

Glimpses of the dilemmas and paradoxes of public administration training in Bangladesh

Mohammad Waheeduzzaman^{*}

Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to appraise the relevance, adequacy and usefulness of various training programs of BPATC for better public sector management in Bangladesh. The core training programs of BPATC include the Foundation Training Course (FTC) for the new recruits of the Civil Service, the Advanced Course on Administration and Development (ACAD) for the mid-level civil servants, and the Senior Staff Course (SSF) for the senior-level officers. A sense of optimism was expressed in 1984 that BPATC would become a center of professional excellence' which would be capable of inspiring creativity and innovation in civil service training and professional development for better public sector management. Yet there are those critics who suggest that the creation of BPATC has essentially led to the centralization of civil service training delivery system without any adequate reference to the improvement of the training process and the outcomes of training. Since its formation, BPATC has essentially remained stuck with the "old baggage" that had been inherited or adapted from the abolished training institutions in the form of institutional structures, objectives, trainers, training programs, curricula, and methods of, and approaches to, training. Indeed, the stagnant state of the inappropriate design, implementation and evaluation of PAT programs has essentially remained myopic, episodic, and often meaningless. In view of such a circumstance, the crucial question is whether or not BPATC has risen from the "ashes" of the now-defunct civil service training institutions. It is also a legitimate pursuit to examine whether or not the establishment of BPATC has improved the process and outcomes of training for better public sector management. It is time to ask whether or not the BPATC is adequately prepared and staffed to competently design and effectively implement job relevant and useful training programs for various types and levels of civil servants of Bangladesh.

Key Words: Public administration, Training, BPATC

Introduction

The quest for maintaining a professionally competent public personnel system and the need for the enhancement of human resource capability and commitment to citizens' welfare have led many developing countries to revamp their systems of public administration or civil service training. Training to prepare government officers for their expanding role in implementing various development programs and projects has been accepted as one of the new initiatives to strengthen the implementation capabilities of their administrative systems. The system of public administration assumes even greater responsibilities for socio economic development in a developing country like Bangladesh where the management of

^{*} Dr. Mohammad Waheeduzzaman (Manik), Professor, Department of Political Science & Public Management, Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, U.S.A. Email: zamaw@apsu.edu

developmental programs is under total governmental control, and where even the mainstream of the private sector falls under the purview of numerous governmental controls, rules, and regulations, Civil Servants in Bangladesh not only play a dominant role in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of public policies, but they are also responsible for monitoring compliance with the government's regulatory policies by private sector organizations. The Government of Bangladesh underscores the importance of strengthening the management capabilities of public personnel for accomplishing the socio economic goals of various developmental programs. It is also recognized that the enhancement of the managerial capability of the Civil Service system is a crucial factor in the process of implementing various poverty alleviation programs.

Bangladesh has thus far experienced a proliferation of Public Administration Training (PAT) institutions and programs over the last five decades. The quest for improving efficiency and effectiveness of the growing number of public sector employees had led Bangladesh either to undertake significant expansion of training institutions or revamp the existing ones. Before the creation of the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) in early 1984 by amalgamating the principal civil service training institutions, three training institutions, the Civil Officers' Training Academy (COTA), the National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA), and the Bangladesh Administrative Staff College (BASC) were mainly responsible for providing the core training programs to the generalist civil servants of Bangladesh. While the COTA offered post-entry induction training called 'Foundation Training Course' for the new recruits of the Civil Service, the NIPA provided in-service training entitled 'Advanced Course on Administration and Development' to the mid-level civil servants. The senior level civil servants of the Bangladesh Government received training on 'Administration and Management' at the BASC. Each of these civil service training institutes also offered various short training courses for various types of governmental officers. Before the Staff Training Institute (STI) was merged into BPATC, this civil service training institute was responsible for catering to training needs of the lower level Government employees. STI's inclusion in BPATC did not substantially change its training components in terms of categories and level of employees. In fact, STI's tradition of skill training for lower level Government employees have been kept distinct from other civil service training programs by creating the Regional Public Administration Training Centres (RPATCs) under the overall supervision of BPATC.

Since its inauguration on May 3, 1984, the BPATC has provided both the post-entry and in-service training programs for the entry-level, mid-level, and senior-level civil servants of the Bangladesh Government. The core training programs of BPATC include the 'Foundation Course' for the new recruits of the Civil Service, the Advanced Course on Administration and Development for the mid-level civil servants, and the Senior Staff Course for the senior-level officers. Additionally, the BPATC offers various courses of shorter duration for a variety of clienteles. As the one-stop governmental training service center, the BPATC also provides technical and procedural skill training programs for various types of lower-level support and supervisory personnel of the Bangladesh Government through Regional Public Administration Training Centers (RPATCs). The training delivery system in Bangladesh also includes a number of specialized civil service training institutes under different ministries,

divisions or departments for imparting job specific training aimed at the civil servants of respective service cadres.

