

Mohd Aminul Karim

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP - BANGLADESH BUREAUCRACY

Abstract

Colonial legacy and Weberian concepts tend to block the sharpening of Bangladesh bureaucracy which has to meet the challenges of a fast moving transformational society of Bangladesh. Bangladesh is changing fast, as is clearly discernible, among others, in the fields of private sector, economy, technology, culture, values, attitude and hopes and aspirations of the people to meet the demands of the globalized fast moving knowledge based world. The felt need of the Bangladesh society today is to revamp the otherwise stereotyped bureaucracy that can look for vision and be more proactive, more positive, more responsive, able to challenge the *status quo*, and be creative, risk taker, better decision maker and harmonizer. What needs to be stressed is the imperative of Emotional Intelligence relative to the Intelligence Quotient. There needs to be an attitudinal change armed with the latest knowledge of how to take charge of an ambiguous, uncertain and volatile environment. A tested institutional/field level model that meets the needs of a transformational society like Bangladesh may be followed to instill the values, attitudes, skills, visionary abilities in the otherwise routine bureaucracy of Bangladesh. The moot point is: the bureaucracy should cross the transactional threshold to enter into transformational arena.

Major General Mohd Aminul Karim, ndc, ldmc, psc; PhD is the Military Secretary to the Honourable President of Bangladesh. E-mail: mdaminulkarim@yahoo.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is undergoing phenomenal changes/reforms in its economy, governance, women empowerment, human resource development, poverty reduction, health, education, etc. Its economy is moving at quite a good pace, given the spurt in export earnings, mainly due to private entrepreneurs, and high remittance earnings mainly coming from the Bangladeshis working in the Middle East, Europe and America. Bangladesh has huge potentials, as the experts predict, even to reach to the middle income group of countries, given some more momentum in terms of improving governance, eradicating corruption and ensuring political stability. As is known, Bangladesh is often battered by natural calamities which cause substantial damage to its infrastructure, and its effort to eradicate poverty, not to speak of the loss to human lives. Bangladesh has certain advantages like homogeneity in terms of ethnicity, religion and a culture of tolerance which play a great impacting role in its integration process. It has a huge population, which may be called a comparative advantage that can be converted into competitive advantage like turning them into human resources. If the huge population can be turned into more literate, skilled, semi-skilled manpower, and utilized domestically and exported to developed countries then the country would greatly benefit economically and socially. Given the limited space of Bangladesh that finds it difficult to sustain such a huge population, this is one of the most feasible and pragmatic options left for Bangladesh. Otherwise Bangladesh's human security will be in jeopardy.

Bangladesh is slowly and gradually turning itself into the mainstream of globalized world but is facing hiccups due to political instability, corruption and weak governance. Leadership and management skills, although better available in the private sector, are lacking in the public sector. Political leadership, however, does not fall within this ambit, since that is naturally homegrown; a kind of informal sector, coming from the grass root levels of Bangladesh. Political leadership, however, is intricately involved with the public bureaucracy in running the governance of the country. Political leadership is definitely more pronounced since they give the policy decisions and direction for running the state affairs. But the real challenge remains in the realm of implementing those on the ground,

where there are almost insurmountable challenges and handicaps in different stages of implementation process. In both the tiers of leadership, there is a dire need of vision, charisma, creativity, changing and challenging the *status quo*, transforming the subordinates or the followers to get into the vision of the leaders or be able to look into their emotions and energy. It is, however, a sorry state of affairs prevailing in Bangladesh where especially in the formal tier of leadership, who also provides impetus to the political leadership for decision making, the bureaucracy is usually carrying out routine, stereotyped functions which, is otherwise, supposed to impact much in the change of the system of governance of Bangladesh. Gulick and Urwick in the book “Functions of the Executive” talk about “POSDCORB”, the acronym that stands for Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting and Budgeting, that implies for scope of leadership; however, the critics found the model mechanical and without concern for the ground realities in which the bureaucrats operate.

