

**Quest for Improving Performance and Quality of Bangladesh Civil Service:
Contemporary Practices and Recommendations**

Dr. Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah²
Dr. Jebunnessa³
M. M. Ashaduzzaman Nour⁴

Abstract: *Civil Service has a task to secure, support and improve the nation it serves. All over the world, each and every public and civil servant plays a vital role in fulfilling this task and so improving the lives of their corresponding citizens. Over the generations civil service has helped successive governments to overcome exclusive and complex challenges. Hence, performance and quality of civil service is very important. Improving performance quality of civil service is a public personnel management process by which the public organizations determine how effectively the employees are performing the job and improve performance to achieve the ultimate goals. Public sector organizations are playing an increasingly important role towards development of Bangladesh by providing a range of services. Bangladesh started promoting quality of civil service under the rubric of the 'Structural Adjustment' in the era of New Public Management. This paper attempts to analyze the present state and limitations of performance management and provide some suggestions to promote quality of civil service in order to improve the overall performance of the Government of Bangladesh.*

1. Introduction

Performance management in civil service can increase management control over public work and results. It can also increase management ability of public agencies to identify public problems and necessities. Incorporating quality management tries to link objectives and functions of public personnel to overall objectives of government. Performance management in civil service can create a sense of contribution for the public personnel. It motivates them by rising sense of belongingness and ownership in order to accomplish objectives and standards of performance. It develops a clear understanding of management expectations about results. It supports by laws remedial action or disciplinary action according to a breach of public performance standards which are defined objectively and in a measurable way (Boyne 1999). In civil service, a centralized record of performance for each public personnel is developed and kept in the personnel agency office. Quality management in civil service provides a system where feedback can be given to public personnel on a more objective basis instead of management's subjective criterion. It provides objective criteria that personnel administration can use to make decisions regarding pay scale and promotion.

² Vice Chancellor, Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur and Chairman, JANIPOP- Jatiya Nirbachon Parjabekkhon Parishad (National Election Observation Council). Email: janipop1995@gmail.com

³ Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration, Jahangirnagar University. Email: asiranjar@yahoo.com

⁴ Lecturer, Department of Public Administration, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP). Email: nourdu105@gmail.com

Performance and quality of civil service in Bangladesh rests on a number of clearly defined and interrelated areas such as need assessment of civil servant, performance appraisal, training, development, career planning and management, promotion etc. of public personnel in government concerning their level of achieving goals. Service rules may be modified to incorporate innovation, creativity in the performance appraisal system. In addition, appropriate mechanisms have to be developed to provide the staff the feedback of the performance appraisal result. If possible, the Ministry of Public Administration may constitute an independent moderation board or any apex body for ranking the Annual Appraisal Report. The aim of this paper is to analyze and explore the contemporary practice of improving performance and quality management to civil service in Bangladesh. Qualitative research methodology has been applied. This paper has been written based on secondary materials i.e. related journals, books and reports. In this study, most of the data are qualitative in nature and the qualitative descriptive method has been applied for in depth analysis.

2. Literature Review

Quality management principles concentrate on the customer orientation in private sector organizations. In the public sector, TQM focuses not only the immediate customers of public services but also all citizens. Citizens are the ultimate determiner of the quality and quantity of public service. TQM also focuses on taxpayer's satisfaction on the delivery of public service. Improvement of quality desires continuous enhancement of input, output and process. To enhance the quality of public service, TQM highly focuses on personnel management instead of process management (Kalimullah et al 2014). The quality and effective delivery of public services depend much on the quality of civil servants. Quality concern for civil service considers both the personnel factors and system factors. Combining the social, political and economic factors, there is a critical system in public sector organizations. TQM emphasizes extrinsic motivation and individual rewards to improve the performance of civil servants. Depending on the nature of public service, indicator of quality varies (Kalimullah et al 2014).

Performance of public officials has enormous impact on government and ultimately the society. As a result ethical practices in administration have become crucial. A good number of literatures support that administrative ethics is crucial in public as well as political arenas and demand effective actions by governments. It has become more crucial in a globalized world, when states are under severe strains and the public sectors across the globe undergo changes responding to both to internal and external challenges. Administrative ethics is gaining importance in the discourse about governance today (Aucoin and Heintzman 2000). Some literatures highlighted that the principles of transparency, integrity, rule of law and accountability in administrations have around for quite some time but during three decades they have enjoyed resurgence. Public bureaucracy must be responsible, accountable and transparent for the working of a democratic polity. Armstrong (2008) notes that administrators have enormous authority in most societies as per their permanence, knowledge, organizational structure and nexus to political power. According to Lin and Lee (2011), public provider accountability entails the methods by using which a public agency or public employees fulfills its responsibilities and responsibilities and the procedure via which that organization or the public professional is required to account for such moves.

