

# **A QUEST FOR QUALITY HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: EXAMINING CIVIL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR DEVELOPING JUNIOR LEADERSHIP IN BANGLADESH ARMED FORCES**

**Lieutenant Colonel Mohammad Reazul Kabir, afwc, psc, G**

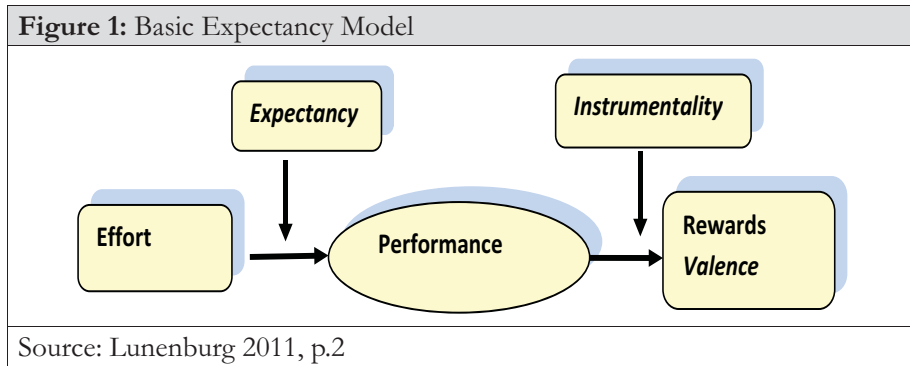
Education is the most powerful weapon, which you can use to change the world.  
- Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa

## **Introduction**

The vision of past glory, present mission and future role is important for development of Armed Forces. The spirit in improving any organization depends on its internal functionality and commitment to sustainability. Functionality largely depends on human resource development (HRD) while sustainability depends on organizational strategy. Soldiering being a unique and challenging profession needs transformational leadership at different tiers than transactional sources of motivation for better functionality. That is why value of honour, commitment, professional excellence, self-sacrificing attitude and obligations to followers remains pivotal to military leadership which is more pronounced at junior levels. Armed Forces cannot be improved unless quality of junior leadership is competent. Achieving such competency need to be nurtured through a careful progressive human resource management (HRM) process: quality intake, professional grooming, leadership training, self-developing environment and other pragmatic factors.

HRM is an important aspect in developing any organization. However, there are many factors that influence human behaviour. It is very important to understand its context and magnitude while formulating HRM policies. Expectancy theory (Victor Vroom, 1964) provides a process of cognitive variables that reflects individual differences in work motivation. Expectancy theory is based on four assumptions that has three key elements: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. A person is motivated to the degree that he or she believes that effort will lead to acceptable performance (expectancy), that will be rewarded (instrumentality), and

the value of the rewards (valence) is highly positive (Lunenburg, 2011) as shown in Figure 1:



In simple terms expectancy theory is based on the idea that people will be motivated if they believe: strong effort will lead to good performance that will lead to desired rewards. From management standpoint, it has important implications. The HRM system may not work as anticipated unless the integration with its clientele is not contemplated carefully. Recent policies emphasize a junior leader to have higher secondary educational qualification. However, quality junior leadership depends on much more wider range of issues. At present secondary level educational qualification is required for recruiting in general in Armed Forces while soldiers undergo a set of progressive training for professional development. In addition, a higher civil education expectation as professional requirement demands better HRM, might shift soldiers' focus on civil education than professional training requirements, and at times may put deficit strength units to HRM challenges.

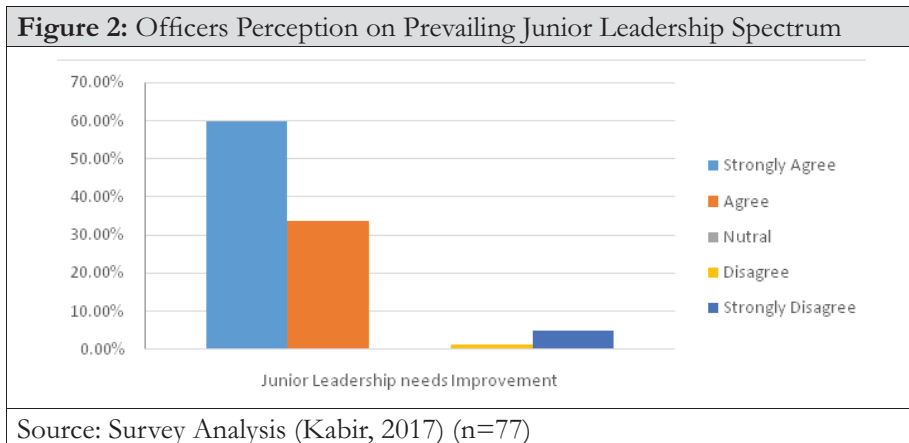
Differing civil education expectations in recruiting and career progression have raised the need to objectively check back for shortfalls, if any, in the recruiting process or inadequacy in professional training across three services of Armed Forces. This paper shall initially give an insight about the prevailing quality spectrum of junior leadership and then review the recruiting policies to discern its effectiveness in developing quality junior leadership. Subsequently, it critically reviews career development system to identify training needs, evaluates effectiveness of the training system and examines the effects of differing education requirements on HRM. Finally, it discusses possible policy options and puts forward few contemplated policy recommendations.

## Why Quest for Quality: A Review on Intake

Quality leadership is an intangible relative term and hard to define. However, developing junior leadership encompass achieving four competence: conceptual, diagnostic, technical and interpersonal skills (Razib, 2015). While education enhances knowledge and conceptual ability, training makes a person skillful. Education and training complements each other in enhancing leadership and decision-making skills of individuals. Non Commissioned Officers (NCO) in many cases have weaker civil education background than the soldiers. From HRM perspective it has important implications on NCOs confidence and leadership challenges. Again, effectiveness of training is also subjected to the capacity of the clientele to conceptualize and take up the peace time training. As such, though excellence in training remain focused in the gambit of peacetime quest of Armed Forces, but, need for quality intake need equal attention.