What is needed is the awareness of the importance of Five ‘I’s– Information, Inspiration, Innovation, Introjections and Integration.¹ “Awareness of the need for innovative thinking on the part of the administrators was considered essential in order to achieve the development goals that could not wait for slow and incremental methods at the expense of suffering masses”. Governance, as a system, in Bangladesh needs a thorough overhauling in order to meet the challenges and constraints, opportunities and threats of the socio-economic life of Bangladesh. Routine work may keep the life functioning but it would not be able to cope with the changes or adapt to the fast moving information technology-driven, knowledge-based, proactive environment of the 21st century intelligent globalized world.

Such being the necessity, this paper attempts to suggest options/remedies that can remodel/reorient or revamp the bureaucracy of Bangladesh. The paper would attempt to show the differences between transactional and transformational leadership

¹ Valsan, E.H. “Leadership in Public Administration for Alleviating Poverty and Development: A Conceptual Approach”, (<http://www.adb.org/Document/Books/Role-of-Public-Administration/default.asp>)

traits and would impress upon the bureaucracy to adapt more towards transformational leadership which would help provide visionary, proactive, perspective planning for the development of Bangladesh. A more vibrant bureaucracy is essential for Bangladesh, as could be true to any other country. Such vibrant bureaucracy would also act as a restraining factor in politicization of administration and would lead the nation, within its perspectives, enthusiastically towards the achievements of national goals and objectives. The paper would attempt to concretize the options, as much as possible; however, implementing the options would need a motivation level that comes from a very high level of value system which is otherwise lacking in Bangladesh society today. Here, however, the concept of introjections, suggested by American scholar Fred W. Riggs, may be relevant. Borrowing the idea from the discipline of psychology, which calls for the selective internalization of values, Riggs suggests for “accepting reforms and innovations that can work in a society, and rejecting those that are not suitable or even cause disturbance to the polity”. A typical example was the successful male sterilization programme in Kerala, India, because of its high literacy rate whereas it failed in North India because of poor literacy rate. Bureaucrats and politicians who wanted this programme to succeed even used force and thereby causing political damage to the Congress Party and contributing in ballooning the population of India beyond a billion. Such manifestation was obvious because family planning became a taboo. Given this experience, positive orientation and attitude is also the call of this paper.

2. TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP TRAITS

Transformational Leadership is the latest and most promising phase in the leadership spectrum. “Here the focus is on leader behavior during periods of organizational transition and on processes such as creating visions of desired future state and obtaining employee commitment to change.”² Transformational Leadership is a kind of leadership that can transcend the normal boundary management of an environment. It aims to walk an extra mile, or take a bit more risk, or take more responsibilities instead of passing

² Philip Sadler, *Leadership*, mba masterclass, Kogan Page India Private Limited, New Delhi, 2005, p.13.

the buck in undertaking a task. It should be able to improvise, if required, to reengineer or reinvent. Stagnancy or maintaining status quo is the job of a routine manager or a transactional leader but creating a new context in order to be more productive is the goal of a transformational leader. It should be able to take the team along who strongly upholds the visions, values and objectives of the leader to be their own and inspires them in such a way that they would carry out the tasks enthusiastically even at the peril of their life. They would not necessarily turn into rabble rouser. They should, as far as possible, reflect charisma, be able to inspire the subordinates and should be able to intellectually stimulate the subordinates or the stakeholders.

Charisma entails providing vision and mission to the stakeholders so that the team moves along the path the leader has foreseen. He should be able to instill pride and gain respect and trust from the subordinates or his constituency. Charisma reflects his personality, knowledge, wisdom, sense of justice and commitment. One may argue this is a born quality- a gift from God. This argument is largely not tenable since - many scholars term it as a myth – such qualities can be acquired through rigorous exercise, given a deep commitment. Next point is about inspiring the stakeholders in undertaking even the arduous jobs. The leadership is about understanding the environment, adapting to the environment and be able to communicate the contingencies commensurate with the environment to the stakeholders. Now the leader should be able to communicate the high expectations expected of the team members in a simple and understandable language. He may use different symbols at his disposal. Gandhi and Mao Tse Tung inspired the whole nation to fight for freedom and emancipation in such a way that hundreds and thousands of them were even ready to die for the cause at their every beck and call. However, such historical examples may not appropriately apply to every level, tier or environment of leadership. But one can always draw lessons from such examples.