Problems concerning neutrality and anonymity of public service, the question of merit in public service appointments, non-transparency in management of personnel functions, and public access to information, which are key components of effective public accountability are

voiced in many developing nations like Bangladesh. Therefore, existence of the problems indicates that the question of administrative ethics cannot be avoided (Besterfield et al 2004). Necessary mechanisms may differ from society to society, as Haque (2012) explains that the procedure of administrative ethics in a democracy will be different from the processes in non-democratic forms of government. According to Hughes (2003), besides the formal procedures of accountability i.e. administrative, legislative and judicial, the informal accountability environment is also important. Thus aspects such as culture, education, the media, public relations consultants etc. will also have a significant impact on the actions of politicians and public officials in enhancing administrative ethics.

A good number of literatures emphasize that the approaches of enhancing performance are closely related to the approaches of ensuring accountability. According to Cardy (2003) various scholars have focused on basically two approaches of accountability i.e. accountability of conduct and conduct of accountability. The first approach looks at rationalization of errors or behavior of individuals to some other individuals or group. It is more psychological and socially oriented. The second approach on the other hand is more institutional in focus and tends to look at structures and procedures through which accountability is ensured (Beatty et al 1995). Most academicians agree that administrative ethics can be vertical- when public sector officials are reporting downward to the public; or it can be horizontal- when public sector officials report sideways to other officials and agencies. Ethical standards require accountability mechanisms for evaluating implementation. Talbot (2005) categorized accountability into administrative or organizational accountability, political accountability, legal accountability, professional accountability and moral accountability.

3. Annual Confidential Report (ACR)

Quality or performance appraisal is vitally important for properly judging the whole year's activity of an individual working in an organization. In the civil service of Bangladesh the prevailing performance quality appraisal system is known as the Annual Confidential Report (ACR). It has eight parts as follows-

Part I: Medical check- up report

Part II: Bio-data of the appraised

Part III & IV: Personal traits & task accomplishment

Part V: Pen picture

Part VI: Recommendation

Part VII: Countersigning

Part VIII: Role of the Ministry

A system of performance quality reports of the civil servants was introduced in 1834. By an order of the Governor-General in council on January 28, 1934, the system of promotion based on seniority was discouraged. In 1974, the prescribed form of ACR was printed in Bangladesh. It continued up to 1981. A new form called ACR Form 1 was appeared in 1982 with a provision for annual medical examination report. It was made in English. Provision of 'pen picture' was introduced in this form and it had to be signed by the officer reported upon. This form was printed again in 1982 and this time it was printed in Bangla which lasted till 1983. The form was slightly modified in 1986 with the exclusion of the provision for signature of the officer reported upon in the 'pen picture' portion. 'Overall assessment' element was introduced. The ACR form was finally modified in 1990 which is still in vogue. The controlling officers were asked to report on the junior officer in respect of his/her qualifications, conduct, knowledge etc. Initially this reporting system was open, but later on, it was made secret (Asiatic Society of Bangladesh 2008).

In part I, the medical report that has been made mandatory, does not clearly depict an officer's health condition. Little information may need to be incorporated there. In addition, there is no room to describe any type of bad disease that requires immediate attention. In part III and part IV, 25 parameters are set for performance measurement. These parameters have barely anything to do with measuring an officer's performance. In part V, the 'Pen Picture' can make the ACR writing officer subjective. However, there is no fixed guideline for writing pen picture. More often, ambiguous, exaggerated comments are made, and thus the very objective of the appraisal remains unfulfilled. Since the existing system is not based on perfect yardstick, most often supervisor's prejudices and biases come into play, which ultimately vitiates the whole purpose. All in all, it leaves so much to the wishes of the supervisor (KOICA et al 2009). The present ACR is given once a year. As a result, a tendency is seen among the officers to work really hard at the time of ACR. This often gives a wrong indication to the appraiser. Thus it can be done twice or thrice in a year so that an equal flow of work continues for the whole year. However, the existing ACR system may be revised and renamed as Annual Performance Report (APR).