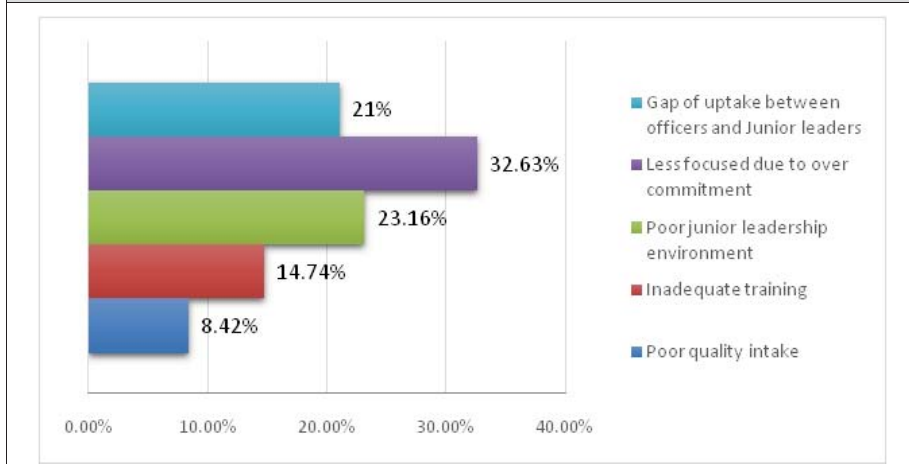
## Prevailing Quality Spectrum of Junior Leadership

There is no set formula to objectively classify a junior leader to be professional or determine attained leadership qualities required for the battlefield during peacetime. However, a view with circumspection allows to make a subjective analysis basing on attitudes, actions and reactions in various situations. During surveys among officers with considerable service lengths having notable HRM experiences, majority unanimously agreed that our present state of junior leadership needs improvement. The perceptions also revealed that, majority of the respondents strongly feel that the improvement is necessary. The survey result is projected below:



Civil education has its intrinsic values in developing cognitive dimension of human being that is equally required for military profession. While there is endeavor to improve in the tangible leadership factors by increasing the educational background requirements during recruiting, then why junior leadership is not performing as expected by the organization? Survey result carried out among officers to discern the striking limitations that are hindering development of quality junior leadership or their effective functioning across armed forces showed few striking limitations:

**Figure 3: Limitations Hindering Development of Junior Leadership**

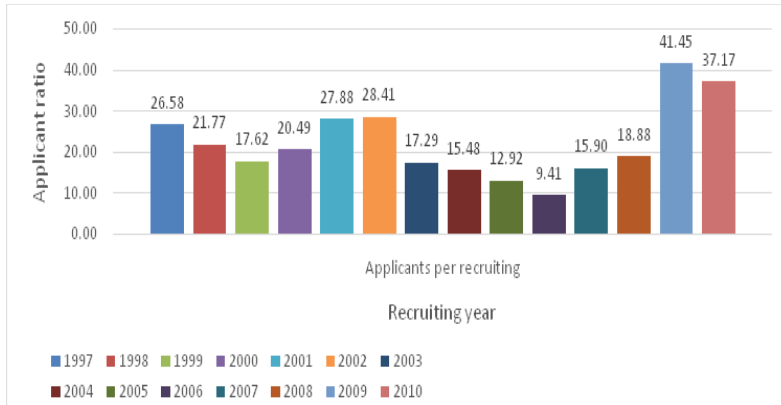


Source: Survey Analysis (Kabir, 2017) (n=77)

### Examining Intake Quality

A case study on recruited soldiers shows that general trend line of applicants per recruitment is upward for the recruited soldiers in Artillery for examined 14 years (figure 4). Similar upward trend was found in case of Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Air Force during the period 2011 to 2017. However, a case study of EBRC, BIRC and Artillery records for the period of 2011 to 2017 illustrates the fact that despite having such applicant ratio per vacancy recruitment in Bangladesh Army fell short of fulfilling required vacancy available in last 7 years. Soldiers' generally comes from village background and trend line is static for last 21 years. A case study on recruited soldiers for the period 1991 to 2017 in the corps of Artillery reveals that intake with higher education than set requirements was significant up to 1995. From 1996 till 2013 higher qualified recruitment was negligible. It again shows significant trend from 2014 onwards.

**Figure 4: Ratio of Applicants per Recruitment in Artillery**

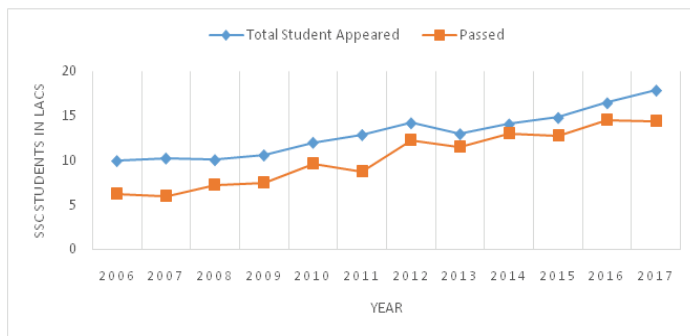


Source: Analysis of Recruiting Data (Kabir, 2017)

### Observation and Analysis

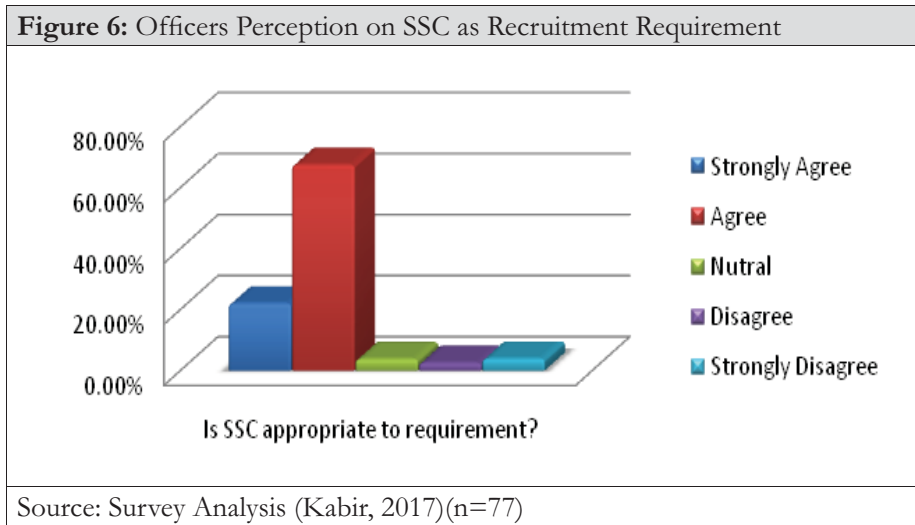
Recruitment is done in Armed Forces based on well laid out procedure. The rising ratio of aspiring applicants per vacancy is very encouraging. This has two dimensions of explanation. Firstly, mass of students passing SSC in recent trend, while a significant part of students' socio-economic condition inspiring them looking for enrollment in Armed Forces. Secondly, dropout trend in HSC suggests that due to socio economic conditions significant part of HSC dropouts look for an alternative to pursuing education.

