



Public Administration Agendas in the Light of New Public Management: A Written Testimony of Reform Initiatives of an Asian Country

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a conceptual discussion of New Public Management (NPM) driven reform initiatives in public administration. NPM is a management philosophy used since the 1980s by many governments, particularly developed countries, namely the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand, to modernize the way the public sector works. The developing countries have also embarked on the path of transformation since the 1990s. Bangladesh has also witnessed various public administration reform initiatives since independence, but is gaining momentum after 1990s with significant use of NPM modalities to make the public sector more responsive and results-oriented. This paper brings the success stories from the global market, and critiques the case of Bangladesh in its administrative reform initiatives through the lens of the NPM. The analysis is based on various secondary sources such as policy papers, research articles, archive material, etc. Based on the discussions, the paper concludes with some recommendations.



INTRODUCTION

New Public Management (NPM) has been considered as the most innovative paradigm of public administration since the 1980s. It represents an approach to public administration that uses knowledge and experience from business management and other disciplines to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and overall performance of public services in modern bureaucracies (Vigoda, 2003). By the time, several frameworks have been developed to classify and analyze different approaches to public administration and public sector reform in advanced industrialized countries (Robinson, 2015). Most of these frameworks focus on the transition from traditional bureaucratic public administration to NPM-led performance-based public administration that took place in the 1980s and 1990s. These reforms help reduce government consumption; reduction in patronage; development of flexibility in employment contracts; improving monetary incentives; building trust in the public and private sectors; and improving operational inefficiencies and poor service delivery (Chowdhury & Shil, 2017). These elements of reform created a new public sector orthodoxy, namely the NPM (Hood, 1991; Dunleavy & Hood, 1994). This movement has emphasized the value of market efficiency in the public sector and has stimulated various management reinventions (Christiaens & Rommel, 2008; Luke, 2008), which results new agendas for public administration in many developing and least developed countries. This study highlights the reform initiatives taken by Bangladesh, a developing country in Southeast Asia, to reconfigure its public administration around NPM ideals.

NPM is a vision, an ideology, a set of specific management approaches and techniques (Kalimullah et al., 2012). The most distinctive feature of the NPM is its greater emphasis on what has been termed 3Es - economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Government fiscal crises, poor public sector performance in various areas, overbearing bureaucracy, lack of accountability, corruption, changing people's expectations and the emergence of better alternative modes of service delivery have all contributed to the emergence of the NPM model (Sarker, 2006; Common, 1998). The NPM brings a breakthrough in the public administration system that arises from market-oriented agendas. One of the most important factors that led to the emergence of NPM is the historic shift in state ideology since the late 1970s in advanced capitalist nations towards a neoliberal framework that includes: rejection of the welfare state; to oppose the large public sectors that occupy scarce resources and yet are inefficient in achieving customer satisfaction; blaming government incompetence; blame the public bureaucracy; believe in private sector supremacy and emphasis on market discipline (Haque, 2004).

The introduction of this new management approach in the public sector aims to promote a culture of performance (Baehler, 2003; Mir & Rahaman, 2006; Jansen, 2008), achieve cost efficiency, budget accountability, and customer orientation in service delivery (Dixon et al., 1996; Groot & Budding, 2008). This approach creates the changes to the structures and processes of public sector organizations with the aim of making them run better (Chowdhury & Shil, 2017). More specifically, this new approach focuses on NPM ideals (Hood, 1991; Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Hood, 1995). While NPM is mainly associated with OECD countries, many developing countries are also aspiring to adopt this management theory, treating citizens as customers and public institutions as managers, in order to facilitate corporatization, privatization, commercialization, etc. In many developing countries, public sector reform involves selective changes to public management models that are appropriate in different contexts while placing the needs and interests of citizens at the center of reform efforts, consistent with the NPM approach (Robinson, 2015). Against this background, this study aims to highlight various reform initiatives undertaken to historically reconfigure Bangladesh's public administration system under NPM ideals. An integrative literature review has been applied to locate relevant literatures based on which the study draws major recommendations and conclusion. The remaining part of the paper is structured as below. Section 2 presents the research objectives and methodology, followed by conceptual considerations and background of the study in Section 3. Section 4 presents analysis and results. Later future dimensions and recommendations are presented in Section 5 and finally the paper ends in Section 6.



RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This study intends to highlight the administrative reform initiatives that have been undertaken to give impetus to public service delivery in an evolving emerging market context. Therefore, the research questions of this study are:

RQ 1: What are the agendas for public administration reform in Bangladesh?

RQ 2: Are the reforms carried out under NPM ideals?

RQ 3: What are the developments so far?

RQ 4: What are the future dimensions of public administration reform in Bangladesh?

