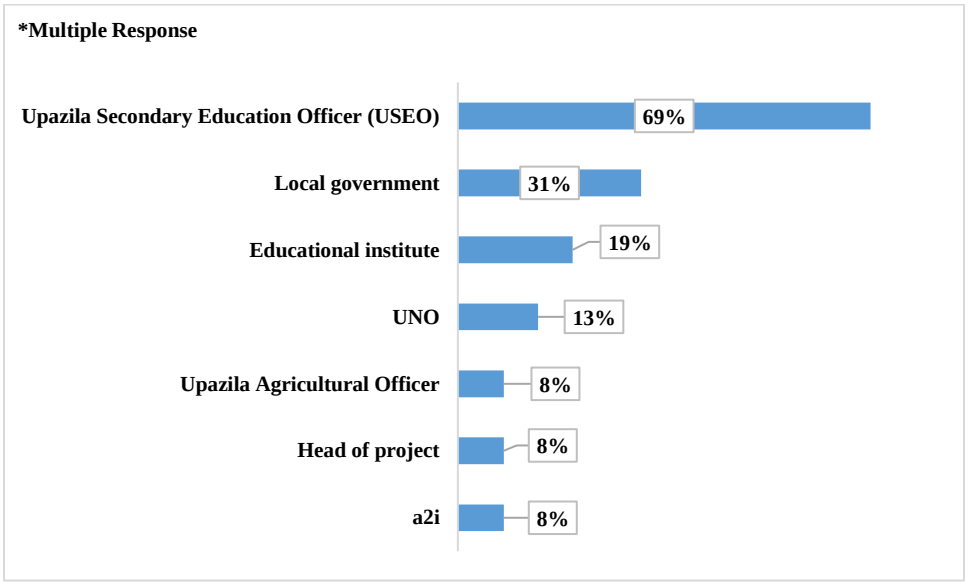


Figure 18: Expected authorities for favor

3.3. Socio-economic Status of the Respondents

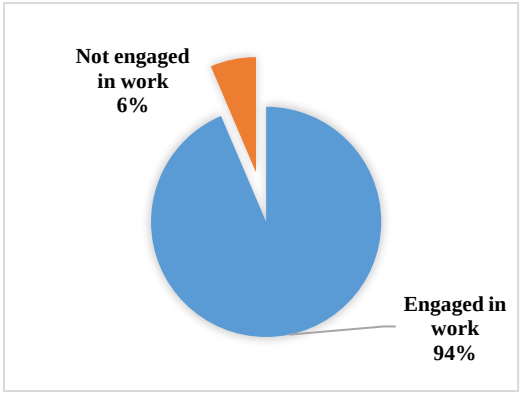


Figure 19: Work Status

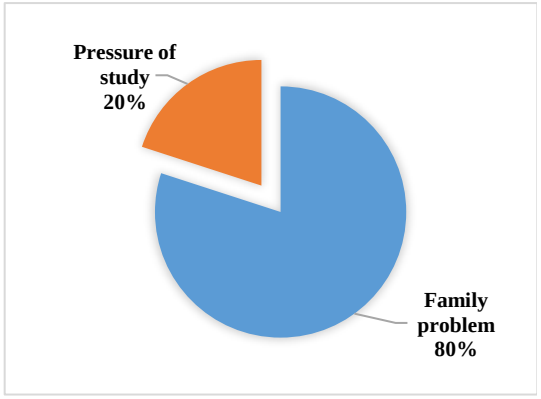


Figure 20: Reasons behind not engaged in work

Almost (94%) all the students were found engaged in work after completion of the training. Yet 6% mentioned that they used to work but because of much pressure of study and some family issues, they were not continuing study for some time. That 94% students were working on different trades they were provided.