**Figure 5: Statistics of Increasing Pass Rate in SSC**



Source: Analysis of Secondary (Kabir, 2017)

The minimum qualification set for recruitment in Armed Forces is easily achievable for any ordinary student. The job of soldiering with existing social status and financial benefits is still an attractive occupation. As such, setting the bench mark is very important for ensuring quality intake. Survey result showing officers’ perception on SSC as recruitment criteria illustrates general agreement, but shows scope of improvement as only about a quarter strongly agrees with the set requirement.



Considering all the discussions above, is the education requirements set during soldiers’ recruiting corresponds to the subsequent requirement of developing quality junior leadership in Armed Forces? The next chapter shall discuss regarding training aspects vis-à-vis professional development.

## **Training Aspects: Career Development Vis-A-Vis Leadership**

### **Review of Training in Leadership Development**

**Army Training System:** Form recruitment up to a soldiers’ promotion to Cpl the training focus is on achieving trade proficiency. Civil education is given due importance in career development and as such the process starts at the recruit training stage. However, there is formal leadership training at the rank of Cpl and beyond as they undergo NCOC or SGTC as Cpl and WOC as Sgt. There

are scopes for senior LCpl also to undergo NCOC. This is a purely leadership development course focusing on the capacity building to undertake responsibilities of next higher rank. This course is conducted at NCOs Academy. On the other hand SGTC is mandatory for Cpl not done NCOC. This course is a combination of leadership development and trade enhancement. It is conducted at respective arms or services center and schools.

**Naval Training System:** Ordinary seaman up to Petty Officer the focus of naval training is on achieving trade proficiency. Formal leadership training is mandatory undergoing DLC for promotion to Chief Petty Officer. Civil education (HSC) is still not a mandatory criteria for promotion. However, there are good practices of providing 72 weeks duration technical trades training to sailors which is equivalent to Diploma Course.

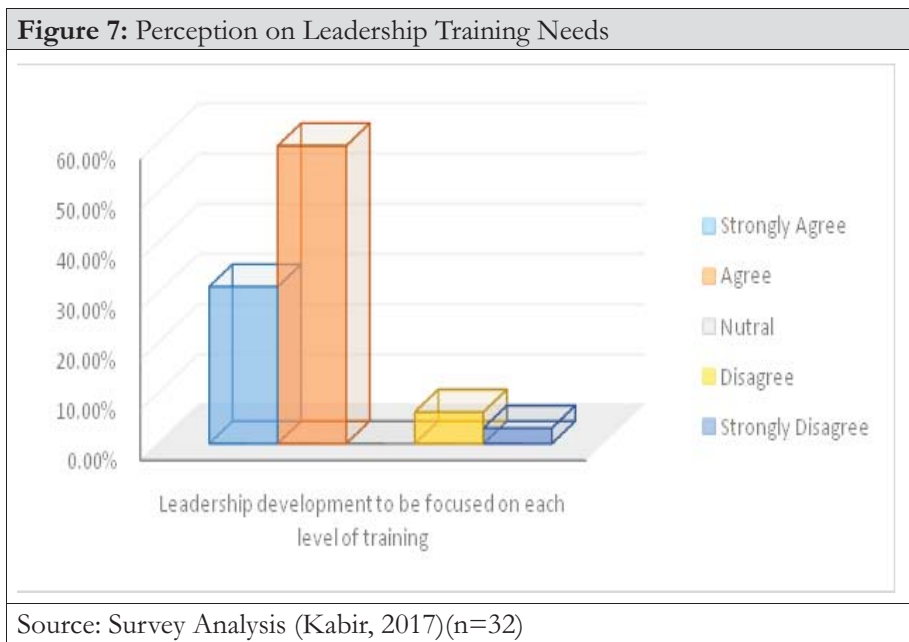
**Air Force Training System:** Training of airmen up to Sgt focus on trade proficiency. The courses conducted in Bangladesh Air Force which adequately address/incorporate curriculums to develop leadership qualities among soldiers/NCOs are Initial Training for 36 weeks, Senior Trade Course for 06 weeks, Management Course for 04 weeks, Ground Defence Orientation Course for 02 weeks and Junior Commission Officers Course (newly introduced since 2012) for 04 weeks. However, formal leadership training is mandatory undergoing Management Course for promotion to WO only. HSC is still not a mandatory criterion for promotion. Out of 23 trades of BAF airmen, most of the trades (about 90% airmen of an entry) are getting Diploma Certificates (Equivalent to HSC) after passing Advance Training (Total service 03 years) which is recognized by the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB), Dhaka (Kamruzzaman, 2017).

## Observation and Analysis

The career development in Armed Forces are well laid out across three services and there are general agreements on the laid out qualification system. However, the training system is focused more on skill development and career progression than that of junior leadership development. Though there are ingredients of leadership oriented skills at each level of training, but, it largely depends on the method of conduct of training, way of imparting lessons and many other factors.

Leadership training is more focused in Army than other services due to their technical nature understandably, however, may be taken as a best practice to customize in application as deemed fit in other services as well. There are best practices in Navy and Air force in terms of 'Certificate Courses'. This may equally be applied in Army. Again there are higher education programs like BoDS in Army that can be extended to other services for professional development.

Training system needs to be focused on leadership building, not promotion oriented. It shall develop the quality spectrum of junior leadership and promotion shall be an automatic bi-product for the best.



Higher education is very much required for developing leadership qualities while HSC is expected to meet the requirement of rank status. Adequate emphasis is given on attaining HSC across three services of Armed Forces. However, institutional leadership training is required at all stages in developing junior leadership which is not prominent in the training system of Armed Forces. A synchronized system may be developed considering the requirements of all services and trade requirements.