A leader should be able to intellectually stimulate his team members. He should understand the context, environment, rationality of his cause or vision, and that would need deep intellectual exercise. He should be able to provide careful and creative problem solving techniques to his team members. All great leaders of the world are

generally men of knowledge and wisdom. Henry Kissinger called Mao Tse Tung one of the greatest teachers of mankind. A leader must pursue knowledge-based critical thinking, especially in this globalized intelligent world. Practical knowledge has no substitute for a leader in order to inspire his subordinates with ideas, values, attitudes, perceptions, visions, missions and objectives. The subordinates are unlikely to accept one as leader if he cannot provide rational and creative problem solving techniques. Without such course, a leader might become redundant in the society.

The last point the author would like to make is personal touch a leader provides to his subordinates. This aspect of leadership practice is seriously lacking in Bangladesh environment. A leader has to give personal attention, and treat all his subordinates individually. He has to counsel and mentor his members, if possible. A leader has to care about the welfare, mental or health state, family problems of his subordinates. This works marvel in Bangladesh environment. Mere patting makes a lot of difference to an employee in the Bangladesh environment. Maslow's Theory of Needs does indicate such directions in order to upgrade the motivation levels of the employees.

A leader should be an innovator apart from being an administrator only. He should be able to inspire trust than merely relying on control. A leader, depending on the tier he is holding in the hierarchy, should generally have a long range perspective and an eye on the horizon apart from having an eye on the bottom line. A leader should not ask how and when an event took place; he, however, would do better if he asks what and why of the incident. He challenges the system or status quo, of course not unsettling the environment. Conflict management is a good technique but that should not destabilize the system one is holding. In a nutshell, transformational leaders are seen as change agents, courageous, believing in people, having a strong set of values, life-long learners, capable of coping with complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity and visionaries.³

3. BANGLADESH BUREAUCRACY IN PERSPECTIVE

Max Weber, the chief architect of bureaucracy, provides certain features of bureaucracy like hierarchy, promotion based on

³ Philip Sadler (quoting Tichy and Devanna), *op.cit.*, p.25.

professional merit, development of a career service, reliance on and use of rules and regulations and impersonality of relationships among career professionals in the bureaucracy and with their clientele. To a commoner, taking cue from Max Weber, bureaucracy would appear to be something to do with red tapism, inefficiency and abuse of power in the context of official-client relationship. It develops a system of authority, which is indestructible and an entrenched bureaucracy that can serve any interest. It shows allegiance only to the authority above it even if political changes have taken place. Webster's New International Dictionary defines bureaucracy as a system that is narrow, rigid and formal, depends on precedent, and lacks initiative and resourcefulness. The essence of traditional public administration tends to be rigid, rule-bound, centralized, insular, self-protective and profoundly antidemocratic; and such traits often collide with the contemporary paradigm of bureaucracy that "allows qualified voters an efficient instrument through which the will of the people may be expressed; makes officers both responsive and responsible," and thereby ensures common welfare.⁴

Theorists and practitioners would like to emphasize bureaucratic paradigms like fairness, representation, participation, accountability, responsiveness, political neutrality, efficiency, rationality, and expertise. But the very nature of public administration poses problem to such value. The bureaucrats have a tendency to rely more on expertise and knowledge than over accountability, participation and democratic control.⁵ Now, therefore, a pertinent question arises: are the bureaucratic traits legitimate in terms of democratic principles. In this regard, David Rosenbloom opines that the legitimacy of bureaucracy occurs when bureaucratic policy making is subject to direct popular control. If bureaucracy is isolated from public

⁴ Lynn, Lawrence E. Jr., "Globalization and Administrative Reform: What is Happening in Theory?", *Public Management Review* 3 (1 March): 19-208, 2001