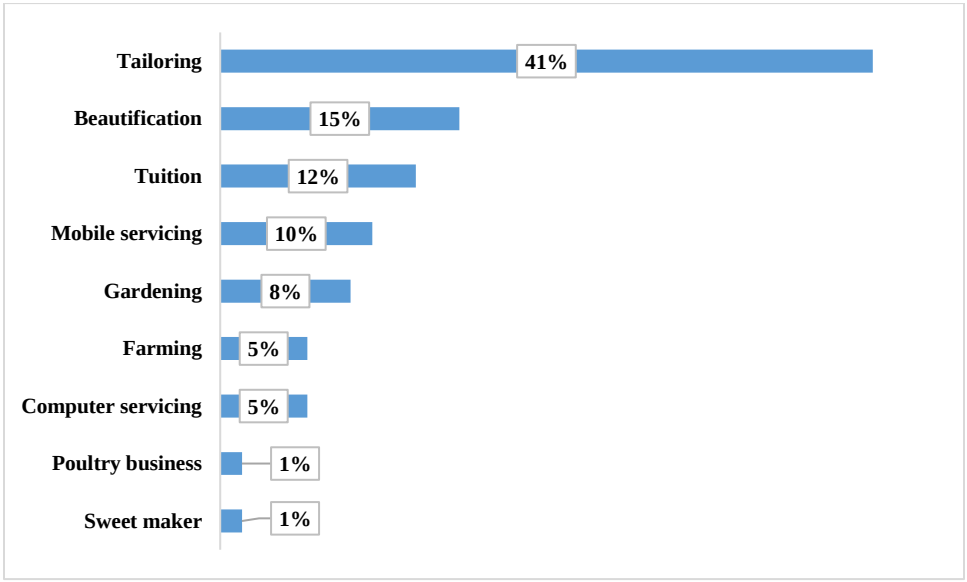


Figure 21: Current Occupation

Most of the students were found engaged in tailoring (41%) while the rest in beautification (15%), tuition (12%), mobile servicing (10%), gardening (8%), farming (5%), computer servicing (5%), poultry business (1%) and sweet making (1%).

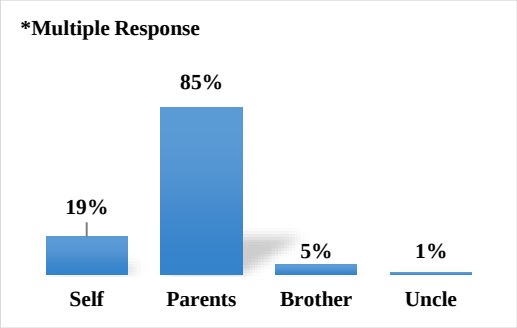


Figure 22: Person bearing educational expenditure then

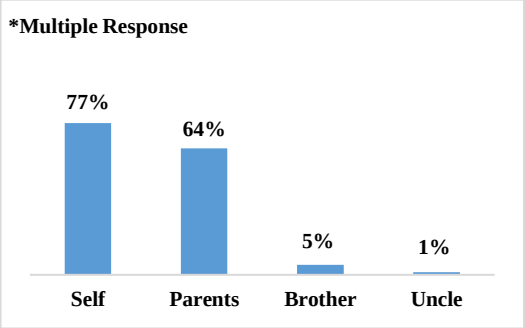


Figure 23: Person bearing educational expenditure now

As almost all the students were found engaged in economic activities, they became more dependent on bearing their educational expenditure by themselves. 77% respondents have become able to bear their own educational expenditure by themselves according to study that was only 19% before training. At the same time, it is evident that they sought financial help regarding their educational expenditure still now from their parents and other relatives though it has also decreased from 85% to 64% for parents. The good thing is, all have Interest in higher studies and they think they are able to continue their higher studies with the help of their own income.

Case 1: Skills Training in Preventing Study Dropout

Lamia Akter lives in the Sankivangha village of Morrelgonj Upazila of Bagerhat district. She is going to sit for HSC examination in this year from Rawsonara Mohila Digree College. Her brother also an HSC examinee. As both of them are in the same class, it is a burden for her family to bear all educational expenses for both. Her father is a garment worker who lives in Dhaka city and rest of the family members live in the village. His father monthly income is 15000 BDT per month. His father spends a portion of his income for his own living and the sends the rest to the family.

