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PGD-KIM

Learnings From the Postgraduate Diploma in
Knitwear Industry Management (PGD-KIM)
Program (*Intake-8*)

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| DESING

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Background

The ready-made garments (RMG) sector has emerged as a key driver of economic growth in Bangladesh, contributing a substantial 83% of export earnings and 20% of the total gross domestic product (GDP). This sector also provides employment opportunities for approximately four million people (Export Promotion Bureau, n.d.). However, despite its significance, the RMG sector faces several challenges, one of which pertains to the availability of a skilled workforce. Bangladesh continues to rely on foreign nationals to fill mid-level positions within the RMG sector due to the lack of adequately skilled domestic manpower. Presently, there are around 200,000 foreigners working in these mid-level positions, including individuals from Sri Lanka, India, and China. Consequently, approximately 5 billion USD are being drained from the country annually (Export Promotion Bureau, n.d.).

In an effort to address this issue, the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BKMEA) has undertaken various initiatives, such as enhancing productivity and improving the social compliance status of its member factories. However, these efforts have not yielded the desired results, and the industry continues to face challenges in sourcing skilled local workers at mid and high levels. This dearth of skilled workers can be attributed to several factors, namely inadequate negotiation and bargaining skills, limited understanding of international markets and strategies, and communication barriers arising from language differences (Knit Communique, 2015).

To tackle the shortage of skilled workers, the Bangladesh government, under its National Skills Development Policy (2011), initiated the Skills for Employment Investment Program (SEIP). This program has received funding support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). As part of its efforts to enhance the skills of mid- to high-level managers in the RMG sector, SEIP has established an Executive Development Centre (EDC) at the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), Brac University along with three other universities. The EDC aims to provide advanced training and development opportunities to executives working in the sector. In 2018, the EDC introduced a fully funded, non-residential nine-month diploma course known as the Post Graduate Diploma in Knitwear Industry Management (PGD-KIM). This program is open to fresh graduates and mid- and high-level staff working in the RMG sector who wish to advance their careers in the knitwear industry. The primary goal of PGD-KIM is to cultivate skilled local managers and reduce the reliance on foreign managers.

This report aims to comprehensively analyze the ongoing dynamics within the PGD-KIM program and identify areas that warrant further development by addressing the following research questions:

- What is the positioning of each actor (EDC, trainers, students, and supervisors) within the program, and what is the nature of their relationships?

- What are the gender, fresher, and dropout dynamics associated with the program?
- What are the perceptions of trainers and students regarding the course content, and what opportunities for improvement can be identified?
- What is the overall perception of the program from the standpoint of all actors involved?

Program Overview

The PGD-KIM program encompasses various stages, including student evaluation, result issuance for the starting of a new term. Although the program's duration is nine months, the academic structure indicates that it takes a year to complete. The program is divided into three terms, with each term spanning three months. The first term focuses on generic courses, the second term delves into industry-specific subjects, and the third term involves an internship experience.

During the initial three months of the first term, the program aims to develop students' fundamental skills through a set of four courses, each carrying three credits.

1st term courses

- KIM 101:** HR Skills and Competencies
- KIM 102:** Analytical Skills and Competencies
- KIM 103:** Communication Skills
- KIM 104:** Business Operation Skills

Although these courses primarily cover generic topics, they are taught within the context of the knitwear industry. For instance, the Communication Skills course focuses on RMG-based communication skills, while the Analytical Skills and Competencies

course addresses problem-solving processes specific to factory settings.

In contrast, the second term concentrates entirely on subjects directly relevant to the garment industry. The courses offered during this term revolve around the functions of different departments within the garment sector. The second term, similar to the first term, offers four courses, each carrying three credits.

Finally, the third term involves a three-month internship, during which students gain practical experience by working directly in a factory. Each student is required to work in at least five sections within the factory, supervised by an industrial supervisor.

2nd term courses

- KIM 201:** Introduction to the Garments Industry,
- KIM 202:** Industrial Engineering,
- KIM 203:** Fashion & Merchandising
- KIM 204:** Quality & Supply Chain Management.

Throughout the internship period, students are expected to make note of their insights and experiences. They then submit a written report detailing their findings under the guidance of an assigned academic supervisor.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed methods research design—a research approach or methodology that involves the collection and integration of both qualitative and quantitative data within a single investigation or across multiple studies. By utilizing this approach, researchers can gather a broader range of data and merge different types of evidence to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem at hand. (Almeida, 2018).

Quantitative Methodology

We conducted a quantitative survey with the aim to gather students' perceptions of the course. To construct the sample list, we obtained data from the EDC, which included the students' names, gender, batch, intake, and contact details. The survey comprised three batches (19, 20, and 21) from the 8th intake, covering all three terms: Term 1 (generic course), Term 2 (industry-specific course), and Term 3 (internship). To administer the survey, we utilized Google Forms, which provided a structured questionnaire to all 93 students. We received a total of 63 responses, indicating a response rate of approximately 75%. Notably, only 9.2% of the respondents identified as female. The data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, enabling us to interpret the findings.

Respondents' Profile

Table 1 provides an overview of the participants' characteristics. On average, the participants are 31 years old; of whom, only about 11% are women, while the majority are men. Although there are no

specific educational requirements for entry-level positions in the RMG industry, higher education can be advantageous for progression into managerial or technical roles. Hiring institutions may prefer candidates with at least an Honours degree in a relevant field for technical and managerial positions, such as production or assistant managers.

The majority of the participants (66%) have an educational background in RMG-related subjects, including Textile Engineering, Apparel Manufacturing, Knitwear Manufacturing and Technology, and Fashion Design and Technology, among others. The average work experience before the application is around 6%. The majority of the participants (89%) are currently employed in RMG-related sectors.

Table 1: Profile of Survey Respondents

characteristics	Students
Age (years)	30.8
Gender (%)	
Male	88.9
Female	11.1
Education (%)	
Honours	68.25
Master's	31.75
Subject (%)	
RMG-related	66.67
Business and Economics	31.75
Others	1.59
Status during application	
Years of experience before application (%)	5.87
N	63

Qualitative Methodology

The qualitative component of this research involved engaging a diverse range of stakeholders from the PGD-KIM program and utilizing various qualitative research tools to achieve the study objectives. The participant selection process was designed to ensure maximum diversity. Key qualitative methods employed included in-depth interviews (IDIs) and key-informant interviews (KIIs). The research focused on a small group of 16 individuals, with the majority participating in IDIs. A total of 12 online and four face-to-face interviews were conducted for this purpose.