4. Rewards for Performance in NBR (National Board of Revenue)

Reward is granted to- (a) an official/individual for successful detection of concealment of income and evasion of taxes by individuals, firms, associations, companies etc; (b) officials of tax department for their outstanding performance (extraordinary initiative and meritorious services) in collection of taxes and detection of tax evasion; (c) the officials/individuals for giving information related to seizure of smuggled goods, detection of evasion of customs duty and/or VAT etc. The Central Intelligence Cell (CIC) of NBR gets 25% of the total reward money which NBR allocates annually for all the departments working under it and the CIC distributes this amount among its officials as per the break-up time-to-time approved by the NBR. There are some rules such as- (1) the highest amount of cash reward to be given does not ordinarily exceed ones two years' salary in a single case; (2) maximum 40% of the aggregate of the value of goods and fine and penalty realized is rewarded; (3) maximum 50% of recoverable amount of VAT, Excise and penalty realized is rewarded etc. However, reward is confined to extraordinary performance in collection of taxes, detection of tax, customs duty and VAT evasion and anti-smuggling activities. It is not granted upon evaluation of overall performance and it is not related to overall activity of an official, team or unit. Compensation system does not have any link with the missions, visions and targets of NBR as a whole and its units in particular; rather it is rewarded for a particular accomplishment of a unit or a team. Although officials are rewarded for their outstanding performance, NBR does not have any system of punishment for officials who show poor performance. Performance based reward gives some monetary benefits to the officials, but it is not at all linked with their promotion, posting and other related advantages (KOICA et al).

5. Incorporating Quality Management

The Total Quality Management (TQM) approach has been applied both in the industrial and service sector in Bangladesh. Recently TQM concept is being utilized in public sectors. In the public sector nation building departments like Education, Social Welfare, Agriculture, Local Government, Engineering, Police, Fisheries and Livestock, Forest, Health, Food, Disaster Management, Statistics, Family Planning, Ansar and Village Defense Party (VDP), BRDB (Bangladesh Rural Development Board) are implementing work improvement plans for ensuring expected quality of service delivery to the citizens. Examples of some of the projects in Tangail undertaken by different departments are (Tarik 2012)-

- Increasing of Land under HYV Mustard from 30% to 45% in Tangail Sadar (Department of Agricultural Extension)
- Ensuring Timely Attendance of Staff in the URDO Office of Tangail Sadar (Bangladesh Rural Development Board- BRDB)
- Reducing Society Registration Time of 6 Unions of Tangail Sadar (Department of Cooperatives)
- Enhancing Awareness of Primary School Students about Sanitation and Safe Water (Department of Public Health Engineering)
- Preparing Pregnant Mothers List in Gharinda Union of Tangail Sadar Ensuring Inclusion of at least 80% Pregnant Mother in the List by November 2012 (Department of Family Planning)
- Ensuring Formalin Free Fish in the Bottola Fish Market (Department of Fisheries)
- Optimization of Use of Medicine at Dharer Bari Union Health Sub Center of Tangail Sadar (Health Directorate).

6. Recommendations

6.1 Formation of Performance Standards

Formation of performance standards is very important. They must be specific and clear cut. Current parameters are so vague that the appraised can never be sure on what basis he/she would be evaluated. There must be a constructive engagement between the supervisor and the subordinate. They must sit together on periodic basis to set realistic goals. The culture of absolute loyalty must be somewhat relaxed. The appraised must be given opportunity to clarify his/her position if any goal remains unfulfilled. He/ She must not be reprimanded, nor be given poor marks unless it is found that the failure occurred out of the negligence or folly of the appraised. Performance must be measured on actual standards. Senior officers have a tendency to give officers who keep good relation with them, high marks. If measurement could be done strictly on the basis of performance, then it would have been better both for the organization and individual working there. The officer being reported upon must be given chance to correct his/her mistakes. Continuous failures, should however be severely dealt with. Finally, to ensure an efficient bureaucracy there is no alternative to evolving a pragmatic performance management system (KOICA et al 2009). It can only be done by making the appraisal system more realistic and time befitting.