Lamia received training on tailoring in 2017 under skill development through stipend program. She also got a sewing machine after completing the training. Before this training it was hard to afford their educational cost for her family. Her mother said *they read in the same class in the different institutes, their educational expenditure is more to bear.*

After completing training, she engaged in includes generating work. Tough her income is not enough to meet her education cost, she can afford her pocket money, and transportation cost, cosmetics and sometimes clothing cost too. Now her monthly income is 500 on average, as she is new in tailoring, she doesn't get more order like an experienced tailor gets. She believes, when she becomes experienced, her income will increase day by day. Lamia and her brother want to be graduated from a public University. She thinks by using her technical knowledge which she got from training, she will able to afford her higher education cost. Her mother hopes her children will be educated in higher education. She (Mother) said *I have desired to provide higher education to my children and I will try from my side in this respect. If my children become enlighten by education, the nation will be enlightened too.*

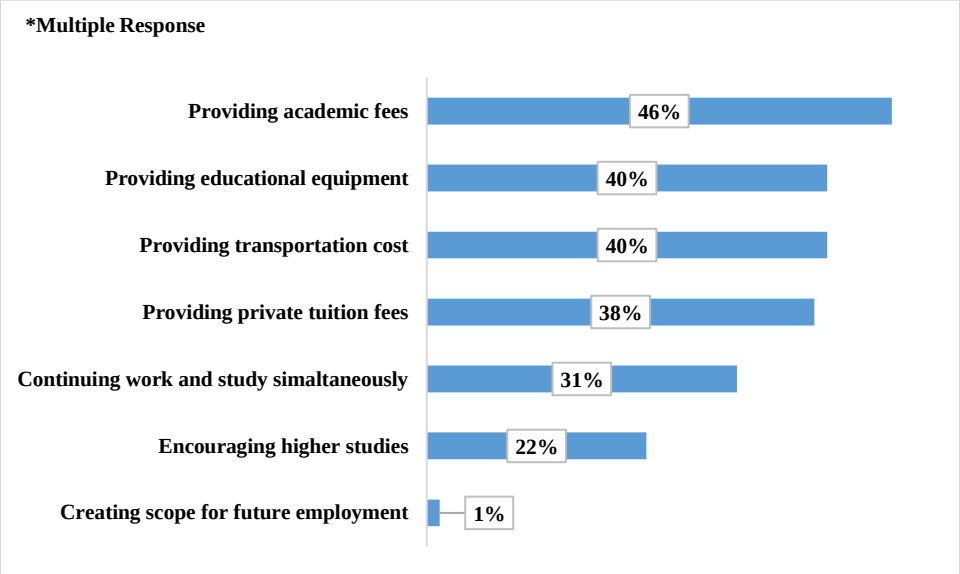


Figure 24: Perception on income contribution in higher education

As the students think that their income could contribute to their higher studies, they also identified the elements how it would contribute. They said that income could contribute by providing academic fees, educational equipment, transportation cost, tuition fees that is by providing all sorts of financial facilities. Also, they mentioned that the income generated form their work would be helpful in other sense that they could continue their work and study simultaneously that will actually encourage them.