⁵ Ahmad Martadha Mohammad, "Administrative Discretion and Representative Bureaucracy: Linking Descriptive Representation to Substantive Representation" (<http://www.adb.org/Document/Books/Role-of-Public-Administration/default.asp>)

accountability, bureaucracy can in no way be responsible to public interests and desires.⁶

Again Merton, an American sociologist, goes deeper into the pitfalls of bureaucratic system. Bureaucracy's adherence to rules originally conceived as a means, turns into an end-in-itself, thereby resulting in the displacement of goals. "In Bangladesh, the bureaucracy, to a large extent, conforms to the Weberian model..... Bureaucrats are not always assigned specific positions on the basis of their specialization or expertise but rather on the basis of belonging to a particular civil service cadre. Rationality is conceived in a narrow sense. It is primarily equated with administrative efficiency and economy both of which are considered ends in themselves rather than means to an end- the effective delivery of public service."⁷

Bureaucracy's strict adherence to regulations induces timidity, conservatism and technicism. Bureaucracy's avowed norm of impersonality and its dependence on abstract rules put it in conflict with the personalized consideration the members of public and clientele would expect. Bureaucracy's entrenched corporate interests, which may be called *esprit de corp*, totally negates the concept of transformational leadership traits.

Given the traits as shown, bureaucracy, theoretically speaking, goes against the grain of transformational leadership. However, such theoretical branding may not always find true reflection in the practical application by an individual bureaucrat. He may have the charisma, vision or personalized consideration like that of a transformational leader and he may exert to establish his leadership, but the environment of the boundary around which he is operating may not permit him to realize his full potentials. Initiative of an individual bureaucrat is greatly circumscribed in decision making process; there may be ten tiers, in the Central Government, to be

⁶ Rosenbloom, David H., *Public Administration: Understanding Management, Politics and Law in the Public Sector*, 3rd Edition, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1993.

⁷ Mohammad Mohabbat Khan and Habib Zafarullah, "The Political System and Bureaucracy- Currents and Crosscurrents," in *The Bureaucratic Ascendency-Public Administration in Bangladesh The First Three Decades*, Habib Zafarullah and Mohammad Mohabbat Khan (ed.), AH Development Publishing House, Dhaka, 2005, p.12

crossed, when the final decision is made. However, in most of the cases, all the ten tiers may not have to be crossed. Anyway, a kind of timidity thus sets in such a process. Initiative, dynamism, and creative and innovative thinking, the *sine quo none* for transformational leadership that should be undertaken by a bureaucrat are lost, at best diluted. Risk-taking is one of the hallmarks of real leadership. In a scenario like this, a bureaucrat will not take any risks since he has somebody above him.

It is reportedly known that a Secretary to the government puts forward a file to his Cabinet Minister seeking sanction of a paltry sum of Tk. 25,000 (equivalent to US\$350) to be disbursed for the repair/maintenance of a small building in a remote village of Bangladesh. Now this brings to the fore another predicament where the authority is so much centralized that such a simple decision has to be taken by the Central Government located in Dhaka. ADB Country Governance Assessment (Draft), Bangladesh, May 2004, under heading 'Centralization' observes, "An additional constraint to good governance at the local level is the extremely centralized form of government now in place. Union Parishads (UPs) derive their authority and a substantial portion of their funds from national ministries whose effective reach to the level is constrained by intervening levels of government. For example, Union Parishads (UPs) must submit their budgets and work plans for review and follow-up action by several appointed officials at the Upazilla and district levels. As a result, the UNO and the Chairman of the Upazilla Development Committee have more *de facto* power over development projects in Unions than do the UPs themselves."

Although Bangladesh is a unitary system, there are three administrative tiers and local government structure which could have easily taken care of such problem. Even for posting of foundation level officers like lecturer/teacher of a college/high school or a medical officer at Upazilla (Sub-district), the Central Government, where again so many tiers may have to be crossed, gets involved. Here again, timidity sets in and that delays the decision making process. This also gives rise to more probability of corruption and sufferings of the employees. Motivation, which is conditioned more by intrinsic factors than extrinsic ones, gets badly affected and the overall productivity of the government definitely suffers. However,

the probability of corruption still remains valid even if decentralization in relatively important decision making is done at the administrative levels. Federalism is, however, a far-fetched idea at the moment since basic structure of the Constitution has to be amended and for that political consensus has to be reached.