Doubtless, a sense of optimism was expressed in 1984 that BPATC would become a Center of Professional Excellence which will be capable of inspiring creativity and innovation in civil service training and professional development for better public management. Yet there are those who suggest that the creation of BPATC in 1984 by amalgamating STI, COTA, NIPA, and BASC led to the centralization of civil service training delivery system in Bangladesh. Since BPATC is an amalgamation of the pre-existing civil service training institutions, the establishment of this apex civil service training institute has improved neither the process nor the outcomes of training for better public sector management. It is significant to find out whether or not BPATC has thus far been successful in designing and implementing job-relevant training programs. The most poignant question to be pursued is to ascertain whether or not training programs in BPATC, Bangladesh's premier civil service training institution, are being designed, implemented, and evaluated with adequate reference to any predetermined standards of excellence for public administration education and training. Thus the time is ripe to assess the perception of a widening gap between the professed objectives and the actual institutional accomplishments of public sector training institutions, in general, and of course, BPATC, in particular.

In light of the imperatives mentioned in the preceding, the main purpose of this paper is to undertake an assessment of various critical perspectives, dilemmas, and paradoxes pertaining to the design, implementation, and evaluation of PAT programs with specific reference to BPATC's experiences and experimentations. To accomplish these purposes, both primary and secondary sources have been employed, and the research for this work had embraced a substantial number of questions to be addressed. While the secondary sources have been used to examine some PAT programs of several developing nations, primary and secondary sources, and summaries of surveys, document studies, participant observation, and interviews were employed for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and describing the state of civil service training in Bangladesh. Some formal and informal follow-up interviews were conducted with some instructional staffs and informed individuals. In terms of originality and relevance, this paper aims to examine the state of civil service training in Bangladesh and to identify the strengths and weaknesses, as well as potentials for improvement. Once the growth and revamping efforts of the civil service training institutions that led to the creation of BPATC are being narrated, an appraisal of the design, implementation and evaluation of training programs in Bangladesh. Hopefully, this paper will present a fresh analysis of the factors and points towards embracing a systematic approach to civil service training in Bangladesh with enormous relevance to the urgent need for setting of the standards of excellence for public administration education and training.

Growth of Public Administration Training Institutions in Bangladesh

From its former status as a neglected and deprived province of Pakistan, Bangladesh became a sovereign nation on December 16, 1971, after nine months of liberation struggle, but it did so "without all the necessary paraphernalia of needed administrative organizations, agencies, offices and bureaus and personnel ... new offices and bureaus were being created and

manned. Large numbers of new public service personnel were necessary to staff the new offices and replenish the existing ministries..." (Rashiduzzaman and Anisuzzaman, 1979). The tremendous expansion of Government activities and the creation of numerous public sector corporations resulted in massive growth of the public service and made it imperative to restructure the training institutions of this new nation which were inherited from the Pakistan period. Although no serious efforts were made to revamp the system of public administration training in the initial years after independence, Bangladesh had experienced a proliferation of public administration training institutions and programs from late 1970s. The need to restructure and reorient the system of public administration through training became pertinent when the Government initiated major administrative reforms. In fact, the need to improve the performance of public employees and organizations became more intensified in view of the Government's decision to decentralize the nation's public administration system and devolve more administrative responsibility to the field-level officers. Thus the enormous need for improving the performance of public employees and public organizations hastened the process of revamping the training delivery system for public sector management in Bangladesh.

During the Pakistan period (1947-1971), there existed an elaborate system of public administration training institutions covering all levels and cadres of Pakistan's civil servants. While some of these training institutions offered post entry training, most of them offered in-service training programs. There was an Administrative Staff College (ASC) to provide in-service training to the senior-level civil servants (of the rank and status of Joint Secretary and above). There were also three National Institutes of Public Administration (NIPAs) to train the mid-level civil servants (of the rank and status of Deputy Commissioner, Additional Deputy Commissioner, and Deputy Secretary).. The new recruits to the Civil Service system of Pakistan received post entry training in various training institutions. For instance, the new recruits to the superior civil and foreign service cadres had received foundation training at the Civil Service Academy (CSA). The Finance Service Academy (FSA) was set up to train the new recruits of the Pakistan's Finance Service. Most of the civil service training institutions which had existed during the Pakistan period, especially the Civil Service Academy, the Finance Service Academy, the Administrative Staff College, and two of the three National Institutes of Public Administration were physically located in the then West Pakistan. Hence Bangladesh at independence had inherited only one National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA) which was set up in Dhaka in 1961 to provide in-service training to the mid-level civil servants. Although a Gazetted Officers' Training Academy (GOTA) had existed in Dhaka since 1960 to provide post-entry training to the new recruits of the then East Pakistan Civil Service (EPCS), this training institute was unequipped and inexperienced to provide post-entry or in-service training to the expanding Civil Service of independent Bangladesh. As pointed out by Sheikh Maqsood Ali, "after liberation, therefore, Bangladesh was confronted not only with the problem of reorganizing its existing training institutions but also setting up new training institutions for its expanding civil servants" (Ali, 1978).

The dearth of civil service training institutes in Bangladesh is well reflected in the following observations of A.M. M. Shawkat Ali: "At independence, Bangladesh inherited only five training institutes. These are: Gazetted Officers' Training Academy (GOTA); National

Institute of Public Administration (NIPA), Staff Training Institute (STI), Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), and Police Training Academy (PTA). GOTA used to cater to the needs of the former EPCS (East Pakistan Civil Service), NIPA was meant for imparting training for mid-level officers. The STI was for non-gazetted employees. BARD was primarily meant for training local government representatives and appointed officials but was involved in training civil servants. PTA (Police Training Academy) was exclusively for police officers as it was in pre-independence days” (Ali, 2007, pp. 120-121).