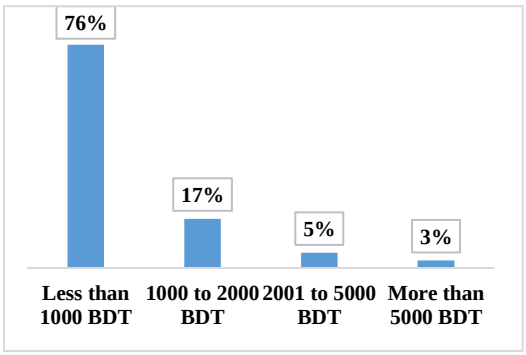


Figure 25: Income before

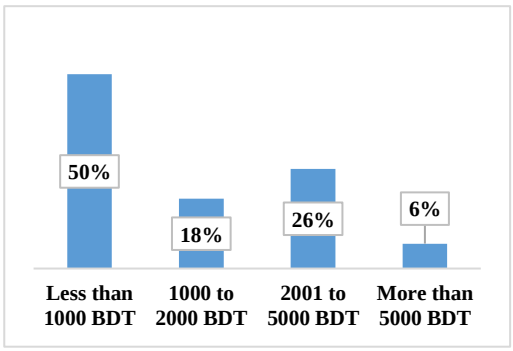


Figure 26: Income now

The above graphs (figure 25 and 26) show the economic condition of the respondents by income before and after training. The graphs depict that the category of students with 'less than 1000BDT' has almost been decreased after they had received the training. In each of the income scale, increment has been noticed. Most significantly, 26% has been noticed belonged to the '2001 t0 5000BDT' income scale that was only 5% before training. Respondents said that the training has done a great job in enhancing their working capability that leads to the increment in their income. They spend their income

in providing private tuition fees, academic fees, and necessary educational expenses and also in supporting their families. And maximum of them can spend their income on their own will as they said.

Case 2: Skills Training in Increasing Economic Solvency and Encouraging Higher Study

Ferdousi lives in Holdia village of Kolapara Upazila of Patuakhali district. She is a student of Nawa Bhanggha Sahelia Fazil madrasah and she is Alim (equivalent to H.S.C.) examinee of this year. Her father is a "chokidar" and a farmer, too. In total, her father monthly income is approximately 15000 BDT. Ferdousi receieved training on dress making under "Skills Development through Stipend Program" in 2017 for three months. Before this training, his father was the one in his family, who engaged in income-generating work. But now she is also an earning member. She added tailoring as sources of income for her family. Before this training, it was a hardship for her father to bear her education cost as well as her from his limited income. Her father said "I could not buy her books, notes in time. Because of my financial problem. I could not afford her tuition fees properly even I can't let her go for private tuition. I had to borrow from other to provide her fees. *After completing this training she can afford her educational expenditure herself her*, her father said. Now she bears her own expenditure herself including fees, private tuition fees. Even she provided her form fill up fees for Alim examination. He rarely asks me to give her money. Now she isn't just the one who earned but reducing family expenditure by sewing or making dresses for herself and other family members. Her monthly income is approximately **3500 BDT** on average. She told *this income gives me an opportunity to study more. No one won't be able to pressurize me to get married soon. I will be able to afford my higher education cost by tailoring. Now I can help my father to buy my mother medicine too.*

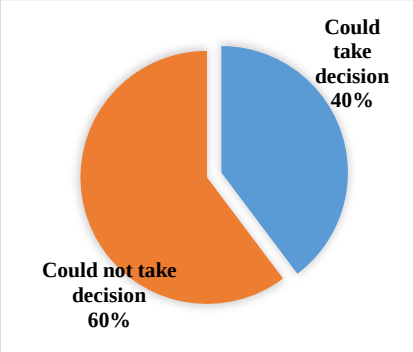


Figure 27: Status of being able to take decision before training

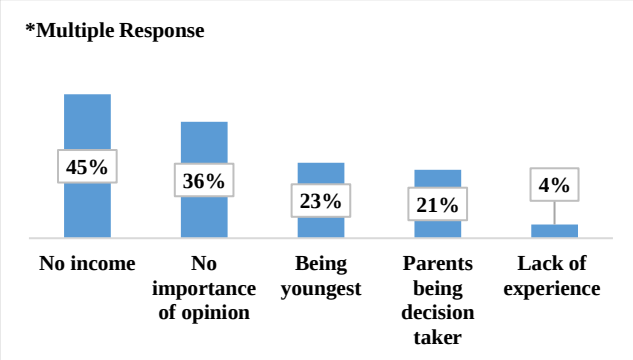


Figure 28: Reasons behind not taking decision before

One of the most important outcomes of the training is that those who received training can play a great role in family decision making now. From figure 27, it has been revealed that 60% of the respondents were said to be unable to make any decision in their family.