## **Effect on HRM: Alternative Policy Options**

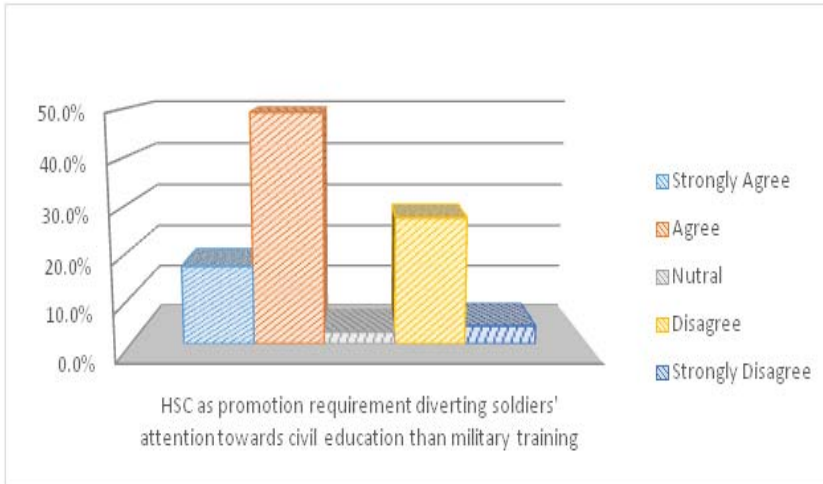
### **Need for Better HRM**

Soldiering by profession, demands more of intangible attributes like patriotism, discipline, loyalty, attitude and courage along with physical ability than merely educational qualification. However, the intangible qualities can be related to a person's aptitude developed through the kind of quality education he receives. These precepts make setting education criteria for recruiting a critical decision. At present SSC is set as recruiting criteria, however, the necessity is felt for higher educational requirement at junior leadership level. Military training system is unique in nature and has trivial relationship with civil education as such unable to address the differing requirement. This pose HRM challenges and requires to look for alternative policy options.

The challenge is not significant in case of Navy and Air Force. Though the process of achieving higher education is incorporated right from recruit training in Army, but there are good number of soldiers who are yet to achieve the bench mark. Balancing soldiers' qualification and HSC requirement is one example of HRM challenge in next three years.

In order to address such challenges units need meticulous planning to qualify soldiers both in military qualification and HSC. Units also need to assist individuals for educational pursuance, address their leave requirements during examinations and so on. This might require some adjustments with their individual military training requirements or unit training activities. Such steps might affect cohesion to some extent. The recruits joining units are more focused to attain their second year of HSC than undergoing Basic Trade Training. As such, it might shift the soldiers' focus on military training. However, all such issues can be addressed through a better HRM process.

**Figure 8: Shifting Focus on Military Training**



Source: Survey Analysis (Kabir, 2017)(n=77)

It is no denying fact that quality soldiering makes better junior leaders who contribute to vertical organizational development. What is required is to make a balanced correlation between quality intake with required level of education and quality military training to develop better junior leadership skills. All the discussions above calls for a better HRM.

### HRM Options Available

From the discussions of previous chapters it is evident that higher education and military training is required for leadership development while HSC is expected to meet the requirement of rank status. However, following HRM options are revealed for junior leadership development through the research process:

**Option 1: HSC as Recruiting Requirement:** Recruiting HSC qualified candidates and provide them 6 months initial military training (Easy HRM option).

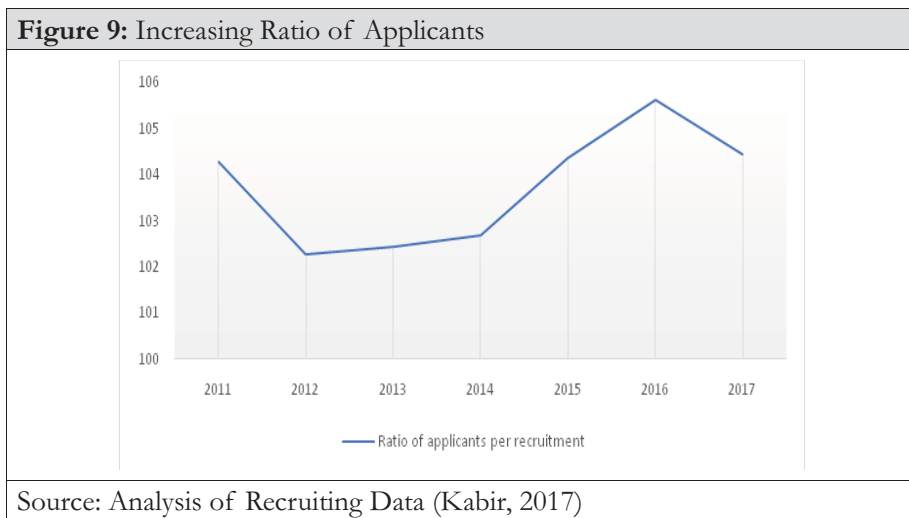
**Option 2: Integrating Military Education with Civil Education:** Intake SSC as existing and enhance educational background with ‘Certificate Courses’ (Less focused civil education than military training option).

**Option 3: Focused Military Education for leadership development:** Intake SSC or HSC as convenient, fulfil HSC for all, but pursue academic higher study for leadership development on selection basis through military curriculum (Focused civil education along with military education option).

### Analysis of HRM Options

**Option 1: HSC as Recruiting Requirement:** Recruiting HSC qualified candidates and provide them 6 months initial military training.

Increasing the level requirement to HSC is a viable option (Ahmed, 2017 and Kamruzzaman, 2017). Question is whether it would affect candidate turn up? In a case study of artillery records it is found that trend of applicant for armed forces is adequate. The ratio of applicants per vacancy trend line is increasing as shown in Figure 9:



The workforce in Bangladesh is large, numbering about 57 million. According to the Labour Force Survey of 2010, about 22 percent have attained secondary or tertiary level education (World Bank 2013, p. 13). Population Projection of Bangladesh during the period 2011-2041 shows an increase by around 15% relative to that of the base year 2011:

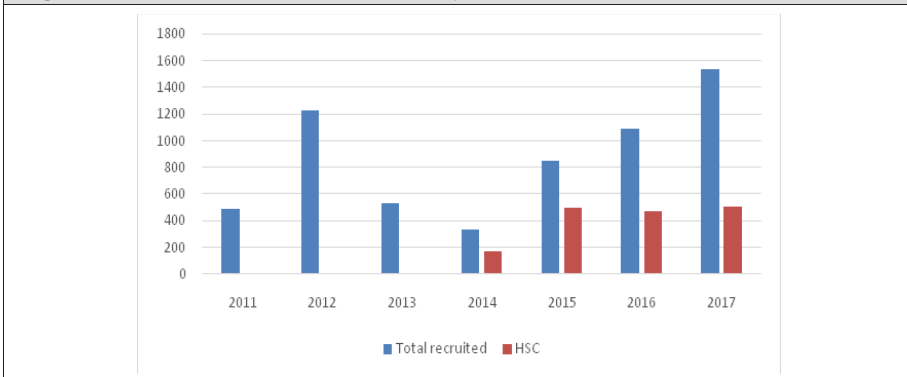
**Table 1:** Population Projection of Bangladesh in Age Groups, 2011-2041