In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)

IDIs served as a crucial tool in this study, providing a means to gain insights into the program from multiple perspectives. Out of the 14 IDIs conducted, six involved students. Care was taken to include a diverse range of participants, with interviews conducted with freshers, dropouts, and employed students, comprising both male and female participants. The purpose of these interviews was to uncover participants' viewpoints and challenges from different angles. Additionally, two academic and two industrial trainers were interviewed to provide a detailed understanding of the program's various advantages and disadvantages. Furthermore, two industrial supervisors and two academic supervisors were also interviewed to gain insights into the dynamics of the program's internship component. These interviews are expected to be highly valuable in understanding the overall status of the program.

Key-Informant Interviews (KIIs)

KIIs were primarily conducted to gain an understanding of the supply-side activities and challenges. In this study, the EDC team members responsible for the program's implementation were considered key informants. Two EDC team members were interviewed through KIIs to gain insights into the overall functioning of the program, covering institutional aspects of the PGD-KIM program, as well as student and trainer engagement.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents in Collection Methods

Respondents	Tool	Number of respondents
Academic trainers	IDI	2
Industrial trainers	IDI	2
Supervisors (academic & industrial)	IDI	4
Students	IDI	6
EDC (Management Team)	KII	2

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data, with all interviews recorded and transcribed. To ensure data validation, inter-tool data triangulation was maintained during the qualitative data analysis process. Codes were extracted from the interview transcripts, and the data were organized according to thematic categories using these codes.

Findings

Different Stakeholders and Their Activities

The PGD-KIM program involves key stakeholders who actively participate throughout its duration. These stakeholders include the EDC, students, trainers, and additional supervisors in the third term. Trainers and supervisors can be categorized into two types: academic and industrial, each with distinct responsibilities within the diploma program. Academic trainers are responsible for teaching the generic courses in the first term, while industrial trainers provide instruction in industry-specific courses during the second term. During the internship in the third term, industrial supervisors oversee students within their respective industries, while academic supervisors assist students in writing the final report in adherence to Brac University guidelines.

The PGD-KIM program is supervised by the EDC team, which is responsible for overseeing the program and communicating with stakeholders, arranging logistic support, and ensuring its smooth completion. The EDC team collaborates with external stakeholders, such as the SEIP, which represents the Bangladesh government and provides oversight for the program.

“The course is especially valuable because prior to its implementation, there were no similar programs available for the RMG sector. Previously, training programs were only conducted for short periods of 8 to 10 days. The Analytical Skills course offered within the PGD-KIM program is particularly beneficial, and the curriculum covers all necessary skills for managerial positions, including communication and HR skills. Our reports indicate that many individuals have advanced their careers through this program. Therefore, it is highly likely that the course will continue to be useful for individuals in the RMG sector in the future.

- An ECD Official

BKMEA also plays a vital role in supporting the program, addressing industry-related needs and promoting the PGD-KIM program alongside SEIP.

Insights From EDC

Activity and Perception

The PGD-KIM program is a collaborative initiative between SEIP and Brac University. The coordination and management of the program are primarily handled by the EDC team. Their responsibilities include promoting the program, managing applications, conducting admission tests, and overseeing the entire program's execution and completion. Effective communication with all stakeholders is a crucial aspect of their role. The EDC team directly interacts with various relevant stakeholders, including the government, which is responsible for connecting BKMEA with the program, and Brac University, which communicates with the University Grants Commission (UGC) for course approval.

The EDC team believes that the PGD-KIM program is highly beneficial to individuals working in the RMG sector, and that the positive outcomes of the program will become visible within a few years. However, they acknowledge that a major challenge is the limited time frame available to complete the comprehensive course.

Prior to each intake, the EDC team develops a work plan and initiates a promotional campaign, with BKMEA playing a crucial role in promoting the program within the industry. BKMEA disseminates information about the program to factories, while the EDC team also advertises through national newspapers and utilizes the social media platforms of BIGD and Brac University for promotion. Additionally, a significant portion of promotion occurs through informal channels, leveraging the informal community of past and present trainers and students of the program to spread awareness about the PGD-KIM program.

Challenges of EDC

with the Brac University calendar. However, there are certain constraints that differentiate it from regular academic courses. For instance, the PGD-KIM program requires makeup classes for any missed sessions. Moreover, scheduling examinations can be challenging due to the uniform semester end time for all courses at Brac University, necessitating adjustments in the schedule.

In practice, the most significant challenge faced by the EDC is coordinating the schedules of both students and trainers. Given their busy professional lives, rescheduling classes can prove to be quite difficult. Despite these obstacles, the EDC team continues to make progress in implementing the program. Moreover, they consider the high dropout rate as a significant challenge to the program's overall success. To address this issue, they are presently engaged in discussions with SEIP on potential strategies to reduce dropout rates.

Insights From Trainers

The trainers involved in the PGD-KIM program can be classified into two categories: academic trainers and industry-based trainers. Academic trainers are typically sourced from Brac University's network and are responsible for teaching the generic courses in the first term. On the other hand, industry-based trainers join the program in the second term and bring their industry experience to deliver industry-specific courses. Our study findings indicate that both types of trainers hold a positive view of the PGD-KIM program and recognize its significance in creating effective leadership within Bangladesh's RMG sector. The trainers also expressed their appreciation for the well-organized structure of the PGD-KIM program.

“ The PGD-KIM program is an executive course that covers a broad range of basic and essential topics. It consists of four courses in the first term, and the curriculum is similar to a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degree. The program is beneficial for individuals with a technical background who may not possess strong soft skills, such as communication and leadership abilities. Therefore, the program's focus on developing business skills is vital for such individuals. Overall, the program is valuable and serves as a good diploma program.