Even if an individual bureaucrat would like to exert his dynamism, creativity or initiative, the system would not permit it. The system constraint has become a serious problem in transforming the officers. Delay in the system is unwarranted and is a recurrent phenomenon. This author learnt about a case where a simple clarification on a point, pending for last about six years, asked from the higher office of the Republic to a functioning ministry took about six months, that too after several reminders. Such delays are caused both vertically and horizontally. Horizontal delays (reasons for vertical delays are already pointed out) are caused mainly because of consultation or opinion seeking with the other line ministries. In the horizontal plane also files have to again move up and down the tiers as mentioned. And if there is a disagreement, the matters get further complicated. It further delays the decision making process. This author was shocked to learn a state of affair where an important appointment case remained pending in a functioning ministry for three years. The case could have been processed to the appropriate authority for his approval. As a matter of fact, the incumbent continued functioning presumably without lawful authority for three years. When, on the eve of a ceremony, it was discovered that the appointment was not validated and hence the subsequent actions that followed could be questioned, the Pandora's Box was opened. How and why it happened was not looked into. The accountability and transparency, which are so much essential for good governance, were totally lacking in this case. The matter was, probably, somehow patched up. Even in a transactional leadership spectrum, the *status quo* is at least maintained. In this case, even the *status quo* or routine functioning was not maintained, let alone challenging and changing the *status quo*. So the creative or innovative ideas cannot be expected that are so critical in this globalized, intelligent 21st century world.

Transformational leaders are supposed to be intellectually sound, so that they can transmit to their followers their wisdom; and it results in two-way traffic. A leader has to command the respect

through his personality, values, wisdom, and long-range view and make them think the way he thinks. Only then can the leader take the team along with him. He has to capture some of their styles or traits in order to be successful in his domain. And his own domain is to have contemporary and up-to-date knowledge and the ability to apply those in the field he is handling. If he is handling WTO matters, he should be a reasonable expert on the subject so that he can communicate, negotiate and be able to enter into agreements, keeping the country's interests above everything, with his expert counterparts coming from both developed and developing worlds. This is a knowledge-based world, but sad enough Bangladesh has turned out to be a knowledge starved society.

If our bureaucrats could be armed with more technical and appropriate knowledge, then the Government would not probably have signed the Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) with the International Oil Companies (IOCs) where 72% of the revenue earnings are given to the IOCs in foreign currencies. Gas is stored in the territories of Bangladesh but it only gets a paltry 28% percent of revenue earnings. Again, because of the lack of adequate technical and appropriate knowledge or realizing the urgency Bangladesh, as yet, could not place its case before the United Nations regarding the maritime demarcation of the Bay of Bengal, although it ratified the UNCLOS in 2001. Bangladesh has not yet carried out necessary survey to decide about the extent of its continental shelf. The control points of its base line, both in the western and eastern sectors, have been contested by both India and Myanmar. Bangladesh is likely to get 'zone/sea locked' and if serious negotiations are not undertaken immediately with the actors concerned, mostly applying the equity theory as against equidistance theory, much of Bangladesh's life sustenance resources and maritime freedom might get jeopardized. It is to be especially mentioned here that the neighboring countries like India, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia have settled their scores of maritime boundary demarcation.

There is a big question: is Bangladesh prepared for such serious negotiations with its neighbours in order to protect its interests? Or it is going to surrender its interests as it did during the last Hong Kong round of WTO negotiations because the Bangladesh team did not carry out enough home work for such negotiations? There can be a

further question: is the person who is supposed to carry out his homework has the requisite ability and the right attitude to do so? There is a concern about it. The answer is simple: the person may not have the requisite expertise and the positive attitude that would take care of the national interest.