6.2 Introducing Performance Based Evaluation System for Quality Improvement

For the purpose of evaluating the Government Officials, the Ministry of Public Administration has to introduce Performance Based Evaluation System (PBES) instead of existing Annual Confidential Report (ACR) system. Performance Based Evaluation System (PBES) is the momentous aspect of the civil service quality management system. The term PBES is also popularly known as Performance Assessment System or Performance Measurement System in many organizations. Performance appraisal is a periodic activity whereas civil service quality management system is a continuous process. Performance appraisals are a part of civil service quality management. It is clearly linked to training in that it identifies critical dimensions of enhancing employee quality. On the other hand, career development receives inputs from performance appraisal which in turn form the basis for training need assessment. Government must start thinking of introducing Performance Based Evaluation System (PBES) for all cadres' members of the proposed cluster of ministries. However, Bangladesh Bank has already successfully introduced the system. Performance Based Evaluation System (PBES) is a systematic process whereby a ministry/ division/ department/ agency may involve its officers both as individual and a member of group, to

achieve the organizational vision, mission, strategic goals and objectives (Aminuzzaman 2013). The proposed model of PBES has mainly the following 6 steps-

Step 1: Planning (Preparation of a Forward Job Plan);

Step 2: Implementation Monitoring;

Step 3: Objective Evaluation of Performance;

Step 4: Ranking by an independent body;

Step 5: Performance Improvement (for non-performers); and

Step 6: Linking PBES to increment, promotion, award, reward, & sanction.

However, before introduction of the PBES, a great deal of awareness process should be undertaken by and a quick orientation programme for all stakeholders of the PBES should be organized.

6.3 To Promote Political Obligation

Performance will not succeed except it is strongly underpinned by authentic political obligation. This political pledge may be through speeches and statements, which requires demonstration through setting examples. Moreover, this commitment must be supported by allocating adequate resources for such actions. Thus, it is a precondition for success of other elements of the ethical system. Politicians may play two critical roles to promote administrative ethics in Bangladesh. Firstly, as politicians they have obligations to be accountable to voters for their political activities. Therefore, they are in a exclusive arrangement to claim that decisions should be clear and there should be effective and equitable delivery of public services. Secondly, as law makers they have powers to put into effect their necessities by asking government officials to describe what and how actions are taken and how they are being performed. Experience suggests that political obligation could also be established by an independent commission or a procedure to evaluate or examine any policy issue or public undertaking and/or make recommendations for new administrative ethics in Bangladesh.

6.4 To Strengthen Legal Structure

Legal structure is constructed by laws and regulations which set standards of behavior for government officials and implement those standards by detailed systems of analysis and action. This legal framework acts as a control function of the ethics infrastructure framework and sets limits on public officials, behavior, by enforcing them in form of sanctions, and allowing public scrutiny (through access to information) and action through improvement of transparency of government operations. The behavior standards of public officials are to be set high, as they direct the authority and resources on behalf of the government or state. Consequently, legal framework dealing with truthfulness of public officials should clearly lay down legal obligations, expected standards and spell out consequences and punishments for failing those standards. Such frameworks could be set within the broad context of existing criminal and civil laws of the country and punishments are to be set in order to enforce administrative ethics and integrity within the public service. These could set within Public Service Acts and Code of Conduct, etc. of public sector officials in Bangladesh. These laws and standards have to be equitable, impartial and enforced effectively to enhance performance in Bangladesh Civil Service. The threat of sanctions will be only effective if they are sufficient, enforced and respected. Moreover, enforcement of administrative ethics require calculation of the motivations and discouragements to proscribed performance, which are then supported up by autonomous prosecution and investigation services of the state machinery. However, these services are required to be seen as being active to advance

reliability in the public service and perceived to be so by the general public with reference to Bangladesh.

6.5 To Enhance Control Mechanisms

Control mechanisms act as strategies for directing the activity of government, by evaluating whether it has been directed in a proper manner, and for confirming achievement of results. Preferably, control instruments uphold moral behavior by creating corrupt activities in public sector difficult to perform and rather easy to perceive. Consequently, they direct public authorities in settling on ethical choices inside circumstances of contending duties and objectives. In fact, the possibility that public authorities are responsible to choose agents sets confines on their obligations and watchfulness. Nonetheless, this idea ought to not exclusively be advanced through obvious enactment and directions, yet in addition through authoritative approaches and methods or responsibility instruments, which control the everyday lead of open authorities. It needs to be remembered at this point that in many countries, the public sector is being reformed by making public sector officials not only accountable to the legislature but also to the citizens and media as well. As a result, public officials are now are presently dependable for following the tenets as well as for accomplishing results and achieving them with inadequate resources. Under the circumstances, accountability mechanisms are important in describing to whom and for what public officials are answerable. Experience suggests that all these mechanisms work as protective measures, e.g. guidelines and practical procedures, in addition to performance connected evaluation mechanism controls e.g. in-house and outdoor audits and investigations, in-house and outdoor monitoring and reporting, and appeals processes. Thus, liability and control mechanisms play most important role in an ethics system through provision of a comprehensible administrative framework, upheld by examination and assessment limits required to enforce administrative ethics. To enhance such control mechanisms can be an effective strategy to improve performance in Bangladesh Civil Service.