- A female academic trainer

Perception About the EDC and Its Logistic Support

The trainers in the PGD-KIM program expressed overall satisfaction with the EDC and reported a positive experience with necessary communication and support. They appreciated EDC's responsiveness, supportiveness, and flexibility in accommodating schedule rearrangements when needed. The

trainers, who often balance their regular professional work with teaching in the program, acknowledged that evaluating exams could be stressful with deadlines approaching, but EDC showed patience and understanding in such situations.

“ I have no complaints in terms of EDC. They provided all necessary documents, including class routines, timely. They also communicated with us and the students regularly to follow up on all these things. EDC was to consider this as we have a huge workload besides this course. They always maintained communication regularly so that we could cover all the classes properly in time, and we always got support. They were always very considerate of any emergencies we had.

- A trainer

While academic trainers had more interaction and communication with EDC, industrial trainers, though they did not face any major issues while conducting the training, reported limited contact beyond personal interactions with a few individuals. Communication between industrial trainers and EDC was primarily through formal emails, and some trainers expressed the need for more informal interactions.

“ I have met only three times with the people who run this program, that too at their workshop at BRAC Centre or in any program where they talk about the impact they have made, and from there I got to know their course expectations, objectives, and delivery accordingly. Apart from that, I don't have much contact with them.

- A trainer

Although the trainers expressed their satisfaction with the logistical support

provided by EDC, they also highlighted a few areas for improvement. For instance, due to the three-hour continuous classes, trainers opined that providing refreshments such as food, water, or tea during the breaks would be beneficial. Additionally, the trainers mentioned the absence of a reference list or guidelines for their course, which could result in inconsistencies among different trainers' lectures. To address this, they proposed the idea of coordinating lectures and references among trainers to ensure consistency in course delivery.

Perception About Students

According to feedback from the trainers, the students in the PGD-KIM program are generally considered good, but some face challenges in concentrating for 3 hours long periods due to work pressure. However, trainers have observed an improvement in the quality of students over time, especially for those who have taught multiple intakes. Communication with the students has not been problematic, and trainers maintain interactions with students through a WhatsApp group and over the phone to provide any necessary assistance.

“ I got some good batches, some average batches, but out of 35, 15-20 got the best output, and the rest were average. But [it is] not like that others don't understand, they are also graduates and have work experience.

- An academic trainer

Trainers in the PGD-KIM program face the challenge of dealing with heterogeneity among the students.

According to some trainers, the students have varying levels of experience, ranging from freshers to individuals with over 10 years of experience in the RMG industry. This diversity can lead to different expectations and difficulties since experienced individuals may find the course material repetitive, while those with less experience may struggle to relate to certain topics. As a result, trainers have to cater to the different needs and expectations of the students.

“ There are two distinct groups of students for whom this course has very little impact. For one group, the course is too difficult to understand, and for the other group, it is too easy and does not add much value. There is a small group in the middle for whom the course is just okay. It is not clear what should be done about this situation.

- An academic trainer

To address this challenge, trainers suggested reducing the gap between students' work experience to improve the overall learning experience. However, it is important to note that even with varying skill levels, students are still able to learn and progress in the program. Beginners can take their time to grasp the concepts and receive assistance from their more experienced classmates.

Insights From Students

The majority of students enrolled in the PGD-KIM program are already working in the RMG sector at a mid-level position. Some fresh graduates interested in pursuing a career in the industry have also joined the program. These students have a strong desire to gain a comprehensive understanding of the garment industry beyond their specific department and to advance their careers. They have high

expectations of learning from experienced professionals from different industries and benefiting from their expertise.

Most students expressed satisfaction with the program and felt that their expectations were largely met.

“ The best thing here is that now I know the basics of cross-functional knowledge of departments other than my own. Although not very detailed, the basic concept is there. I can talk about other departments when it comes to work and they appreciate it. This is my biggest takeaway from PGD.

- A satisfied student

As students progress through the program, they become more confident and ambitious about their career prospects. According to our quantitative analysis, approximately 40% of all the students aspire to reach the position of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in the next 10 years, while around 25% aim for managerial positions.

“ After doing the course, I realized that my skills have improved a lot. This will have a lot of impact on my future career. It will help us a lot to take us to the leading position.

- A female student

When asked about their expected income in the next 10 years, both men and women expressed a similar outlook, expecting it to be around BDT 100,000 and above.

Onboarding Process

In most cases, students learn about the PGD-KIM program through its promotion on social media platforms and join the program after gathering information and making inquiries on

their own initiative. While in other cases, they are introduced to the program by their seniors or colleagues from universities or the industry who have previously completed the program. Positive feedback and recommendations from these individuals motivate the students to enrol. Quantitative survey results, depicted in Figure 1, indicate that social media platforms, particularly Facebook, serve as the primary source of information for the PGD-KIM program, as reported by over 44% of respondents. Additionally, colleagues (31%) and friends (18%) also play a significant role in disseminating information about the program.

“ At first I came to know about this course from LinkeIn Some of the PGD graduates were showing their certificates there. Then I spoke to my colleagues and supervisors about this and everyone spoke well of the course and appreciated it, so I joined without looking back.

- A student

However, it is worth noting that the involvement of program alumni in actively informing others is rather poor—a little over 1%—which suggests a potential area for improvement.

According to the students, the onboarding process of the PGD-KIM program, starting from the application for admission to the admission test, is considered fair and smooth. Around 68% of students rated the procedure as “good,” while 30% rated it as “very good.” After learning about the program through various means, they follow the application rules and undergo an assessment test. Those who perform well in the test are called for a viva. Admission is granted to those who excel in the viva, and they receive confirmation via email. The overall process is transparent and straightforward. Additionally, at the beginning of the program, students receive an orientation where they are provided with information about the program outline.

