



## Why a supply chain mindset is key to fixing our education



What comes to your mind when you hear "supply chain management"? Perhaps transport, logistics, inventory, production, distribution, procurement, and all sorts of related jargon. But what if we took a step back and looked at it as something more? What if it is not just a business buzzword but a mindset that helps us recognise how everything is connected and manage processes to create real value in the bigger picture? As an educationist, here are my two cents on the supply chain mindset in education, and how its failures lead to socioeconomic losses.

In a factory, from acquiring raw materials to shipping finished products, every step affects the end result. One small glitch at the start, or even halfway through the process, can trigger a chain reaction of problems down the line. Now imagine applying that same logic to something seemingly different, like education.

Instead of seeing education as just a mix of classrooms, textbooks, and exams, what if we started viewing it as a supply chain? The "raw materials" are curious young minds, the "processes" are the methods, tools, and environments necessary for teaching and learning, and the "finished product" is a capable, well-rounded graduate. This perspective can help us identify weak points, improve flow, and raise the overall quality of education, just as a good supply chain improves efficiency.

Our education system, much like a production line, moves through several linked stages. We take in children, our valuable raw materials, and through years of learning, we aim to produce skilled, knowledgeable, and confident graduates who can thrive in the workforce.

The foundation for all development is set at the primary school stage. It is where children learn basic literacy, numeracy, and how to interact with the world. If a student struggles here, that weakness does not simply vanish. It becomes harder and costlier to fix as they move up the chain.

Next comes secondary school—our specialised assembly line. Here, students begin focusing on specific subjects and developing independent interests. However, this is also where cracks in the system become more visible. Many teachers lack proper training, resources are outdated, and the pressure to memorise facts for the SSC and HSC exams overshadows real learning. Think of this faulty process as a weak supplier that keeps lowering the quality of production in a factory. The result is students who may score well but lack the critical thinking or practical skills necessary to apply their knowledge effectively.

Finally, we reach the tertiary level, which should act as the final stage. A university is where students refine their knowledge and prepare for real-world challenges. Yet this stage often exposes more failures, as students who may progress without learning to think critically and truly understand core concepts begin to fall behind. Dropouts rise. Due to weak ties with industries, many graduates remain unprepared even for the jobs available.

The [World Bank's Development Report 2024](#) gives us a clear picture of this disconnect. Between 2016 and 2022, Bangladesh's manufacturing industry grew by 9.1 percent annually, yet employment in the same sector declined by 9.6 percent. This illustrates a widening gap between education and employability, like a factory producing goods that no one wants to buy. According to the [Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics \(2023\)](#), more than 20 million students are enrolled across all levels of education—roughly 27 percent of the total workforce—but many never reach their full potential.

While World Bank suggests that Bangladesh's unemployment rate for 2024 is 4.7 percent, some researchers estimate the real rate at 10 percent. According to the BBS, the number of unemployed people in the country rose from 2.46 million in 2023 to 2.62 million by December 2024, an increase of 160,000 within a year. The situation is worse for university graduates. Just think, 29 percent of unemployed youth between the ages of 15 and 29 are university graduates. A [2025 estimate by bdjobs.com](#) reveals that out of around 700,000 graduates entering the job market each year, fewer than 100,000 can secure formal employment. Many end up in low-paying informal jobs or remain unemployed. Most of us in the education sector believe the unemployment rate is actually well over 20 percent, with a significant portion being fresh graduates.

These numbers suggest that our problem is not a lack of education; it is a lack of alignment. The system isn't producing what the job market demands, while the market is also not expanding fast enough. There is a disconnect between different levels of education. What's taught in primary school does not always lead smoothly into secondary school, and what's learned in college may have little relevance at the university level. This lack of continuity confuses students and encourages rote learning as a coping mechanism. We need a seamless pipeline where each stage builds naturally on the one before it.

In supply chain terms, the solution lies in improving the quality checkpoints—teaching, learning, and assessment criteria. In a factory, if a product fails inspection, it is sent back for correction. But in our education system, many underprepared graduates fall through the cracks. This happens because our teaching, learning, and assessment systems do not align at different stages of education. When lessons focus on memorisation rather than understanding and critical thinking, you naturally end up with graduates who can pass exams but not solve critical problems. To fix this, we must move from rote learning to competency-based education. Students should be measured not just on what they know, but on what they can actually do.

Then comes the role of teachers, the people running the production line. Teachers are expected to do so much but are given so little support. We must understand that investing in them, particularly through continuous professional development in modern pedagogy, communication, emotional intelligence, and real-world skills, is an investment in the nation's future.

Another challenge is students' growing dependence on AI tools. While useful for research, many use them to complete assignments without real engagement, making it harder for teachers to assess their competency. This adds pressure to an already strained system, underscoring the need for assessments that foster critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. Industry collaboration is also crucial. In supply chain management, communication between suppliers, manufacturers, and customers is essential. Similarly, our education must align with workforce needs. Quality here is not just about ensuring production efficiency; it is also about preventing or minimising the cost of failure. Every graduate who enters the workforce unprepared represents socioeconomic losses.

These losses manifest in multiple ways. Graduates lose valuable time, money, and effort; businesses spend resources retraining underprepared employees; educational institutions waste resources producing graduates who are not market-ready. Indirectly, national productivity drops, industries struggle to stay competitive, and long-term innovation slows. Many talented individuals also leave the country, while social frustration rises. Ultimately, the entire nation bears the cost.

An education system that fails to prepare students adequately is like a broken supply chain, wasting resources, increasing reliance on foreign expertise, weakening the economy, and threatening future growth. And the solution is not just to open more schools or enrol more students. It is to view education as a holistic journey, a supply chain that transforms a curious child into a well-rounded professional. We must align all stages of it into a cohesive system to ensure proper teaching, curriculum, assessment, and industry preparedness.

If we can do that, Bangladesh won't just be producing graduates; it will be producing high-value professionals who are skilled, adaptable, and ready to meet global demands. That's how education stops being just a pathway to a degree and starts becoming a force that creates real value for every individual as well as for society at large.