Although the Government of Bangladesh did very little towards reorganizing and reorienting the civil service training institutions and programs in the initial years after independence, the Civil Servants' Training Academy (CSTA) was created in March, 1973, by amalgamating the Gazetted Officers' Training Academy (GOTA) and National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA). However, an elaborate system of public administration training started to emerge in 1977, and in that year, the then military Government quickly discarded the idea of an ‘integrated training institute’ for all categories of civil servants by splitting up the Civil Servant's Training Academy (CSTA) into the Civil Officers' Training Academy (COTA) and the National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA). While the COTA was assigned the task of providing post-entry training for the newly recruited civil servants, the NIPA was allowed to revive its former status as the provider of in-service training to the mid-level civil servants. The then Government also decided, in early 1977, to set up an Administrative Staff College to train the senior level civil servants. The Bangladesh Administrative Staff College (BASC) started functioning as the apex training institution in June, 1977. By the end of 1977, the fresh recruits were required to successfully complete a 22-week long Foundation Training Course at COTA before receiving formal confirmation for placement into various cadres of the Bangladesh Civil Service. While the Government officer of mid-level seniority was required to attend the 15-week long ‘Advanced Course in Administration and Development’ (ACAD) at NIPA, the senior-level officers at the rank of a Joint Secretary or above years started attending a 12-week long training course on ‘Administration and Management’ at BASC.

Various official documents of the Bangladesh Government pointed out the inadequacies of the civil service training institutions and programs. Specifically, the Planning Commission of Bangladesh had emphasized the need to revamp the system of public administration in order to accomplish the national goals of socio-economic development: “A developing country like Bangladesh must, therefore, give serious attention to rationalize its administrative organizations, financial and personnel systems, rules and procedures for achieving public service efficiency commensurate with the country's socio political and economic aspirations. While the traditional regulatory functions of the state are multiplying, the administrative system of the country is getting so much involved with the process of development that administrative network is no more considered merely an arrangement to administer, control and monitor development but an essential input in the development process itself. Accordingly, the issue of development of public administration has moved from the periphery to the centre of the country's development efforts” (Planning Commission of Bangladesh, 1983).

In reviewing the various initiatives to improve the system of public administration, the Second Five Year Plan (1980-'85) clearly pointed out the "inadequacies in all such strategic areas of administration as training, research, personnel management, office procedures, planning and development processes, revenue administration, accounting, and budgeting" (The Planning Commission 1983, p.39). In fact, the First Five Year Plan (1973-1978), the Second Five Year Plan (1980-1985), the Third Five Year Plan (1985-1990), the Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-1995), and Fifth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) had consistently emphasized the need of the trained human resources as crucial ingredients in the development process. As noted by A.M.M. Shawkat Ali, "The national planning documents starting from the first FYP (1973-78) till the fifth FYP (1997-2002) stressed the importance of training of civil servants. The first FYP (1973-78) drew attention to the need for a coordinated administrative and management training policies, programmes and the establishment of a National Training Council (NTC) to oversee implementation of programmes. ---The fifth FYP provides some details in this regard. It notes that the government has attached top priority to training of civil servants in all the previous plan documents. This was reflected in the fact that of the total allocation made in public administration sector, 55 percent in first (five year) plan, 51 percent in the second, 67 percent in third and 63 percent in the fourth (FYP) were allocated for training" (Ali, 2007, p. 121).

Bangladesh's commitment to public management training had been demonstrated through several concrete initiatives in early 1980s. The establishment of a Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) by merging the pre-existing training institutions was no doubt a hall mark in the checkered administrative history of Bangladesh. However, other commendable efforts were also undertaken toward revamping not only the entire training system but also the system of public personnel administration. Of prominence in this regard was the upgrading of the Establishment Division the Central Personnel Agency of Bangladesh Government to a full-fledged Ministry. The Ministry of Establishment had a Training Policy Cell responsible for articulating and coordinating the training efforts of the Government, and this Cell had taken major initiatives in 1980s to restructure the training institutions and training programs. The Ministry of Establishment also had a Training, Personnel and Management Project, funded by the World Bank, specifically designed to strengthen the efficiency of the public service through improved and expanded management and administrative training, upgraded personnel management and better organization and management services. A Project Implementation Office in the Ministry of Establishment was charged with the task of co-ordination and integration of Project activities, and this Office had been instrumental in organizing training efforts, especially in the formation of BPATC.

The governmental commitment to training had also been exhibited through the formation of a National Training Council (NTC) in early 1981, which formulated a draft Training Policy for the Government Officers in 1984. Another draft Public Administration Training Policy" (PATP) was approved by the National Training Council on December 20, 2000. The draft PATP envisaged "an accountable and innovative administration capable of delivering quality and cost-effective services to the people." It was claimed that the newly drafted PATP "has been framed with a view to enhancing the capability of the public administrative system to analyse, develop and implement national policies, plans, and programmes." One of the

objectives of the draft PATP was to build up "an effective, innovative, accountable, transparent, honest and committed public service." The final version of PATP was published in Bangladesh Gazette Extraordinary, May 12, 2003. As noted by Shawkat Ali, the 2003 version of PATP, in specific terms, "has identified areas of training, need assessment, formulation of Annual Training Plan (ATP), incentives for trainers and trainees, linkages of performance to incremental pay and promotion, post training utilisation, resources/budgetary provisions and working with counterpart training institutions" (Ali, 2007, p. 136).