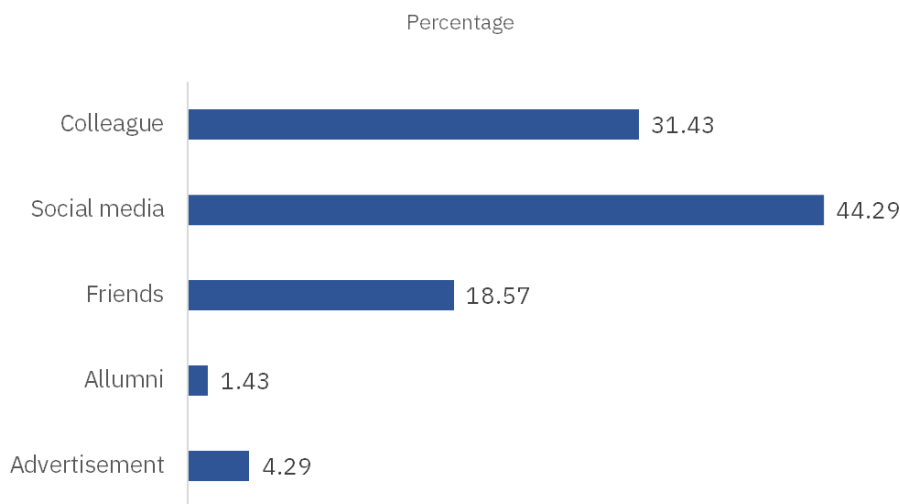


Figure 1: Sources of Information About the PGD-KIM Program



Figure 2: The Orientation Program of PGD-KIM Students (Intake-8)

Experience With the EDC and Its Logistic Support

Students have minimal direct interaction with the EDC team, and they primarily reach out to the team only when they encounter a problem. However, the students expressed that the EDC team is responsive and prompt in addressing their concerns. In the quantitative survey, students were asked if they had any complaints about the program and whether those complaints were resolved. An overwhelming majority (97%) stated that they had no complaints, while the remaining students reported being satisfied with the resolution of their concerns. Additionally, students expressed overall satisfaction with the logistics support provided by the EDC team. They mentioned that the required course materials were easily accessible outside the classroom, eliminating the need for extensive travel.

“ Their overall organization is fairly good. However, there was no need to communicate much with anyone. Our class materials were available outside the classroom, which was good.

-A student

Despite the positive aspects, students also highlighted some minor issues they encountered during the course. Notably, there were instances where students needed to search the internet using Google for class-related information, but they faced challenges due to the lack of internet access in the classroom.

“ One limitation of the logistics support was that Brac University did not provide us with Wi-Fi access during the course. Although there was mobile data available, it did not always work properly in the classrooms. As a result, we often missed out on the opportunity to search for information on Google during class. We would have to rely on someone else’s mobile data, if it was working properly, to access the internet.

- A student

Experience With the Trainers

Overall, the students hold a positive view of the trainers in the PGD-KIM program. According to our quantitative analysis, more than 75% of students rated the supervisors, both industrial and academic, highly for their behaviour towards them. Similarly, around 70% of students expressed satisfaction with the trainers' behaviour throughout the three terms of the program. The students appreciated the trainers' sincerity and helpfulness. At the beginning of the class, trainers would provide their contact numbers to students, encouraging them to reach out for assistance outside of class time if needed. Additionally, each trainer maintained a separate WhatsApp group for communication with the students. The trainers were also interactive during class sessions, sharing their work experiences, which the students found valuable.

“ All the trainers were very professional, I really liked it. Teachers used to share their professional life difficulties with us. They used to share the problems they faced at work. After listening to everyone's ideas, they shared their type of solution from their experience; this method is very effective.

- A student

While the overall class experience was positive, students identified a few areas for improvement in the program. They suggested that the trainers incorporate more interactive and practical elements into their teaching style. Making the course content more engaging and relevant to the students' interests and career goals could also enhance the learning experience. Students emphasized the importance of seeking feedback from them

regarding the trainers' teaching style and course content, as this feedback can help trainers make necessary adjustments and improvements. Regular assessment and updating of teaching methods, according to the students, are crucial to ensure that the course remains dynamic and effective.

Course Overview

As mentioned earlier, the PGD-KIM program, apart from the internship in the third term, consists of eight courses that are spread across the first two terms. These courses are classified into two categories: generic and industry-specific. During the first term, students focus on generic courses, while in the second term, they delve into industry-specific courses. It is crucial to highlight that all the courses and their content undergo approval by Brac University through the UGC before being included in the program. This ensures that the courses meet the necessary standards and requirements set by the university.

Course Content

The trainers and students generally find the course material in the PGD-KIM program to be essential and relevant. In Bangladesh, academic studies often lack practical, work-related skills, leading to graduates having insufficient soft skills. The PGD-KIM program aims to effectively address this gap in the RMG sector.

Trainers also believe that the course content is industry-relevant and that the syllabus is well-designed. They acknowledge that the course provides valuable fundamental knowledge about various departments within the RMG sector. As most industry executives primarily focus on their specific department, they have a limited

understanding of other departments and their overall role in the industry. The trainers believe that this course helps bridge that gap by providing students with a holistic understanding of the industry.

“ I find that my course, Business Operations Skills, is truly enlightening for the students. In this course, everyone gains an understanding of the industry’s business model and where their own work fits within it. Many students already understand their work but need to develop their communication and leadership skills. This is why I believe my course is so eye-opening for them.

- An academic trainer

One of the EDC team members explained how the syllabus for the PGD-KIM program was developed professionally in consultation with major stakeholders of the RMG sector and also noted the concerning feedback they received from trainers and students.

“ Our curriculum is approved by the UGC and was developed after conducting a needs assessment with factory owners and individuals in high-level managerial positions. The aim was to create a curriculum that would build the skills needed for the industry. However, while I believe the content is suitable, the feedback we receive from trainers and students is that there is too much content for the allotted time. Those topics are needed, they need to be known, but maybe the time is being given to us a little less.

- An academic trainer

However, the trainers noted that their knowledge is limited to their specific course and that they are not fully aware of the entire syllabus.

Students were also found to be satisfied with the course content. They believe it

to be relevant to their needs and found the courses to be well-designed.

Based on the feedback received from both trainers and students, the content of the PGD-KIM course is generally considered satisfactory at a fundamental level, but there is a need for updates and improvements in certain areas. Some courses are noted to be overly theoretical and lack practical relevance.

“ While the content of the syllabus was generally good, one course in particular, Analytical Skills, was overly theoretical and not very useful for us. It focused on economic theory that did not necessarily apply to our work. Another course, Business Operational Skills, could have provided us with more practical knowledge. Additionally, there were some academic subjects that were not very relevant to our needs.

Additionally, the depth of industry-affiliated courses is often limited due to time constraints, as they are divided into two parts and taught within a limited number of classes.