Age Group	Base Year	Projection by Selected Years					
		(In Thousands)					
	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041
15-19	13375	17268	18785	14903	14505	15656	16603

Source: Compiled from Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics Data (Kabir, 2017)

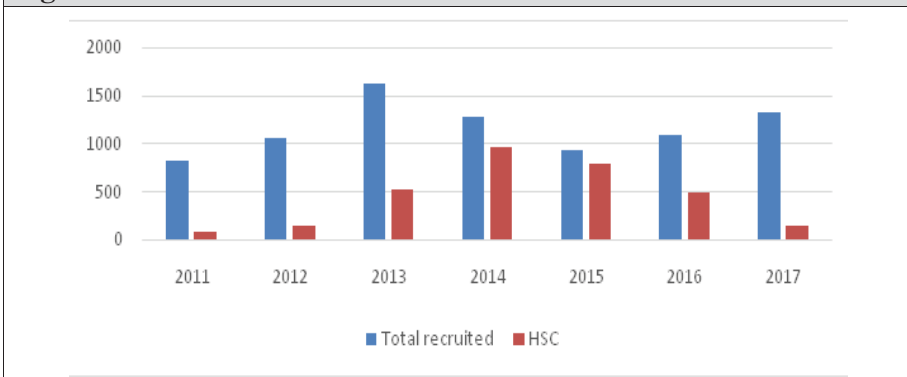
Analysis of case studies on the recruited soldiers during the period 2011 to 2017 reveals that good number of the recent recruiting is HSC qualified. The picture is illustrated below:

**Figure 10:** Intake with HSC in Artillery



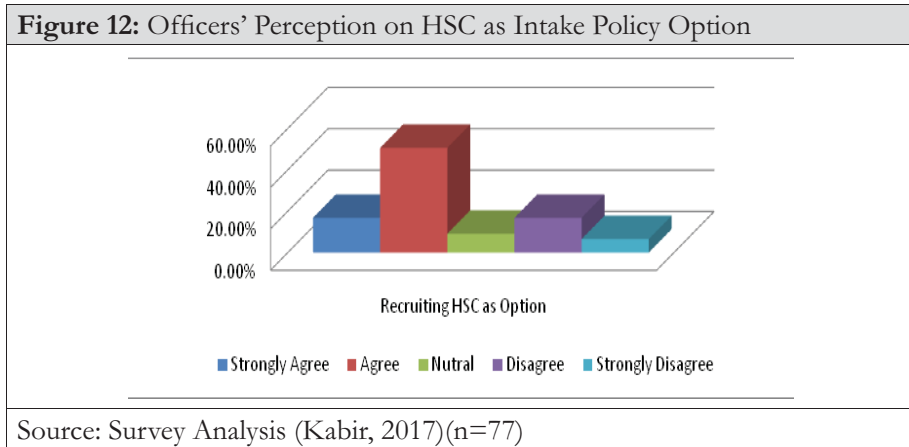
Source: Analysis of Recruiting Data (Kabir, 2017)

**Figure 11:** Intake with HSC in BIRC 2011-2017



Source: Analysis of Recruiting Data (Kabir, 2017)

Survey result of officers’ perception on the issue is shown below:

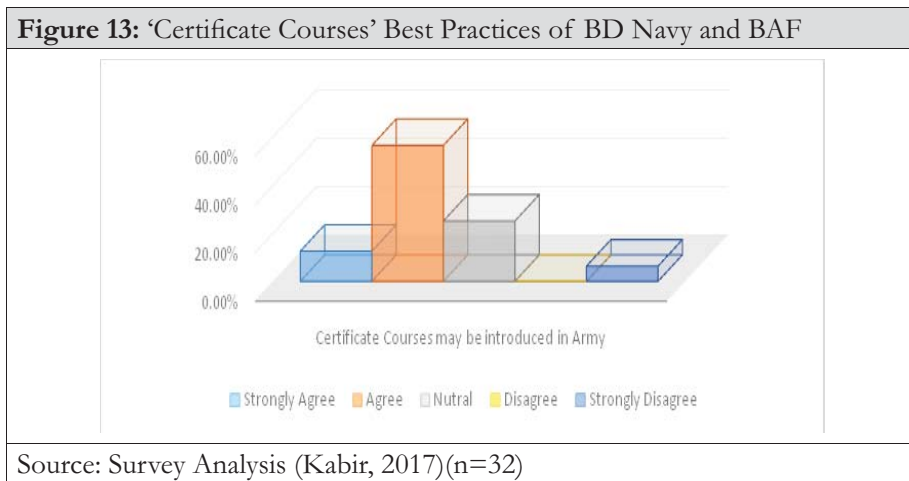


All the indicators above justifies recruiting HSC qualified candidate as a viable option.

**Option 2: Integrating Military Education with Civil Education:** Intake SSC as existing and enhance educational background with ‘Certificate Courses’.

It shall provide better motivation as per Vroom’s (1964) expectancy theory.

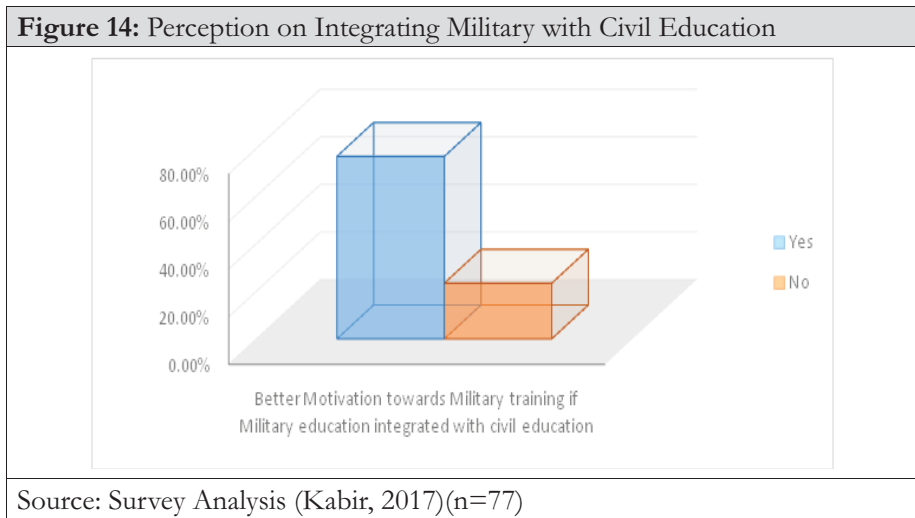
Certificate Courses are already introduced in BD Navy and BAF. Only Army to be integrated to implement this option. Survey conducted to get a general perception on the issue justifies this proposition:



**Option 3: Military Education for Leadership Development:** Intake SSC or HSC as convenient, fulfils HSC for all, but pursues academic higher study for leadership development on selection basis through military curriculum.