As a reason they mentioned that they were unemployed or had no income before and even those who earned could contribute a little to their family. This did not allow them to take part in decision making. But now, 68% of them (see figure 29) have become able in decision making. Those who can't even take part in decision making now is due to their younger age.

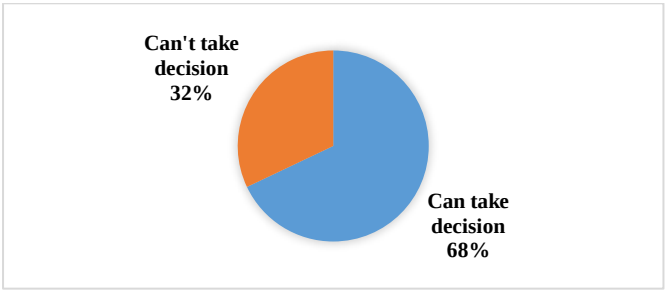


Figure 29: Status of being able to take decision now

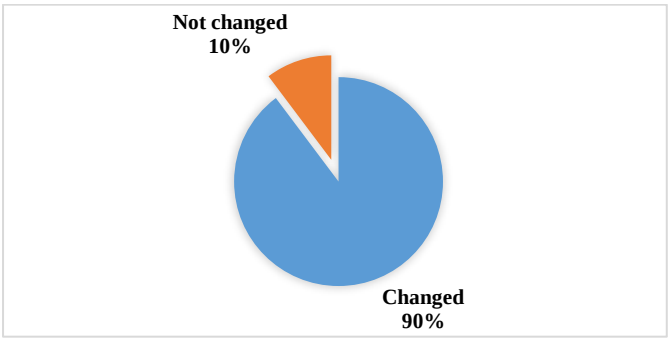


Figure 30: Status of any change in the way of living after training

From the study it has been learnt that the training has brought some change in the way of living of the students (see figure 30). The changes were mostly about their self-dependency, financial well-being, new scope for employment, opportunities for higher studies etc. (see figure 31).