During the quantitative analysis, when students were asked to rank their satisfaction level with the course content, the results showed that student satisfaction is below 50% for both the first and second terms, which raises concerns about the overall satisfaction with the course content.

Effective communication skills are crucial in the RMG sector, as they involve communicating with subordinates, superiors, and foreign buyers at different levels. Many PGD-KIM students already have work experience in the sector and are familiar with their job responsibilities. However, the main obstacle to reducing foreign dependence at higher levels in

the industry is the communication weaknesses of native officials. While Bangladeshi workers are not less skilled than their foreign counterparts, they often lack presentation, communication, and confidence. Trainers and students alike in the PGD-KIM program believe that communication skills are a significant weakness among Bangladeshi workers in the RMG sector.

“ At the start of each batch, I always ask students where they feel they are lacking or facing challenges, and they frequently tell me that they struggle with communication skills. They have a good understanding of their work, but lack confidence in their abilities. In comparison to foreign managers, they feel less self-assured.

- An academic trainer

While English language skills are emphasized in the program for communication with foreign buyers, students consider grammar less important than the ability to communicate effectively. Additionally, it is important to note that buyers from countries like China and Spain may not have a strong command of English; so clear and easy-to-understand English becomes necessary.

“ Another course we had was on communication skills, which focused more on one-to-one conversations rather than conversations with buyers. While there was some content on communicating with buyers, it wasn't sufficient and needed more detail. Communication with buyers involves negotiating, presenting oneself, and marketing skills, which are particularly relevant for my work in a foreign buying house. While the course covered these topics, more in-depth information was needed.

- A student

In the Communication Skills course, a primary focus is placed on teaching reading and writing skills. The course also covers writing formal business emails. However, a student raised a point regarding the distinctive style of official emails in the RMG sector.

“ In this sector, no one reads large emails, just write down your needs in a nutshell. In this case, I cannot say how much the communication course in PGD will be useful.

- A student

A trainer acknowledged that the content of the Communication Skills course could go deeper but noted that there are limitations in going beyond the prescribed course outline approved by the UGC.

EDC officials stated that the course content is updated periodically, and that they consider students' suggestions for improvement after discussing them with the faculty. In this regard, three workshops have already been conducted to address such issues. However, they also mentioned that certain obligations exist.

“ The curriculum is approved by UGC, so the main outline of the course cannot be altered, but we can make updates to the sub-content as necessary. Occasionally, some faculty may teach additional material that goes beyond the curriculum.

- An ECD official

The discrepancy between the trainers' and EDC officials' statements regarding the possibility of making changes to the course content suggests the need for further clarification and coordination.

Learning Process

The learning style of the PGD-KIM program has received positive feedback from both students and trainers. Students appreciate the dedication and sincerity of most trainers in teaching them. The results of our quantitative analysis also reflect similar satisfaction levels for the lecture quality of the trainers, with Term 2 and Term 1 showing satisfaction rates of 51% and 46%, respectively. Trainers in the second term, who often possess extensive working experience in the RMG industry, have been particularly commended for sharing their practical experiences during class discussions—real-life challenges and methods to overcome them—facilitating strong student engagement.

“ I was impressed with the professionalism of all the trainers. They used to share their personal work challenges with us and discuss how to solve them. After listening to everyone’s ideas, they shared their own experience with solutions, which I found to be very effective.

- A student

However, the trainers have identified some challenges faced by students enrolled in the PGD-KIM program. Many students have full-time jobs and must contend with long commutes and traffic congestion to attend their three-hour-long classes. Consequently, maintaining focus in class can be challenging. Trainers recognize that traditional lecture-based approaches may not be effective in such cases, as students may quickly lose interest. To address this, they have adopted classwork strategies to foster student engagement throughout the course.

“ In my course communication, I think there is no point in teaching the lecture base. I try to work application based. I moderate their activities from prom to speech, prom to presentation and all that.

- A trainer

The trainers also expressed their empathy towards the students, who are working full-time, often in far away factories while taking classes. One trainer explains how he adapts his pedagogy to accommodate the realities faced by the students

“ Students come here from far and wide to jam, so if the classes are monotonous, they don’t stay focused. In that case, I tell them you don’t need to memorize, you just combine these things with your work. Really try to motivate them which is their strong area, which is their weak area

- A trainer

Furthermore, both students and trainers expressed concerns about the limited time available, which often hindered their ability to implement effective learning methods. The constraints of a vast syllabus and a limited number of classes meant that interactive sessions were not always feasible, despite the desire to engage students actively. Our quantitative analysis revealed that 49% of students in the first term were satisfied with the lecture duration, but this satisfaction decreased to 43% in the second term.

Some students mentioned that while most trainers employed effective teaching methods, one or two courses suffered from either dull content or ineffective teaching styles. Additionally, students pointed out that the number of examinations in the course was excessively high, resulting in increased stress.

“ What I feel about this course is that the number of tests is too high. I think it was getting too stressful for so many exams. It seems to concentrate more on the exam than the lecture. And at this level, no one has that mental stage to memorize the exam. This test procedure can be revised a bit.

- A student

Trainers also highlighted the challenge of evaluating students within a 40-mark examination, especially considering the extensive writing required. They mentioned that the current testing method employed is quite conventional.

“ Students are not allowed to enter the exam hall with books, notebooks, or mobile phones during the examination here. But I often prefer the Open Book Exam. In this kind of exam, your book or mobile will be in front of you, and you will give the test but you will not be able to write by copying. I will give a problem that you have to solve yourself keeping the theories in mind. This seems to me to be a very effective method but I cannot test it for the system here.

- A trainer

Although there is room for improvement in certain aspects of the learning method, the overall approach is considered good by both trainers and students.

Gender Dynamics in PGD-KIM

The PGD-KIM program places particular emphasis on the importance of encouraging women executives in the RMG sector to enhance their skills. However, there is a noticeable disparity in the number of male and female participants in the course. The participation of women remains

significantly lower, although there has been an increase compared to the program's inception.

“ Our target is to increase the number of women but after qualifying the admission, there is not that much. For women, however, there is no specific number to be fixed, as long as it lasts for admission. Although SEIP's target is to achieve 30–50% women participation in the program, for now it is around 20%.