This author learnt about a case where a summary for an appointment to a very high office was placed in the higher office in such a way that the constitutional provision apparently got violated. When someone pointed out such violation, the reply given to him was that there was such a precedent earlier. To that officer, what was important was the precedent not the Constitution. It also shows lack of knowledge of the Constitution both by him and his predecessor. It could be also attitudinal tendencies to show what they did was right, not what the Constitution stipulates. It can be surmised that it was more of a lack of adequate knowledge of the Constitution. Superficial knowledge on such critical issues could be disastrous for the nation and on occasions national interests might get violated. Even a transactional leader is expected to have enough knowledge on a subject he handles in order to maintain the *status quo*; otherwise atrophy would take over. In a globalized interdependent world, specialist knowledge by the bureaucrats in their respective field of activities is essential even if we presume they are not transformational leaders. Intellectual stimulation is *sine quo non* for someone to be a transformational leader.

It is generally believed that the bureaucrats, especially officers from the Administrative Cadre, probably, acted as a pressure group (there could be other pressure groups also) to block the separation and independence of the judiciary and Anti-Corruption Commission. It also did not work favorably to institutionalize the local government system of Bangladesh. The Supreme Court, through its twelve point directive in 1999, asked the Government to completely separate the judiciary, especially the lower judiciary, from the executive. But the successive governments started dilly-dallying the process, presumably also at the behest of the bureaucrats. Bureaucrats might have apprehended that their power could get greatly curtailed by such action. This could also be true in the case of the local governments, as already pointed out. However, the local

political leaders also had their vested interests in not institutionalizing and strengthening the local government structures.

Be that as it may, bureaucrats would not like to part with the control and superintendence they have on different aspects of the local government. Bureaucrats both at the local tiers and also at the central level have varying degrees of control over the local governments. It is a well nigh difficult task to meaningfully direct, control and monitor the activities of the local governments, from the capital city, spread in every nook and corner of the country. Personalized consideration would be totally lacking in such a scenario which goes against the concept of transformational leadership. Innovativeness, creativity and emotional attachment are essential in transformational leadership styles but sad enough such inputs may be absent in a scenario like this.

4. RESPONSE

A thorough overhauling of the bureaucratic structure, span of control, style of work, motivation, values, attitudes, and mindset may be necessary in the context and environment of Bangladesh. There may be a necessity of strategic planning for this. Donor assistance, both in terms of money and expertise, may be necessary.

Firstly, flatter organization system, which generally goes with the modern management concepts, as against many-tiered vertical organization in the bureaucratic hierarchy of the Central Government, may be thought of. It could be brought down to four to five tiers that would facilitate better and faster decision making. However, the number of streams, dealing with limited subjects, within a Ministry/Division may be increased. This will help in faster decision making and specialization.

Secondly, similar types of Ministries/Divisions could be clustered together within which the officers/employees would generally rotate. Example could be the Ministries/Divisions of Finance, Planning, Commerce, External Resources Division, Expatriate Welfare Division could be clustered together, something like Strategic Business Units (SBUs), as practised in the business world, where the officers from their foundation level to even up to highest level would rotate during their stint of staff appointments. Another example could be the Ministries/Divisions like Foreign,

Home, Defence, Disaster Management, Chittagong Hill Tracts, etc could be clustered together. The specialization that would accrue in such clustering would better take care of areas like WTO, maritime or land boundary demarcation, counter-terrorism, etc. where there are tendencies of faltering. This is given merely as a suggestion; one may not be sacrosanct about it. In a similar vein, Zafarullah's categorization of ministries/divisions merits consideration, may be with certain adjustment. Those could be categorized, as he prescribes, like Executive (President's Office, Prime Minister's Office and Cabinet Division), Regulatory (Establishment, Finance, IRD, Local Government, Commerce, Home, Jute, Civil Aviation and Tourism, Shipping, Lands, etc), Service-orientated/Welfare (Relief, Special Affairs, Health and Family Welfare, Railways, Post and Telecommunication, Social Welfare, Women's Affairs), Food, Labour and Manpower Developmental (Agriculture, Rural Development and Cooperative, Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control, Roads and Road Transport, Industries, Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, Works, Fisheries and Livestock, Jute and Textile), Promotional (Primary and Mass Education, Education, Science and Technology, Environment and Forest, Information, Cultural Affairs, Youth and Sports, Religious Affairs), Advisory (Armed Forces Division, Planning, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Parliament Secretariat), Research (Statistical and Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division), and International (Foreign Affairs and Economic Relations).⁸