6.6 To Maintain Codes of Conduct

In public administration, a set of accepted rules can be either an authoritative record or simply managerial articulation setting out the normal levels and nature of execution of people in general authorities. Sets of principles can apply to the whole ethical administration or can be particular to singular government offices or organizations in Bangladesh. A code generally outlines the ethical values applied to either the overall public service or to a particular department or agency. Such a set of principles may contain a mix of an announcement of its esteems, a depiction of its part in broad daylight benefit in public service, spell out responsibilities of public employees and in some cases it also specifies relationships of the public officials to the Constitution, people, government, elected officials and legislature with reference to Bangladesh. It may also contain a detailed list of a public servant's legal obligations, e.g. upholding interests of the public, declaring conflicts of interest in issues or decisions, putting certain restrictions in making open remarks, confinements on political exercises, etc. Additionally, it could likewise incorporate such different arrangements as systems for whistle-blowing (willful disclosure of information by a member of that organization on unethical or illegal practices or decisions in the organization); or minimum performance standards in public service delivery. Although codes of conduct generally play a guiding role, they also act as control function as they set up and delimit public boundaries of behavior and set up standards (Government of Bangladesh 2008). Experience suggests that most codes by and large have double disciplinary and optimistic functions as they tend to set down boundaries, based on inspirational values or goals, and spell out which sanctions may be imposed for breaching them. Nowadays however, a number of questions are raised about

codes, which include codes being excessively particular or excessively broad, unworkable, unused, obscure, inaccessible, and those generally shortsighted explanations of guidelines are not the perfect medium for noting convoluted moral inquiries confronted by public officials.

6.7 To Enhance Professionalism

Professionalism means the procedure by which government officials become skilled at and instill ethos, qualities, morals and guidelines of conduct in a society. It adds to morals foundation by imparting gauges of lead and creating judgment and abilities of public authorities to fit in with those standards. It has a guiding role as it tends to show public officials how to apply practically existing legislation and how to conform administrative ethics. Experience suggests that important socialization components are education and training programmes, in addition to continuation of good role models at higher levels. To enhance professionalism in public sector can be an effective strategy to improve administrative ethics and ethical standards in Bangladesh. Pay and security issues also matter in ensuring ethics, but it cannot always be proved that better pay will lead to decrease of corruption in public sector of Bangladesh. Parliamentary committees can be mandated to oversee the ethical behavior of public officials. To activate parliamentary committees can be an effective strategy to improve performance in Bangladesh Civil Service.

8. Conclusion

Public service conditions in Bangladesh, especially personnel policies, non-transparent career path, lack of scope for recognition and punishment directly influence performance and accountability of public officers. The operational independence of the three branches of the government from each other might be favorable for maintaining performance in Bangladesh Civil Service. This autonomy also creates an environment for a system of checks and balances, and fosters restraint against excesses or dominance by any single branch or office or service and reduces the chances of unethical activities and helps to ensure accountability. These checks and balances must be implemented without any bias and on a regular basis. Performance committee, comprised of a group of prudent people, can go a long way in resolving most important questions connecting ethical and accountability issues going up against association individuals over the span of their work. Respective officials of the committee can proactively implement or enforce the organization's code of ethical conduct. Whistle Blowing can also include diverse provisions and procedures to maintain a reasonable and desirable disclosure of official wrongdoing. It is a means to promote performance by encouraging the disclosure of information by people within the organization about misconduct and corruption in that organization. Information can be disclosed to any person within the same organization, a co-worker, a supervisor or even to the press, or a special body of investigation. For enhancing performance in Bangladesh Civil Service, the scope for whistle blowing should be created within public sector organizations and the protection of the whistle-blowers should be guaranteed. In this context, measures of guaranteeing employment; protection of confidentiality of the whistle blower; ensuring physical safety of relevant persons, and lastly provision for financial rewards for the act must be created. This will encourage a healthy environment for enforcement of ethical standards and lead to internal checks and balances. There are oversight agencies which watch the mainstream agencies of government in specific areas of concern. Public service with integrity cannot exist without high integrity public officers. At the same time without organizational support systems and ethical boundaries and frameworks, good personnel can be unable to find their bearings when faced with pressures, temptations, and heightened performance expectations.

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