This is a convenient approach keeping education for leadership development in the focus. In that case existing facilities and good academic program for soldiers like BoDS may be pursued.

It would meet the requirement of rank status of the junior leaders, while further provide a professional recognition to the selected NCOs those are likely to go up the ladder. It shall provide better motivation as per Vroom’s (1964) expectancy theory.



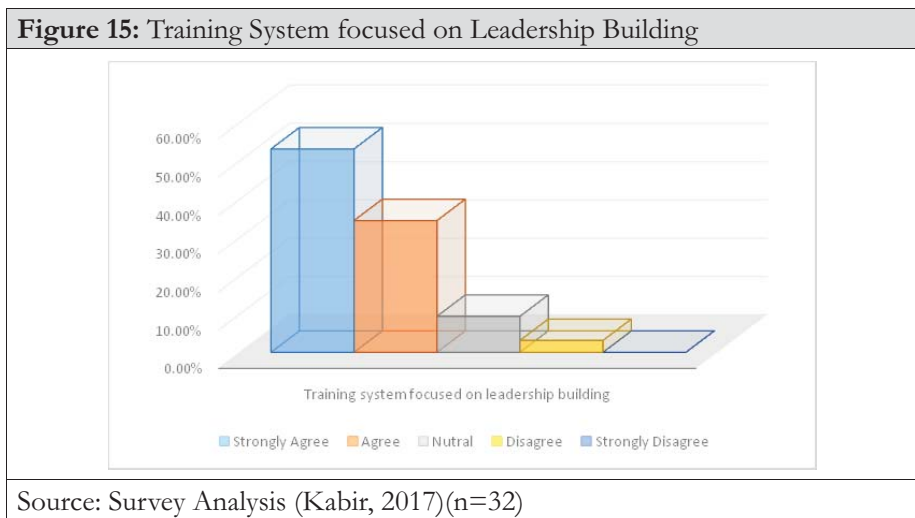
### Comparison of HRM Options

**Subjective Analysis:** In this analysis subject matter experts’ opinions are given due importance. Best practices of Certificate Courses may be introduced coordinating with BTEB for providing HSC certificate to the soldiers joining the unit and undergoing OJT (Serniabat, 2017). Considering the present quality of education in our country, HSC is the desired or appropriate civil education which is required for our soldiers to develop quality Junior Leadership (Ahmed, 2017 and Kamruzzaman, 2017). However, how much civil education is fruitful for military purpose or the relation between the present education system and present military training is not explored. Up gradation of education level was due

to pressure of the circumstances. The manual of qualification in 2012 was set with very high ambition which was difficult to materialize as such some tailor made solution had to be taken (Nazimuddin, 2017). HSC qualified soldiers are being taken. However, could be taken as policy, but, there are other considerations as well. HSC as recruiting option might conflict with education qualification set for officers' intake. Candidate turn up may reduce to one third, age would be more of the potential candidates, and choice shall be limited. There are students who are incapable of continuing study at their own due to financial difficulty, they are also now aspiring to join Armed Forces. As such, more number of candidates is available which enable to ensure selection quality (Haque, 2017 and Ahmed 2017). Analysing above, option 2 and 3 seems better option than option 1. Out of which option 3 further provides professional recognition to the selected NCOs those likely to go up the ladder. This as policy option likely to generate urge for professional competency among soldiers.

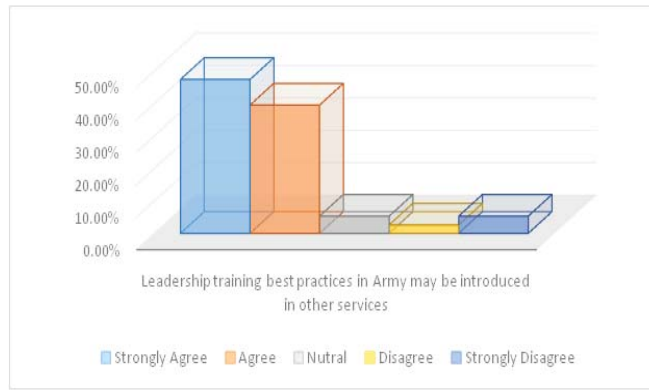
**Objective Analysis:** An objective study of research outcomes may give us more insight in analysing the advantages and disadvantages of the HRM options.

Soldiers need training, which need to focus and fit in to the objective (Nazimuddin, 2017, Ahsan 2017 and Haque, 2017). Similar echo was found through survey analysis that emphasized training system to be focused on leadership building, not promotion oriented. It should focus on developing the quality spectrum of junior leadership and promotion shall be an automatic bi-product. The survey result is shown below:



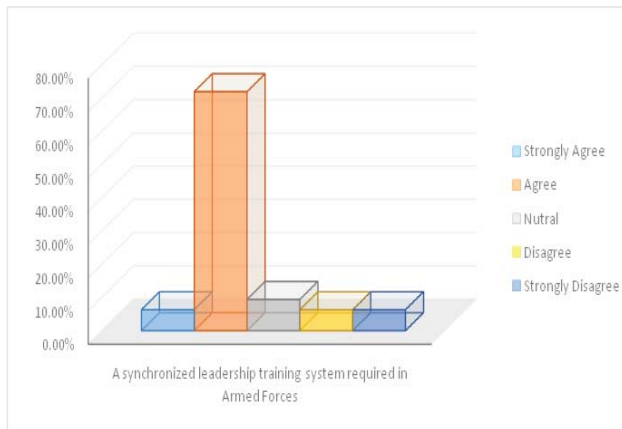
The good ingredients in the leadership training curriculum in various services in Armed Forces may be institutionally shared and customized as deemed fit in other services as a synchronized training system is needed. This is further substantiated by the survey analysis presented below:

**Figure 16: Leadership Training Best Practices to be Shared**



Source: Survey Analysis (Kabir, 2017)(n=32)

**Figure 17: Need for a Synchronized Training System**

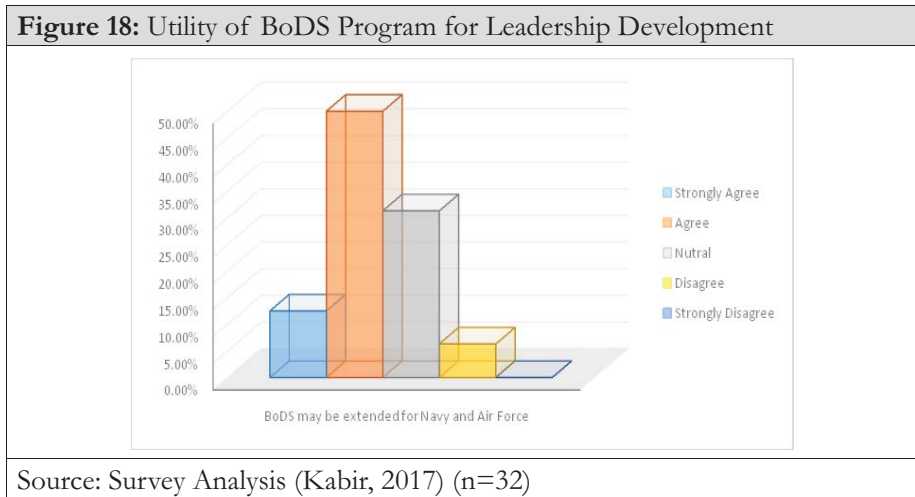


Source: Survey Analysis (Kabir, 2017)(n=32)

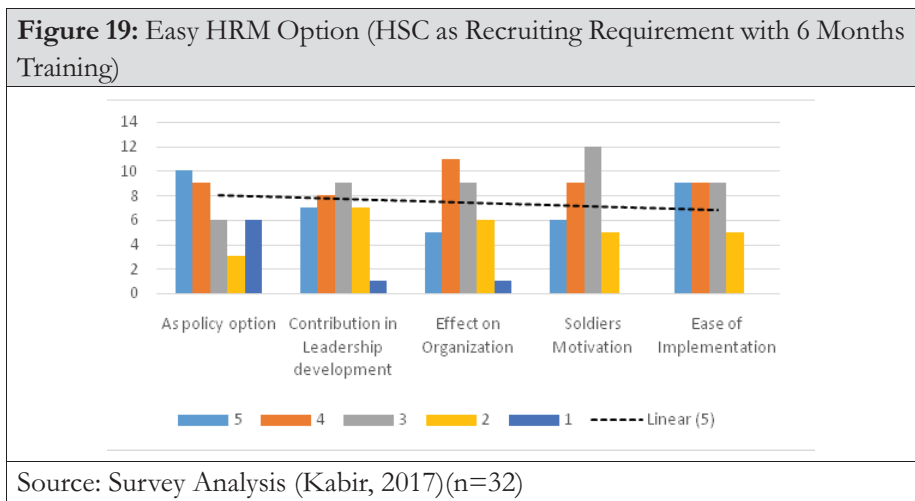
Higher education and training definitely increase confidence. To take higher responsibilities, higher education and training is a requirement. However, our training facilities are being saturated. Any additional requirement or foreseeing the future expansion of the forces we need to focus on developing infrastructure



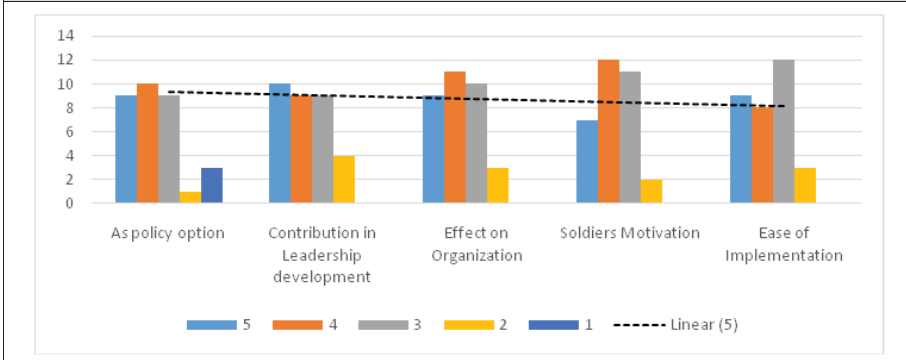
and other training facilities to manage our training effectively. In this scenario, existing facilities and good academic program for soldiers like BoDS may be pursued (Ahmed, 2017 and Serniabat, 2017). This is substantiated by survey analysis as illustrated below:



Keeping the above three aspects in mind: objectivity of leadership development, synchronized training system and ease of implementation in terms of existing infrastructure, HRM option 3 is better than the other options. Survey analysis presented below also provides a clear picture about all the options' credibility and shortfalls:



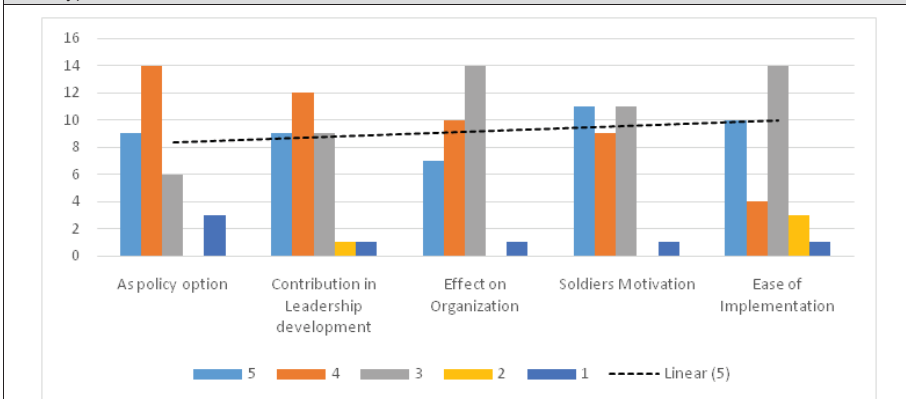
**Figure 20:** Military Training with Less Focused Civil Education (SSC as Recruiting Requirement with 1 year Training and Certificate Courses for HSC)



Source: Survey Analysis (Kabir, 2017)(n=32)