Thirdly, Strategic Management Planning, along with Management by Objectives (MBO) technique, as practised in the business world, dovetailed to the culture of public service may be adopted for the Bangladesh Civil Service. Vision/Mission, long term objectives, strategies, yearly objectives, policies, feedback system for each Ministry/Division, Corporation and Department should be clearly spelt out in a realistic, achievable, time bound benchmark.

⁸ Habib Zafarullah, "The National Administration-Organizational Arrangements and Operating Methods" in *The Bureaucratic Ascendancy-Public Administration in Bangladesh, The First Three Decades*, Habib Zafarullah and Mohabbat Khan (ed.), AH Development Publishing House, Dhaka, 2005, pp.75-77. Some of the Ministries/Divisions, over the years, have been renamed or reorganized.

This is not to say that broad objectives are not spelt out in the yearly /three yearly/five yearly planning processes. Bangladesh has a good macro level planning, but what it lacks is the micro level planning and implementation. It also lacks feed back loop which helps in further planning. Objectives are not set out in a realistic and achievable manner; as such Bangladesh generally falters in implementing the Annual Development Plans or in utilizing the foreign assistance. Strategic planning involves all segments, spectrum, activities, cohesion, top down and bottom up approaches, etc. It also involves participatory planning. All stakeholders should be consulted before deciding about an objective. Each Department/Tier/Local Government should be given their yearly achievable, tangible and intangible (to be quantified as much as possible) objectives that would, in totality, meet the yearly objectives of a particular Ministry/Division. Our foreign missions, as part of economic diplomacy, could be given the yearly objectives like export to the target country be increased by say 10% or so many skilled/non skilled manpower be exported to that country. Such objectives could be decided realistically based on past experiences and future trends. Management by objectives, although an American concept not fitting into our culture, may be followed at least in its spirit. Now any player who fails to meet a reasonable expectation of the objectives may be made answerable. Such lapses may be reflected in his yearly performance appraisal in clear terms which would ultimately impact on his career advancement. An independent team has to work out the details of modalities, in case the Government decides to implement the concept.

Fourthly, in order to attract the better graduates of the universities (private sector is now a better destination), their pay, perks and privileges should be greatly enhanced. ADB Country Governance Assessment Bangladesh (Draft), May 2004 acknowledges that the Civil Service no longer attracts the same calibre of entry- level officials that it did in the past. It prescribes salary reform, “mindful of the need to balance the prospect of competitive salary increases with the corollary need to reduce the overall costs of public administration”. If necessary, a portion of the Annual Development Plan may have to be diverted to the Revenue Budget in order to cater for the extra expenditure involved in salary increases. In the long term, it would prove to be more cost-effective.

If the actors are not efficient, output would be always problematic. One cannot be expected to be efficient, if his/her physiological needs are not adequately met, when he is de-motivated.

Fifthly, since the quality of Bangladesh University education has deteriorated to a great extent, especially in relation to communication skill in English and latest developments around the world, there is a dire need for an exhaustive, realistic, up-to-date training package programme to be developed in the training institutions. This is borne out by the observations made by Shawkat Ali, a former career civil servant, "various studies have drawn attention to the deficiencies in the training of civil servants, specially post-entry and pre-entry training. Some of these deficiencies are as follows: lack of qualified and well trained staff arising out of posting unwilling civil servants in the training institutes and such postings do not take into account the qualification and experience of the civil servants which result in low quality of training and lack of motivation; the post-entry training and in-service training courses are not well integrated and scheduled to provide and continuously update the level of training and knowledge of civil servants. ...Questions have already been raised about relevance of training, utilization of training and incentives for training.⁹ Training should be both class room and field based. Exhaustive training programme generally for greater duration than what is done today, especially at the foundation level would pay rich dividends in the long run. Training in the form of case studies, seminars, group projects especially at the field levels, presentations, research papers, In Basket Exercises, visits and orientation with varied types of installations, institutions, corporate world, NGOs, local government, industries, etc may be given more emphasis. Field trips and exercises, something similar to military system, could be given a consideration. For such extensive training system foreign advisory team from countries like Singapore, Japan, UK, and Australia as also from the Bangladesh Armed Forces may be sought.