Of all the concrete initiatives that were undertaken or commissioned by the Government during 1990s for revamping the training delivery system for better public service, the Asian Development Bank funded study entitled 'Strengthening Public Administration Training in Bangladesh' was substantive (The Commonwealth Secretariat/the Ministry of Establishment, 1998, pp. 4-6).

An Appraisal of the Design, Implementation and Evaluation of Public Administration Training Programs in Bangladesh

It is fair to suggest that there had been no dearth of training institutions, nor had there been a paucity of training programs even before the creation of BPATC in 1984. In fact, COTA, NIPA, and BASC offered core training programs and a substantial number of special programs on a continuous basis. Although there has been no paucity of training institutions and programs, it has always been difficult to effectively assess either the appropriateness or the impact of the now-defunct training institutions in terms of measurable improvements of performance of public personnel and organizations. There are those who clearly maintained that in spite of institutional proliferation or reorganization of training institutions, training programs in Bangladesh had essentially remained archaic and often irrelevant to the changing needs of a growing civil service.

It was also increasingly argued in late 1970s and early 1980s by a number of civil servants, trainers, and scholars that the training programs provided by the various governmental training institutions did not always produce the desired impact on the effectiveness of public sector management. It was emphasized that major training institutions had conducted training programs as part of their routine activities, often taking results or accomplishments of training for granted. For example, Khalid Shams, a brilliant civil servant with an exemplary record of a professional trainer, succinctly summarized in 1978 the state of training in Bangladesh in the following words: "Public Administration Training (PAT) has traditionally been taken for granted in Bangladesh. It [PAT] is taken for granted by the clientele, by the trainees, and finally by the training institutions. This is borne out by the fact that in spite of institutional proliferation, training has not produced the desired impact on [public] administration" (Shams, 1978, pp. 41-54).

Unfortunately, the generalizations of Khalid Shams on the limited or no impact of PAT on the performance of the Civil Service had remained valid or relevant throughout 1970s and 1980s, and beyond. A number of Government-sponsored studies, especially Rashiduzzaman and Anisuzzaman's Public Administration Training Survey (1979) and the Institute of Public Administration's (IPA) Pre-Investment Report (1981), had underscored that the approaches, methods, and procedures of the civil service training institutions in the design,

implementation, and evaluation of training programs were either inadequate or irrelevant to the needs of the Government officers and organizations of a developing country like Bangladesh. Specifically, the World Bank funded Pre-Investment Report (1981), issued by Institute of Public Administration (IPA was a Washington based consultancy organization) scathingly criticized NIPA's 15-week long Advanced Course on Administration and Development (ACAD) and BASC's 12-week long course entitled Administration and Management (IPA, 1981). Yet, both of these core training courses were revived in BPATC without any substantive changes.

The real state of training scenario of 1970s and early 1980s was well depicted in the draft of the national training policy. In the preface to the 1984 Training Policy for the Government Officials, the then Secretary of the National Training Council pinpointed the actual performance of the now-defunct civil service training institutions in the following words: "Training Policy for the Government Officials takes note of the existing moribund state of training in the country and the need for linking it to the career/development of the public servants of the emerging nation. It (Training Policy....) attempts at synchronizing the efforts of different training institutions, making training more relevant to the process of national development..... In the past, training institutions in the country were always considered as the "dumping ground" where both the trainers and the trainees were inflicted with routine activities having neither the charm nor the glamour" (The Ministry of Establishment (MOE)—later known as the Ministry of Public Administration (MOPA, 1984).

Doubtless, the lack of autonomy of the civil service training institutions had adversely affected the quality of the design and implementation of the training programs. A variety of training institutions, both before and after the creation of BPATC, have been mainly responsible for "conducting" training programs. While the Ministry of Establishment (now the Ministry of Public Administration) and the concerned Ministries or Divisions are assumed to be responsible for "the assessment of training needs," "selection of trainees," and "post-training utilization," the training institutions are primarily responsible for "the design," "implementation," and "evaluation" of training programs. However, there is no shred of convincing evidence to indicate that the Ministry of Public Administration or any other governmental organizations have thus far pursued training objectives on the basis of any systematically assessed training needs analysis. It was the widely shared view that the then Establishment Division or later the Ministry of Establishment had dwarfed the effective operations of the now-defunct COTA, NIPA, and BASC. Yet the Ministry of Public Administration (MOPA) does not use any systematic training needs assessment analysis for the design of the training programs and credible criteria or procedures for the selection of trainees. There is also a total absence of any feasible post-training utilization plans or procedures.

Although BPATC was created as an autonomous institution, the question of institutional autonomy has not yet been adequately addressed. Instead of providing leadership and coordination to the design, implementation, and evaluation of task relevant training programs, the Ministry of Public Administration (MOPA), is still in a position to control and encroach the activities of BPATC. The MOPA still plays a dominant role in the National Training

Council (NTC) and the Board of Governors of BPATC. There is little wonder why BPATC has not been successful to inspire creativity and innovation in public sector management training. Mohammad Mohabbat Khan had clearly explained the nature of unequal relationships between the then Ministry of Establishment (MOE) and BPATC. The MOE had total control over major decisions of BPATC through its predominant role in the National Training Council (NTC) and the Board of Governors of BPATC. The excessive control of the MOE (now MOPA) over BPATC as early as in 1985 had dwarfed “the operational and budgetary autonomy” of this training institution (Khan, 1985, p. 74).