Trend line of highest score (5) is downward sloping (8 to 7) for option 1 and (9 to 8) for option 2 as shown above, while trend line is upward sloping (8 to 10) for option 3 as shown below:

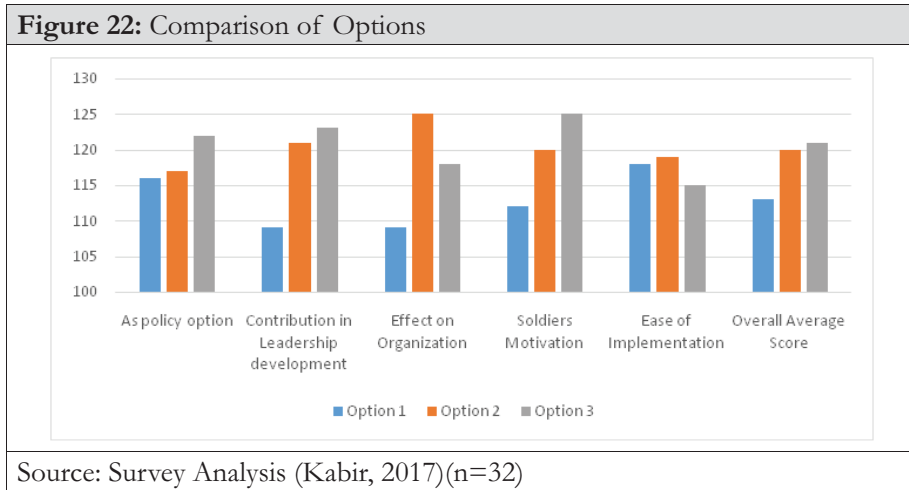
**Figure 21:** Military Training with Focused Civil Education (SSC/HSC both as Recruiting Requirement with 1 year/6 Months Training with Higher Military Study)



Source: Survey Analysis (Kabir, 2017)(n=32)

During comparison of options, it is found that Option 3 scored highest in three indicators: as policy option, contribution in leadership development and soldier’s motivation, while option 2 scored highest in terms of ease of implementation and effect on organization. However, based on overall average score considering

all factors option 3 is the best suited option as shown below:



**Preferred Option:** Based on the subjective and objective analysis it is deduced that options 3 would be the preferred HRM option for Armed Forces as it has overall advantage over other options. It is expected to provide better motivation as per Vroom’s (1964) expectancy theory, provide a professional recognition to the selected NCOs and generate urge for professional competency among soldiers if adopted as policy option.

## Conclusion

Sustainable development strategy needs focused improvements of internal functionality of any organization. Achieving such competency need to be nurtured through a careful progressive HRD process. Soldiering being a unique profession needs transformational leadership at different tires. The research shows that, levels of quality education influences cognitive dimension of human being, influences his leadership qualities and contributes to vertical development of the organization which supported the research hypothesis. However, quality junior leadership depends on much more wider range of issues. Leadership experience, progressive training coupled with quality education is critical for such potential leadership development.

Despite many positive indicators of the education environment of the country, the overall quality of education remains a matter of continuing concern. In such context, SSC as education requirements set for recruiting soldiers’ shows general

agreement, however, indicates rooms for improvement in fulfilling subsequent professional requirements. The training system in Armed Forces are adequate for skill development and career progression but also needs improvement for corresponding qualitative development of junior leadership. There are some grey areas in institutional leadership training. A synchronized training system across Armed Forces, considering the requirements of all services and trade requirements and integrating the best practices of different services may address the issue.

Higher education is very much required for developing leadership qualities while HSC is expected to meet the requirement of rank status. Adequate emphasis is given on attaining HSC across three services of Armed Forces. However, military training system is unique in nature and has trivial relationship with civil education as such unable to address the differing requirement. This pose HRM challenges and requires to look for alternative policy options. The research examined three possible HRM options: higher level intake, integration of military training curriculum with civil education and focused civil education for grooming junior leadership. Analyzing comparative advantages from subjective and objective point of view, focused civil education along with military education option was found to be preferable option. That is, Intake SSC or HSC as convenient, fulfil HSC for all, but pursue academic higher study for leadership development on selection basis through military curriculum. It is expected to provide better motivation as per Vroom's expectancy theory, provide a professional recognition to the selected NCOs and generate urge for professional competency among soldiers if adopted as policy option.

## **Recommendations**

After comparative analysis of the HRM options from subjective and objective point of view the study puts forward contemplated policy level and few operational/ functional level recommendations. Details are as follows:

### **Policy Recommendations**

- Focused civil education along with military education with objectivity of leadership development should be adopted as a policy option in all services of Armed Forces for a sustained vertical organizational development. That is, intake SSC or HSC as convenient, fulfil HSC for all, but pursue academic

higher study on selection basis through military curriculum.

- Formulating a policy guideline to select NCOs for higher study.

### **Operational/Functional Recommendations**

- A synchronized military training system for leadership development at each levels of career progression need to be worked out for all services of Armed Forces.
- Need to select military subjects or field of study corresponding HSC certificate and careful preparation of syllabus that contributes to leadership development. Necessary coordination needs to be done with BTEB to get accreditations.
- Extension of BoDS program/other higher study options in all services. Necessary coordination needs to be done to get accreditations with the concerned Universities.
- Capacity building of existing education centres/institutions and support facilities across Armed Forces for smooth implementations.
- Upon development of a workable environment, pilot projects may be taken up with suitable field formations, with a view to test, validate and implement the policy before adopting for the entire Armed Forces.

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## **Author**

Lieutenant Colonel Mohammad Reazul Kabir, afwc, psc, G was commissioned on 11 June 1998 with 38th Bangladesh Military Academy Long Course in the Corps of Artillery. He served two Field Artillery Regiments, one Medium Artillery Regiment and one Locating Unit. He Commanded a Field Artillery Regiment. He served as Instructor Gunnery in the School of Artillery. He also served in two Cadet Colleges as Adjutant and Instructor Class B. He served under the blue helmet as Contingent Member in United Nations Mission in Cote D' Ivoire and as a Military Observer in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Besides military courses at home, he also did mid-career course in Pakistan. He completed Gunnery Staff course. He is a graduate of Defence Services Command and Staff College and alumni of Armed Forces War Course Wing at National Defence College. He is pursuing MPhil on Strategy and Deveopment Studies under Bangladesh University of Professionals in the field of Human Resource Management. Presently, he is serving as General Staff Officer 1 in Headquarters, 19 Infantry Division.