- An ECD official

Many individuals associated with PGD-KIM, including trainers, students, and EDC members, believe that the underrepresentation of women in executive-level positions within the garments industry impacts the number of women enrolled in the program.

We categorized the reported positions held by students into four categories: senior officials, upper-mid-level officials, mid-level officials, and junior officials. Figure 3, based on quantitative data, illustrates the underrepresentation of women in senior ranks. Furthermore, the number of men in upper-mid-level and mid-level positions, such as Senior Executives, and Senior Merchandisers, Deputy Managers, is more than six times higher than the number of women. Women constitute 42% of all senior merchandising positions compared to 26% of men in the same positions.

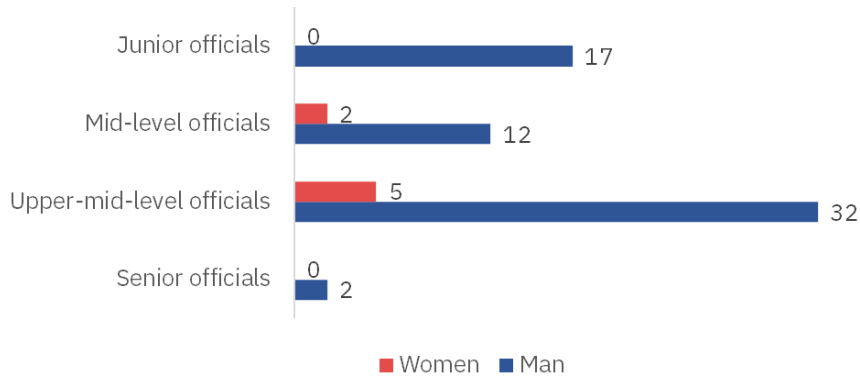


Figure 3: Distribution of Various Positions Held by PGD-KIM Students in the RMG Industry

In addition to these factors, societal gender roles create challenges for women in pursuing further education alongside their responsibilities in the family, particularly as the primary caretakers of children. Married women often face barriers imposed by their families. Additionally, distance poses a significant issue for both men and women, with most garment factories located in Gazipur, Narayanganj, Narsingdi, and Tongi. For women in particular, this distance adds extra pressure to attend courses while managing their professional and personal commitments.

“ There are very few girls in this RMG profession and therefore less in the course. Motivating girls to take up this course should actually motivate them to enter the profession. I have come to work here and I have seen that it can also be a very good profession for girls but people look down on it. It looks bad in our society. Those of us who still have conservative families are not preferred to this profession. Many of those who get married leave their jobs after marriage.

- A female student

When we examine the income distribution data from the quantitative survey (Figure 4), it becomes evident

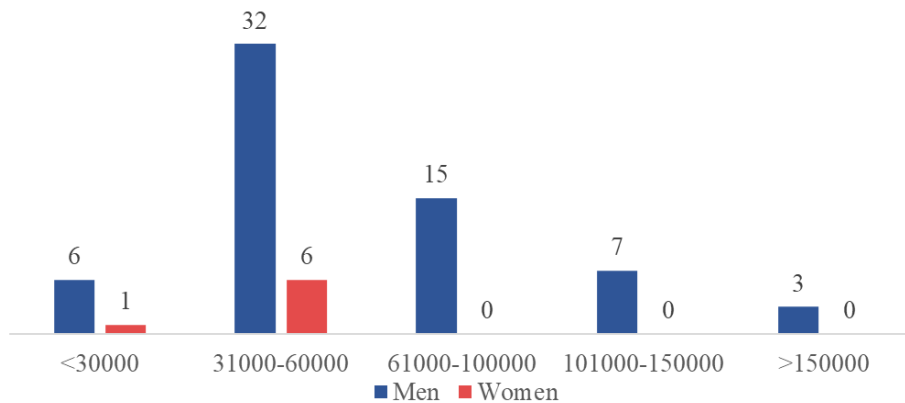


Figure 4: Income Distribution of PGD-KIM Students in the RMG Industry

that men are present in all income ranges surveyed, while women are confined to the lower end, primarily within 60,000 BDT. This disparity further highlights the significant absence of women in higher-ranking positions.

In addition to the aforementioned reasons, networking plays a crucial role in promoting the program, as personal communication is key. Some participants have suggested implementing special campaigns targeted at women, as they often have fewer social contacts than men, which means that information about the program may not reach them as easily.

“ Hybrid classes can be arranged to increase participation of women. Moreover, there is less campaigning about PGD-KIM. Most students, when asked, responded that they had discovered the course on their own. There is a lack of publicity and there is no separate initiative for female students.

- A female academic trainer

implemented targeted initiatives aimed at women, such as distributing leaflets and organizing discussions in girls' colleges like the Eden Mohila College and Bangladesh Home Economics College. These campaigns have started to yield positive results, as the presence of women in previous intakes has increased from 7–8% to present 20%.

“ Special campaign for girls has been carried out by SEIP. They hired a third party to do it. Some benefits are probably also available because our female students have increased compared to earlier. But we don't have any program regarding the working environment of women in the RMG sector.

- An ECD official

Dropout Dynamics in PGD-KIM

In PGD-KIM, dropout rates have been identified as a major obstacle in achieving the program objectives. Data obtained from EDC shows that some students drop out at the beginning of the program, while others drop out later, resulting in a waste of time and resources for both the students and the institution. A team member of EDC identified dropouts as their biggest challenge.

“ The most challenging part of this project is preventing dropouts. Many people come here from far away to attend classes but due to distance and traffic, many drop out. If they were given the opportunity in the next term, the dropout rate would have been reduced a lot, as retakes can be given at the university.

- An ECD official

which can make it difficult to obtain a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from new employers. Other factors such as non-cooperation at the workplace, family pressures, physical illness, pregnancy, and low attendance can also contribute to student dropouts. It should be noted that once a person drops out, even on the ground of a valid reason, they can never enrol in the program again. A female student shared that she dropped out due to physical illness.

“ I also submitted medical documents but they didn't count them. They said it was late. So I have to drop out. In this case, EDC could definitely do something if it wanted. Since I had a valid reason and had submitted all the documents, they could have easily considered it if they were a little more sincere.