Notwithstanding the existence of Training Policy (both 1984 and 1986 draft versions), there was no comprehensive nation training policies or guidelines for pursuing training for better public sector management. Another draft Public Administration Training Policy" (PATP) was approved by the National Training Council on December 20, 2000. The draft PATP envisaged "an accountable and innovative administration capable of delivering quality and cost-effective services to the people." It was claimed that PATP "has been framed with a view to enhancing the capability of the public administrative system to analyse, develop and implement national policies, plans, and programmes." One of the objectives of the draft PATP was to build up "an effective, innovative, accountable, transparent, honest and committed public service." The final version of PATP was published in Bangladesh Gazette Extraordinary, May 12, 2003. As noted by Shawkat Ali, the 2003 version of PATP, in specific terms, “has identified areas of training, need assessment, formulation of Annual Training Plan (ATP), incentives for trainers and trainees, linkages of performance to incremental pay and promotion, post-training utilisation, resources/budgetary provisions and working with counterpart training institutions” (Ali, 2007, p. 136).

Although there is a dearth of critical assessment of the design, implementation, and evaluation of PAT programs for the post-BPATC (post-1984) period, certain important studies clearly point out the inappropriateness and inadequacies of training efforts. The state of the design, implementation and evaluation of training efforts for public sector management in Bangladesh had essentially remained stagnant over a period of at least four decades. Mohammed Mohabbat Khan had observed the following: “Public sector training has been characterized by a lack of clear, bold and innovative training policy; poor quality of training and dearth of well-trained and professional corps of trainers; training curriculum mostly based on foreign models and rarely updated; teaching methods mostly class-room based and lack relevant practical exposure; proliferation of training institutions; training not linked to career development; absence of appropriate evaluation of training programmes; and tendency to appoint career civil servants to directorial posts in premier training institutions” (Khan 1998, p. 171).

In his paper titled “Public Service Training in Bangladesh: A Critical Overview,” Noore Alam Siddiquee emphasized that in spite of elaborate institutional arrangements and creation of BPATC, the training delivery system has still remained ineffective in terms of designing job-relevant training programs (Siddiquee, 1993). In an admirable book titled ‘Civil Service Training in Bangladesh: An Institutional Analysis of BPATC Role, Rhetoric and Reality’, Syeda Lasna Kabir and Hasan Muhammad Baniamin eloquently pointed out the inadequacies

of BPATC's role as the apex PAT institution: "Despite long experience and tradition, BPATC is yet to meet the expectations. As far as promoting efficiency of the civil servants and inculcating right ethos are concerned, BPATC – as an apex training institution of the country has failed to reflect the desired tone" (Kabir and Baniamin, 2012, p. 99).

The moribund status of BPATC with particular reference to PAT in Bangladesh is succinctly depicted in Mohammad Mohabbat Khan's poignant observations that he had made in his Foreword to Syeda Lasna Kabir and Hasan Muhammad Baniamin's seminal work: "One of the problems that has plagued BPATC since its inception is lack of appropriate leadership in terms of meeting the needs of civil servants at all levels-entry, mid- and senior levels. The other problems that have significantly eroded BPATC potential for growth are control exercised by the Ministry of Public Administration (MOPA) over policy and financial matters of the apex training organization; continuing with inappropriate background and poor motivation in directional and teaching positions; failure to retain and promote highly qualified professionals; and failure to regularly update training (course) curricula" (Kabir, and Baniamin, 2012, Foreword (Khan, p. xi).

A number of civil servants of Bangladesh Government have also raised serious concerns about the relevancy and usefulness of the PAT institutions and programs. For example, Kamal Siddiqui (former Principal Secretary of Bangladesh Government), one of the most distinguished members of the Civil Service with exemplary record of scholarly and action oriented research work on Bangladesh, made the following observations on the state of training in Bangladesh: "In addition to poor recruitment over the years, training of officers has grossly been neglected in our country since independence. Its impact is now being sharply felt, with a drastic decline in efficiency and capability at all levels of the bureaucracy. Indeed, if this trend continues, we may soon end up with the most incompetent bureaucracy in South Asia, and we may have to hire consultants to write cabinet papers, which I am told, happens in some African countries. Our political masters may come up with the most wonderful decisions in the Parliament and in the cabinet meetings, but there will be a pigmy bureaucracy around to ensure that at the end of the day, nothing is ever implemented" (Siddiqui, 1996, pp. 74-77).

In an important paper titled "Effectiveness of Management/Administrative Training in Bangladesh," (Proshikhyan, 1994), Saadat Husain, a senior civil servant with expertise in civil service training, had pointed out serious deficiencies in Bangladesh's training operations in terms of the trainers, trainees, training programs, training aids and logistics, and assessment of training effectiveness" (Husain, 1994, pp. 77-88).