Sixthly, for career advancement, successful field level appointments like Upazilla Nirbahi Officer (UNO) and Deputy Commissioner (DC), an independent assignment in a foreign mission

⁹ A.M.M. Shawkat Ali, *Bangladesh Civil Service- A Political-Administrative Perspective*, University Press Limited, Dhaka, 2004, pp.138-139.

may be given more credence. One who performs poorly in such appointments may not be given further enhancement in career. Based on the performance reflected in the Annual Confidential Reports, the officers in the promotion chain, at different tiers, may be required to go through the Assessment Centers where they would undergo various group exercises and individual tasks as well as psychometrics and interviews. Only the successful candidates would qualify for further promotion. This practice is followed in the U.K. Civil Service.¹⁰ This has relevance to military system of promotion as well. It is heartening to note that Bangladesh Government is already thinking of introducing similar system.

Seventhly, there is generally a degeneration of values in Bangladesh. Corruption is rampant in all segments of the society. Such situation should be arrested through greater transparency and accountability. Parliamentary standing committees may be more assertive to make the bureaucrats more accountable. Even the courts of law may, if not already doing, attempt to go into greater details of a case that involves the government projects and functionaries and make the public servants accountable. Higher bureaucracy may regularly visit the field level projects and offices to ensure better accountability and transparency.

Eighthly, E-governance or Digital Governance should be given especial priority. E-Governance has to be seen as a tool for good governance and human development. Good Governance occurs when Electronic Governance is able to enhance the “Public Value” of information supplied. The Civil Service members may be made

¹⁰ The promotion of Japanese government officials is regulated by two methods i.e. “Slow” and “Prize accumulation”. The “Slow” promotion system means that almost all officials employed in the same year are simultaneously promoted to the next higher position until a certain level is reached, and then the system becomes very competitive. The “Prize accumulation” promotion system means that the “prize” results from the appreciation of superiors and peers for one’s steady and cautious accumulation of “no error” service to one’s group, rather than for some spectacular positive achievement in one’s position. (Source: Professor Tatsuo Oyama, “Educating and Training Japanese Government Officials: Current Trends and Policy Study Aspects”- <http://www.adb.org/Document/Books/Role-of-Public-Administration/default.asp>)

aware of the necessity of E-Governance and be thoroughly armed with necessary competencies. Chandra Babu Naidu, a former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, India, could be a role model for our system.

Lastly, as long as necessary expertise, required of a particular Ministry/Division, is not developed, a core committee of experts drawn mainly from the civil society, universities and research institutes may be formed, as a stop gap measure, to assist the concerned Ministry/Division in handling the technical/complicated matters that involve vital national interests. Of course, this has been done many a time. This now needs to be made more structured with definite terms of reference.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has presented a proposition of the transformational stage in the administration, bureaucracy, and state. In fact, it is emphasized here that all other organs and structure of the state are poised for change. Partisan polity in the transitional stage is about to introduce reforms after a huge paradigm shift. The quality of leadership in all spheres – politics, business, profession, bureaucracy – is in question and calls deeply for reform.

In the current reformist and transformational scenario, the bureaucracy has a critical role in enabling an orderly transition to provide the prerequisites for democracy and development. For achieving this, the bureaucracy may help establish the rule of law. Without this, the arbitrary and capricious decision making of the past could reappear.

Leadership in Bangladesh is definitely at a critical juncture and, needless to say, standing at the threshold of the 21st century, Bangladesh has to discard the old perception of it. In this regard, the author considers this phase of history as transitional and transformational. Whether we like it or not, the coming generations will complete the full circle of change that is needed to move from one level of development to the next and thank us for “beginning the beginning”.