- A female student

The EDC team members said that these causes of dropouts have been the subject of multiple discussions with SEIP, and these discussions are still ongoing. As part of their efforts to address this issue, they have planned to reduce the mandatory attendance from 80% to 70% to prevent dropouts. However, a decision regarding the re-enrollment of students who have been absent for an extended period with valid reasons, missed a term, or dropped out of the program is yet to be finalized.

“ SEIP has now brought down the compulsory attendance from 80% to 70% to reduce dropouts. However, no action has been taken so far to acknowledge the reproductive issue of girls or if the period is missed due to a valid reason. In fact, the course is a time-bound course, there are some technical problems, that’s why the initiative was not taken.

- An ECD official

Fresher Dynamics in PGD-KIM

The PGD-KIM program caters to both experienced professionals at executive levels in the RMG industry and fresh graduates aspiring to enter this sector. However, it has been observed that while there is a sufficient number of applications from freshers, only a small percentage of them are successful in passing the PGD-KIM entrance examination. This can be attributed to the course’s primary focus on executive-level knowledge and the lack of direct industry experience among freshers. Consequently, freshers may face challenges in comprehending theoretical concepts and applying them to practical scenarios. Nevertheless, this issue is relatively minor since freshers often have lower presence and frequently secure job placements

during the course. In this respect, the program allows freshers to establish a valuable network of contacts that can assist them in finding employment opportunities.

“ Since my academic background is [in] textile, I had plans to pursue a career in the RMG sector. That’s why I joined the PGD course. The topics of this course are mainly of management level, so joining freshers may find it difficult at first. Later, when I entered the job, this problem did not exist anymore.

- A currently employed fresher

Internship Overview

After completing the first and second terms of the PGD-KIM program within a span of six months, students are assigned a three-month internship to gain practical experience in an industrial setting. The primary objective of this internship is to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the previous two terms by working in a factory environment. Throughout the internship, each student is required to rotate through a minimum of five different departments, spending a minimum of 60 hours in each department. Additionally, a supervisor from the industry is assigned to oversee the student’s work and provide regular updates to the program. Prior to their enlistment as a supervisor, the program verifies the supervisor’s position within the industry.

Upon completion of the internship, each student is expected to submit a report based on their work experience. To assist in this process, an academic supervisor is assigned to provide guidance and support in writing the report.

An industrial supervisor expressed their observations on the practical application of the subjects learned by the students in the program.

“ When he is doing the course, there are some benefits of it, there is actually some implementation of it at the factory level as well. On the part of management, there are some problems at the factory level which need to be analyzed to find out the root causes. So in this course, some root-cause analysis techniques were taught which are now being implemented very well in our factory. This is what Kaiyum [pseudonym] is doing here. He shares with us what he learns from there. And he is already giving inputs into the industry work from his learning.

- An industrial supervisor

Students' Perception

Students also find value in applying the knowledge they have gained in class during their internship. Based on responses from the students, 58% expressed overall satisfaction with their ongoing internship experience. However, it should be noted that some students have encountered challenges in gaining access to all the departments recommended by their supervisors for their internship. Despite this issue, the supervisors, who were chosen by the students themselves, have generally been helpful and supportive throughout the internship period. Effective communication has not been a problem for most students, as they work in close proximity to their supervisors. However, for those who are employed, juggling their official work responsibilities with the demands of the internship can pose a significant challenge.

One student highlighted the issue of dedicating sixty hours to each department during the internship.

“ The problem is spending sixty hours in each department. In fact, we have to devote our time to our own work and these sixty hours of timing create a lot of pressure. Still, we are doing it but it will be better to consider this aspect next time. If it can be reduced by 5–7 hours from here, it will be better.

- A student

Industrial Supervisors' Perception

Industrial supervisors consider their students as their primary connection to the PGD-KIM program. Often, it is the students themselves who inform and request them to become supervisors. Upon receiving an invitation to an online meeting from the program, the supervisors are provided with information about the type of internship, their roles, and the students they will be supervising. While the supervisors expressed satisfaction with the students enrolled in the course, they mentioned that there was no discussion during the meeting with EDC about the course content or objectives. They believe that if they had a better understanding of the course prior to the meeting, they could provide more effective supervision to the students.

“ From what I have observed, a post-graduate diploma in this field is related to the industry. However, I cannot provide a detailed explanation. I had asked Kayes [the pseudonym of the supervisor's student] if there was anyone who could provide me with a better understanding of this course. That way, I could engage in more detailed discussions with him. It becomes challenging to speak about something when you don't have much knowledge about it. While I can contribute from an industry-level perspective, it is difficult to apply any academic concepts if I am unfamiliar with them.

- An industrial supervisor

Academic Supervisors' Perception

Academic supervisors are primarily contacted by EDC, and upon acceptance of their proposal, an online meeting is arranged involving all the academic and industry supervisors. During this meeting, they receive a briefing on the work and expectations for the students. Subsequently, the academic supervisors reach out to their assigned students via WhatsApp and email to schedule regular meetings. Typically, these meetings occur once a week online, allowing for task assignments and progress supervision.

Overall, like the industry supervisors, academic supervisors expressed their satisfaction with their students. They find the students to be actively engaged and motivated to learn, appreciating the opportunity to guide them in their career development.

“ The two students I have been very active and responsive. If you mail them, they reply to the mail very quickly. They are never late if meeting time is fixed and even after working all day, they are very active and try to complete their tasks properly.

- An academic supervisor

Role of EDC in Internship

EDC assumes the responsibility of verifying and approving internship proposals submitted by students, which necessitate the approval of a supervisor from their respective institution. If a proposal fails to meet the necessary criteria, the student is requested to resubmit it with appropriate person. In situations where freshers encounter difficulties in securing an internship independently, as noted earlier, EDC shares the student's name and location with BKMEA to facilitate internship opportunities in nearby industries.

EDC appoints academic supervisors for students one month after they commence their internships. These supervisors play a crucial role in guiding and assisting students in fulfilling their internship reports. The internship period spans four months, during which the EDC team conducts visits to the industries where students are engaged.

Upon completion of the internship, students are obligated to submit a report on their work, adhering to the prescribed format established by Brac University. The overarching aim of this process is to provide students with practical, hands-on experience and enable them to apply the knowledge acquired in the classroom to real-world scenarios.