A host of Government and donor sponsored studies have also emphasized the fact that the training institutions in Bangladesh have thus far failed to improve the performance of the public sector management. For example, 'The Report of the Task Forces on Bangladesh Development' had underscore the PAT institutions and programs in the following words: "Though (public) management training institutions have increased in number, the impact (of training) has been minimal due to shortage of qualified trainers, lack of interest of civil servants in in-country training, and failure to link training with organizational needs and career advancement of trainees. Training programmes have tended to be routinized and

ritualistic, instead of reflecting needed skills and attitudes capable of incorporating new social concerns, i.e., women in development, environmental protection, poverty alleviation” (Task Forces. The Report of the Task Forces on Bangladesh Development’ (Task Force, 1991).

The Public Administration Efficiency Study (1989) which was conceptualized by the World Bank and funded by the USAID had clearly expressed concern about unsatisfactory performance of the existing training institutions with reference to training facilities, trainers, training curricula, and relevance of training (Ministry of Establishment, 1989). Another important study titled Toward Better Government in Bangladesh (1993) which was sponsored by the Overseas Development Agency (ODA), and authored by four important senior civil servants, pointed out the limited impact of training on the actual performance of public sector officers and organizations (MOPA/Ministry of Establishment, 1993). The report entitled Public Administration Sector Study (1993), organized and sponsored by the United Nations Department of Development Support and Management Services (UNDDSMS) and the UNDP, Dhaka, reported the evidence of the inadequacies in human resources management and training in Bangladesh (UNDP, 1993).

A more comprehensive Government sponsored appraisal entitled ‘Strengthening Public Administration Training in Bangladesh’ (1998) had identified a number of serious maladies and limitations of the public administration training (PAT) or civil service training institutions and programs: “Only around half of all Class I officers have received training in the course of their careers. ...There is very little in-house training within Ministries and Departments.Some training courses are of several months’ duration. Over a third of junior officers who received training attended courses between one and three months long. At senior level the figure rises to over 50%. ...None of the (PAT) institutions provide designated management training courses.Attendance on the Foundation course is, in theory, a precondition for promotion to the middle level, but around 50% of all (Government) officers have not attended it (the Foundation course), and those who have (attended it), many have waited up to seven years before attending (the Foundation course).Training in most (PAT) institutions is delivered through lecture: more participatory approaches are relatively rare”. This important study also identified the following deficiencies in the process of training delivery system: the gap between the actual training needs of the civil servants and the design and implementation of training programs, the absence of systematic training needs assessment, absence of evaluation of training programs with reference to the relevance of training, overuse of inappropriate training methods and trainers, lack of professional staff development of the trainers, and total absence of post-training utilization (The Commonwealth Secretariat/the Ministry of Establishment, 1998 pp. 4-6).

The salience of irrelevance or uselessness of civil service training in Bangladesh becomes more evident if reference is made to the prevalence of inefficiency and ineffectiveness at all levels of public service. In the absence of any competency-based and job relevant training programs, the public bureaucracy has often been left to its own rules, procedures, devices, and preferences in determining controls over government service delivery process. It is also increasingly recognized by scholars, practitioners, and reformers of public sector management that there exists a "quiet crisis" involving an erosion in the quality of public

service in Bangladesh. A credible Report on a National Policy Dialogue, organized by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), on "Reforming Public Administration for Improved Performance and Accountability" underscored: "Although bureaucracy continues to be, following colonial tradition, the principal agent of governance and development in Bangladesh, over the years it has undergone substantial erosion both in terms of authority as well as in terms of effectiveness. The administration is generally perceived as too elaborate, complex, overlapping and procedure-oriented which has led to an inability to take prompt decisions and incapacity to implement effectively whatever decisions are taken (Centre for Policy Dialogue, 1994, p. 1).

It is evident that there existed a performance gap between the institutional objectives and the institutional roles or accomplishments of the now-defunct PAT institutions. It seems that visible performance gap has even widened during the post-BPATC period. The professed objectives of BPATC have not been spelled out in the form of mission statement describing the nature and scope of this institution's assigned roles and functions. BPATC's official objectives have failed to provide the policy and operational guidelines for designing and implementing task relevant training programs. The institutional objectives and organizational performance of BPATC have not yet been evaluated by any appropriate authority external to both BPATC and the Ministry of Public Administration (formerly the Ministry of Establishment).

A thorough review of research and publications of the now-defunct training institutions and BPATC reveals that training institutions in Bangladesh play a marginal role in generating nationally relevant research. The research and publications of BPATC have continued neither to flourish nor to change over the post-BPATC (post-1984) years. There is an absence of a scholarly assessment of training scenario in Bangladesh even after more than four decades of institutionalized training experience. With some exceptions, the available body of public administration literature in Bangladesh is dated, fragmentary, disjointed, and impressionistic. The BPATC can't be credited for producing any scholarly work on PAT in which scholars and practitioners will find a wonderful yet credible cornucopia of ideas, perspectives, insights, and observations on substantive training phases such as the assessment of training needs, course curricula, training methods, and evaluation of training programs.