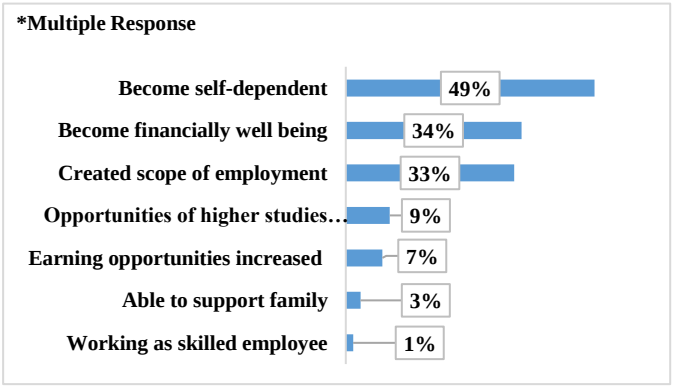


Figure 31: Changes come in lifestyle

3.4. Recommendations

3.4.1. Recommendations from students

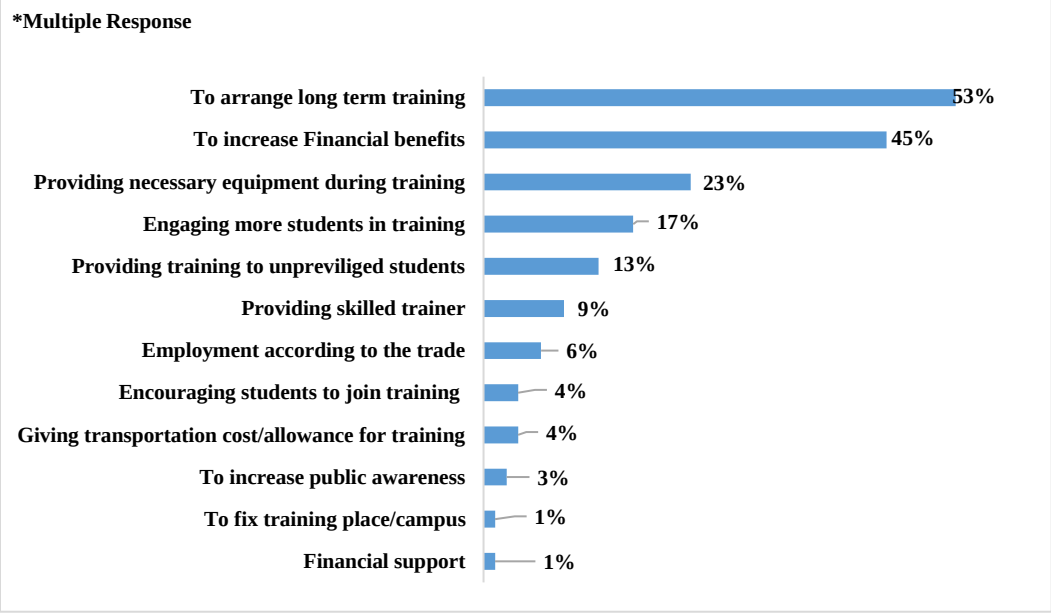


Figure 32: Recommendations for increasing acceptability

The students who were interviewed in this impact study have given some recommendations that will work in increasing the acceptability of this training among students and others. From the figure 32, it has been seen that most of the students recommended to extend the training duration and to arrange long-term trainings (53%). Also 45% of them mentioned about direct financial benefits that may attract both students and parents according to them.

3.4.2. Recommendation from parents

The parents said that this training will sustain if training equipment provided properly during training. Training should be longer than three months as the existing duration is enough for basic one not for being professional. And they demanded for financial and technical support for getting involved in earning for their child, for example, like providing loan for farming, equipment to work, medical cost for livestock rearing, computer and internet access for better work etc.

3.4.3. Recommendation from teachers

To sustain this training program the teachers, recommend mostly the follow up issue. According to them, a well-designed training can be failed to get final results if there is no follow up after the training is over. The post-training environment is most important to ensure trained students' performance to be continued and improved. Also, training should be provided considering students' convenient geographical environment and infrastructure condition.

3.4.4. Recommendation from trainers

According to the trainers-

1. Training duration should be extended from 3 months to 6 months as 3 months seems not enough according to them
2. Training equipment should be provided during training
3. Financial support should be ensured
4. Job placement according to trade and to provide loan if necessary
5. Creating training opportunities for more students
6. To encourage students to be engaged in income-generating work

4. Conclusion

Most of the families faced financial problems in affording their children's educational expenses. Sometimes, they could neither even afford the educational equipment (like books, note, pen etc.) nor providing tuition fees, private tuition fees in time. There are some families who have two or more college going children. It is also another reason for being a burden to providing educational cost. Skills development through stipend program is very effective initiative in this regard according to this impact study. 40% of the students rated this initiative 10 out of 10 as we can see form the graph. Most of the parents said their children are now engaged in income-generating work after completion of the training on their preferred trade. Although some parents claimed that their child are yet to start earning in the long-term, they are still reducing family expenditures by sewing cloth of family members. Parents not only dream but also want that one day their children will enroll in higher studies. Parents are trying from their side to fulfil their wish. Beside this, they demand a job placement for their child according to the trade they received training. All parents think that engaging in income-generating work and continuing study simultaneously is a great benefit of this skills training. It helps their children being experienced both in earning and profession at the same time.

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