Challenges of the PGD-KIM Program

While the PGD-KIM program has proven to be effective in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical industry experience, it is not without its challenges. From time constraints and logistical issues for the EDC to balancing diverse student backgrounds and maintaining engagement for trainers, and managing time, workplace challenges, and attendance for students, these challenges need to be addressed to further enhance the program's success.

Challenges for EDC

Conducting a comprehensive professional course like PGD-KIM on a large scale comes with its share of challenges, with time constraints being the most significant hurdle. The course syllabus and structure resemble that of a Master's program, yet it is a diploma course, making it demanding to complete within the allocated time

frame. Furthermore, a majority of students, including course trainers, are already employed, with many of them working in the RMG sector. Managing the course amidst such a tight schedule and with a diverse group of individuals poses a significant challenge, considering the irregular working hours prevalent in the RMG industry.

“ It is difficult to maintain time during make-up classes. Basically, the problem is from the side of the students. As their NOC mentions three days in a week, beyond that, they cannot leave the office for classes. This is why it is almost impossible to take make-up classes outside of those three days. These classes are mainly cancelled by the faculty, then the faculty talks to the students and fixes a time, then we provide logistical support accordingly. But we try not to take make-up classes beyond their NOC days. In this case, it can be seen that the semester gets delayed.

- An ECD official

EDC collaborates with Brac University to ensure logistical support for the program. One EDC member highlighted the challenge faced during university-wide examinations when there is a classroom crisis due to simultaneous scheduling.

“ During the exams, we have to face a bit of a challenge because at the same time, the exams are held in the whole university, so we have to manage a little bit, maybe by shifting the time or whatever.

- An ECD official

Additionally, EDC recognizes the issue of student dropout as a significant challenge. Regular discussions are held with SEIP to address this concern and develop strategies to reduce dropouts in the course. Steps are being planned for the future to tackle this issue effectively.

📦 Challenges for trainers

Trainers sometimes encounter difficulties when delivering class lectures, particularly due to the diverse range of students in the class, including both experienced professionals and freshers. Balancing the lecture content and teaching style to accommodate all students can be a challenge in certain cases.

“ Students come here from very good-level industries and students come from medium-level industries and freshers are also here, so it is challenging to work in harmony with all kinds of students. In my students, I have [students with] 12 years to 14 years of experience and in every batch, there are 3–4 freshers. So, when I give a lecture, if I take 12 years of experience as a base, then the fresher will not understand anything, and if I take the fresher as a base, who has a lot of experience, he will feel bored. In this case, total accommodation seems tough.

- A trainer


Another challenge faced by trainers is capturing and maintaining the attention of all students. Some students may exhibit a casual attitude, taking the program lightly. Managing and engaging these students requires additional effort.

However, among these challenges, trainers identify time constraints as their most significant obstacle. They believe that the number of classes, typically 12–13, is inadequate compared to the extensive course content. As a result, Term 2 trainers often find themselves having to cover an entire course in just 5–6 classes, leading to a rushed teaching approach.

Challenges for students

Time proves to be a significant challenge for students, as it is for the EDC team and the trainers. After coming to attend the classes from their workplaces, students often find it burdensome to maintain focus for the entire three-hour class session. Despite their self-motivation, staying attentive throughout the duration can be quite demanding.

Additionally, the students encounter challenges in their workplaces that affect their ability to continue the course. Non-cooperation from their colleagues or superiors creates difficulties and obstacles in balancing their professional commitments with the demands of the course.

 Another problem is that the course is sometimes not completed within the stipulated time and gets a bit late due to which the time of NOC exists. If it can be completed on time, there is no friction with the office.

- A student

Furthermore, students often face challenges in fulfilling the course attendance requirements due to various external factors. Traffic congestion, commuting difficulties, family obligations, personal issues, and physical ailments can all impede their ability to consistently attend classes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The PGD-KIM program offered by Brac University has emerged as a valuable initiative to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical industry experience in Bangladesh's garment sector. The feedback from stakeholders, including students, employers, trainers, and EDC members, highlights the positive impact of the program while also shedding light on areas for improvement. By addressing the identified challenges, the program can further enhance its effectiveness and contribute to the overall development of the industry.

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

Course Related Recommendations

- **Orientation program for trainers:** EDC could offer an orientation program for trainers that combines PGD-KIM courses, enabling them to gain a comprehensive understanding of the program and its objectives. **Standardized guidelines for trainers:** Implementing a standardized guideline for trainers of the same course would ensure that lectures are aligned. Introduction of course-specific reference books could assist new trainers in delivering lectures in accordance with established guidelines.
- **Content revision:** Some courses, especially Communication Skills, may benefit from content revision

to enhance their rigour and relevance to industry requirements.

- **Expansion of course offerings:** The program may consider introducing additional courses in the PGD-KIM continuum, such as information and communications technology (ICT), to broaden its impact and enhance its overall value.
- **Practical work-based content:** The EDC could consider incorporating practical, work-based content into courses offered during the second term to provide students with hands-on experience and better prepare them for real-world applications of their knowledge and skills.

Program and Logistics Recommendations

- **Strengthening industry network:** The program could develop a stronger network with RMG industries to foster collaboration, secure more internship opportunities, and gain industry insights to inform course development.
- **Informing supervisors about PGD-KIM courses:** EDC should inform both academic and industrial supervisors about the PGD-KIM courses to enhance their understanding and enable them to provide more effective supervision.

- **Consideration for continued participation:** The program could explore the possibility of allowing individuals who drop out of the program for valid reasons to continue their participation at a later stage, providing them with an opportunity to complete the course.
- **Increased publicity and communication:** There is a scope to increase publicity and communication efforts at the factory level to raise awareness about the PGD-KIM program, its benefits, and its relevance to the industry.
- **Access to Wi-Fi:** The program could consider providing free Wi-Fi

connection for students in the classroom to facilitate their access to online resources and enhance their learning experience.

- **Trainer refreshment break:** EDC may consider incorporating a refreshment break for trainers during the three-hour-long classes to ensure their well-being and maintain their teaching effectiveness.

By implementing these recommendations, the PGD-KIM program can continue to evolve, enhance its effectiveness, and meet the changing needs of students, industry professionals, and the wider garment industry in Bangladesh.

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