Based on my own appraisals of training for public sector management in Bangladesh, it is entirely possible to suggest that the status of the design, implementation, and evaluation of training programs that had been catered by the now-defunct civil service training institutions and the training programs offered by BPATC during the post-1984 (post-BPATC) years can at best be characterized as sluggish because of the following factors: the assessments of training needs of the clientele (trainees) were (are) usually taken for granted by the training institutions; the objectives and contents of training programs were (are) determined in training institutions by the trainers on the basis of their own assumptions, intuitions, and previous course curricula; the "lecture" was (is) the most frequently employed training method; the training programs were (are) designed and implemented by the members of the instructional staff of the civil service training institutions without adequate preparation or training in any substantive areas of training and development; most of the trainers or

instructional staff members were (are) "subject matter specialists," having degrees in one of the social science disciplines, rather than "training specialists" per se; most of the important administrative and instructional positions of training institutions were (are) reserved to the members of the Civil Service on temporary deputation which invariably adversely affect the in-house professional staff development among the directly recruited trainers; and finally, like most of the now-defunct training institutions, BPATC employs only "learning" and "reaction" criteria for the purpose of evaluating training programs without any reference to the adequacy and relevancy of those programs in terms of trainee's job performance or organizational effectiveness. In sum, training programs in Bangladesh's civil service training institution including BPATC are still being pursued, designed, implemented, and evaluated without clear reference to any credible standards of excellence either for better public sector management or public administration education and training (Waheeduzzaman, 1988, 1990).

Conclusion

There has been no dearth of civil service training institutions or training programs in Bangladesh. Nor has there been a dearth of governmental recognition of the need for revamping the training delivery system of the country. However, there is an absence of any credible assessment of either the appropriateness or the usefulness of various training programs in terms of tangible improvements in the performance of governmental functionaries and organizations. No data exist to document that the creation of BPATC by amalgamating the now-defunct COTA, NIPA, and BASC has improved either the quality of training process or the relevance of the training outcome. The approaches and procedures of training design, trainee selection, determination of program objectives and program contents, training methods, types of trainers, and procedures for training evaluation have not substantially changed from the pre-BPATC period, and it seems that the now-defunct COTA, NIPA and BASC are still alive and well in BPATC!

Like its predecessor PAT institutions, BPTAC provides training programs in the absence of any systematic assessment of training needs. Most of the governmental organizations still pursue training programs without adequate reference to the relevance or usefulness of those programs in meeting the specific organizational needs. Indeed, BPATC has become a marginalized governmental organization in the shadow of the Ministry of Public Administration, and instead of becoming a Center of Excellence, BPATC has turned into a dumping ground for some governmental officers either as reluctant trainees or as frustrated trainers on deputation.

Notwithstanding the institutional proliferation or occasional reorganization of the training institutions, the relevance and performance of both the training programs and training institutions have essentially remained archaic, inadequate, and irrelevant in the context of changing performance needs and development priorities of Bangladesh's public service. Therefore, it is not hard to figure out why in spite of institutionalized training experience, public administration system and decision-making process in the governmental organizations of Bangladesh have remained control-oriented, complex, rule-bound, mundane, and rigidly bureaucratic over a period of least four decades. Training for public sector management has not been depicted from collections of systematically assessed training needs, training or learning

expertise, innovative or state-of-the-art training methods, and coordinating excellence standards which are very much required to successfully manage the maladies of the dilemmas and paradoxes of Bangladesh's public service.

Despite various governmental pronouncements and professional postures geared toward revamping public management training institutions in Bangladesh, the BPATC has essentially remained stuck over a period of more than four decades of its existence with the training program and institutional practices that were essentially inherited from the now-defunct civil service training institutions in the form of institutional structures, objectives, trainers, training programs, curricula, and methods of, and approaches to, training. The revamped civil service training delivery system by creating BPATC has not yet succeeded in inspiring creativity and innovation in administrative training for improving the effectiveness of the public sector management.

Disclaimer: An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the NASPAA South Asia Virtual Conference 2021 'Preparing Public Leaders in South Asia for a Post-Pandemic World 12-14 November 2021, organized by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG), North South University, JSW School of Public Policy (JSW-SPP), and (IIM, Ahmedabad).

References

- Abedin, J. (1978). Training Effectiveness: The NIPA Experience in Evaluation. *COTA Bulletin*, 1(1).
- Ahmed, A. (1979). Problem of in-service training of higher civil servants with special reference to Bangladesh. *BASC Journal*, 1(1).
- Ali, S. M. (1978). Training for higher civil servants. *Administrative Science Review*, VIII (1).
- Ali, S. A. M.M. (2007). *Civil service management in Bangladesh: An Agenda for Policy Reform*. Dhaka: University Press Limited.
- BPATC (Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre) (2024). *147th advanced course on administration and development: Curriculum and brochure*. [29th April - 27th June 2024], (Planning, Programming and Recording (PPR) Wing, BPATC, Savar, Dhaka, April 2024.
- Center for Policy Dialogue (1994). *Reforming public administration for improved performance and accountability*. CPD Dialogue Report No. 10, Dhaka: CPD.
- Chaudhury, A. (1979). Problems of coordination in public administration training. *BASC Journal*, 1(1).
- Chowdhury, M. N. N. (1969). Training mid-career civil servants. *Administrative Science Review*, III (2).
- Elias Sarker, A. (2006). New public management in developing countries: An analysis of success and failure with particular reference to Singapore and Bangladesh. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 19(2), 180–203.
- Hossain, M. and Husain, S. (1983). A study on the post-training utilization: The case of thana health and family planning administrators course. *COTA Bulletin*, 7(2), 38–60.
- Husain, S. (1994). Effectiveness of management/administrative training in Bangladesh. *PROSHIKHYAN, A Journal of Training and Development*, 1 (1).
- Institute of Public Administration (IPA) (1981). *Pre-investment study for a PAT and management improvement project in Bangladesh: Final report*. Washington, D.C.: IPA.
- Islam, M. Z., & Hosen, S. (2024). Impact measurement of public administration training module on civil servant capacity development: A case of Bangladesh Civil Service. *Political Science and Security Studies Journal*, 5(4).

- Islam, M. Z., Arifuzzaman, S. M., & Fatema, N. (2012). Training module/curriculum and training effectiveness: An empirical evidence from foundation training course at BPATC in Bangladesh. *World Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(3), 15–30.
- Islam, MZ, & Hosen, S. (2021). An effectiveness study on policy level training course: A case from Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre, Bangladesh. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 18(3), 41–52.
- Islam, Z., & Hossain, R. (2019). What matters for the effectiveness of a training organization? Evidence from BPATC. *Journal of community positive practices*, XIX (4), 28-45.
- Kabir, S. L., & Baniamin, H. M. (2012). *Civil service training in Bangladesh: An institutional analysis of BPATC role, rhetoric, and reality*. Dhaka: AH Development Publishing House.
- Khan, A. A. and Hossain, M. (1985). *Post-entry training in Bangladesh civil service: A survey of the problems and potentials*. Savar, Dhaka: Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre.
- Khan, M. M. (1985). *Public Administration Training Centre: A critical overview*. in Khan, M. M. and Husain, S. A. (eds.). *Bangladesh studies: Politics, administration, rural development, and foreign policy*, Center for Administrative Studies.
- Khan, M. M. (1998). *Administrative reforms in Bangladesh*, Dhaka: University Press Ltd.
- Khan, M. M. (2002). *Resistance to administrative reforms in South Asian civil bureaucracies*. in Farazmand, Ali (ed.). (2002). *Administrative reform in developing nations*, 73–88.
- Khan, M. M. and Zafarullah, H.M. (1980). Public administration training in Bangladesh: An overview. *International Review of Administrative Science*, XLVI (4), 369–376.
- MOPA (Ministry of Public Administration, formerly the Ministry of Establishment. (1984). *Training policy for government officials*, Dhaka: Government of Bangladesh.
- MOPA (Ministry of Public Administration) (1998). *Strengthening public administration training in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Asian Development Bank.
- Planning Commission (1983). *The second five year plan, 1980-'85*. Dhaka: The Planning Commission, Government of Bangladesh.
- Rahman, A. T. (2001). *Reforming the civil service for government performance: A partnership perspective*. Dhaka, University Press Ltd.
- Rahman, M. A., Ali, B. A., Rahman, M. H., & Siddiqui, D. S. (1993). *Towards better government in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Government Press.
- Rashiduzzaman, M. & Anisuzzaman, M. (1979). *Public administration training survey*. Dhaka: Ministry of Establishment, Government of Bangladesh.
- Sarker, E.A. (2004). Administrative reform in Bangladesh: Three decades of failure. *International Public Management Journal*, 7(3), 365-384.
- Shams, K. (1978). Public administration training in Bangladesh: Need for a functional approach. *COTA Bulletin*, 1(1), 41-54.
- Shams, K. and Ahmed, A. (1978). Evaluation of first foundation course. *COTA Bulletin*, 1(1).
- Shams, K. and Hossain, M. (1981). Assessment of post-training utilization. *COTA Bulletin*, 4(1).
- Siddiquee, N. A. (1993). Public service training in Bangladesh: A critical overview. *Politics Administration and Change*, 21 July-December.
- Task Forces (1991). *The Report of the task forces on Bangladesh development strategies for the 1990's: Developing the infrastructure*. Dhaka: University Press Ltd.
- UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), (1993). *Report on the public administration sector study in Bangladesh*, Dhaka: UNDP.
- UNDP (2007). *Building a 21st Century public administration in Bangladesh civil service reform program, Formulation Mission Report*, Dhaka: UNDP.

- UNDP and MOPA (2006). *Preparatory assistance on developing civil service capacity for 21st century administration: Role and effectiveness of Bangladesh civil service in achieving millennium development goals*, Dhaka: UNDP.
- UNDP and MOPA (2007a). *Preparatory assistance on developing civil service capacity for 21st century administration: study on BPATC training course curricula review and cost- effectiveness of training*, Dhaka: UNDP.
- UNDP and MOPA (2007b). *Preparatory assistance on developing civil service capacity for 21st century administration: Institutional development (ID) plan for BPATC*, Dhaka: UNDP.
- Waheeduzzaman, M. (1988). *Towards a systematic approach to public administration training in Bangladesh*. (Ph.D. dissertation, Public Administration Program, Department of Political Science, Kent State University.
- Waheeduzzaman, M. (1990). *Towards a systematic approach to public administration training in Bangladesh*.
- World Bank (1996). *Bangladesh government that works: Reforming the Public sector*. Dhaka: University Press Ltd.
- Zafarullah, H. M. and Khan, M.M. (2005). *The bureaucratic ascendancy: Public administration in Bangladesh: The first three decades*. Dhaka: AH Development Publishing House.