An integrative review method has been applied to obtain the answers to selected research questions. An integrative review method brings together previous empirical or theoretical literature to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon (Broome, 2000), the public administration reforms in this study. It is hereby argued that the reform initiatives are driven by NPM ideals. Integrative reviews incorporate a wide range of purposes: defining concepts, reviewing theories, accumulating evidence, and analyzing methodological issues of a particular topic (Broome, 2000). The integrative review helps to present different perspectives on a phenomenon of concern, and it is deemed appropriate here to identify the public administration agendas and resulting reform initiatives that include an in-depth examination of all four research questions. We applied the following step-by-step process to identify relevant literature, based on which we conducted our analysis and developed recommendations and conclusions.

We identified research questions and some keywords such as public administration, reforms in public administration, NPM ideals etc. in the problem identification stage. The experiences of developed and developing countries with NPM initiatives were considered to assess the applicability of such a model in the context of Bangladesh. Later we used the Google Scholar platform to search for relevant literature. At the data evaluation stage, we read the abstract to screen initial sets of literature and later we read the entire paper to complete the final set of papers. From the references of selected papers, we have added more papers to our final list. Researchers analyzed the content of relevant documents and identified some key themes on which to structure the analysis. In the data analysis stage, we carefully ordered, coded, categorized and summarized the analysis across selected themes. In data analysis, we started with data reduction, followed by data display. Then we initiated the data comparison, followed by finalizing the thematic structure (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Since there are few works (Azizuddin, 2008; Ferdousi & Qiu, 2013; Ferdous, 2014, 2016; Islam, 2011; Rahman, 2018; Sarker, 2004) done on the area, this study took a qualitative approach to develop a critical analysis on the reform initiatives based on various secondary sources like published research works, policy papers, dissertation, conference papers, editorials etc. The findings of this integrative review are presented through tables, figures and explicit details. A critical analysis was made of the key factors influencing the NPM initiatives and outcomes in Bangladesh. This study will serve as a reference work for future researchers in this field. Policymakers will also benefit from understanding the pitfalls of reform initiatives that will prompt them to take policy action.

Conceptual Considerations and Background of the Study

The conceptual foundation of this study lies on various reform initiatives taken across public administration which are driven by NPM ideals. This section gives a brief outlook on public administration and NPM.

Public Administration: Traditional and New Agendas

Public administration is the execution of government policy with the aim of advancing public management so that government can function effectively and efficiently. Appleby (1947) defined public administration as the public leadership of public affairs that is directly responsible for the implementation of policies. It is the study of government decisions, the analysis of the policies themselves, the various inputs that have produced them, and the inputs required to develop alternative policies (Mckinney & Howard, 1998). The



aims of the study of public administration are, first, to find out what government can do rightly and effectively, and second, how it does those things with the utmost possible efficiency and at the least possible cost, either in money or in energy (Wilson, 1887). Public administration is a common feature to every nation that deals with the central, middle and local levels of government. The body of public administration is called the civil service and the civil servants are considered professionals and valued for their expertise (Mosher, 1982).

Twentieth century public administration followed a traditional bureaucratic approach based on the principles of hierarchy and meritocracy, as guided by the notions of Max Weber (Robinson, 2015). It was originally introduced as part of wide-ranging bureaucratic reforms in the United Kingdom and Prussia in the late 19th century to overcome patrimonial systems of administration in which patronage and favoritism dominated government decisions and public appointments. This approach had a number of distinctive features. It relied on centralized control, established rules and guidelines, separated policy making from implementation, and employed a hierarchical organizational structure (Osborne, 2006). Wilson (1887) advocated four concepts of Public administration, namely, a) separation of politics and administration; b) comparative analysis of political and private organizations; c) improving efficiency with business-like practices and attitudes toward daily operations; and d) improving the effectiveness of public service through management and by training civil servants, merit-based assessment. The prominent features of the model cited by Robinson (2015) based on McCourt (2013) are:

- a) Separation between politicians and administrators;
- b) Continuous, predictable and rule-governed administration;
- c) Appointment of qualified and trained professionals as administrators;
- d) Functional division of labor, creating hierarchy of tasks and people;
- e) Resources belong to the organization, not to the one who work in it; and
- f) Delivery of service to the public rather than fulfilling private interest.

This command-and-control approach to public administration was the reference point for bureaucratic systems established around the world during colonial rule and then in most Commonwealth countries after independence. But many postcolonial states experienced a decline in the quality of governance and the effectiveness of public administration in subsequent years, as neopatrimonial pressures prevailed and state resources and public appointments became subject to the personal influence of political leaders and their supporters (McCourt, 2013). This negative connotation later drives the reform process in public administration that produced new agendas of public administration.

Administrative reform is the deliberate use of authority and influence to apply new measures to an administrative system so as to change its goals, structure, procedures and behavior of public bureaucracy with a view to improving organizational effectiveness and to attain national development goals (Mollah, 2014). Such reform is a complex and multifaceted issue where the changing structure and increased attention to performance has become the central point (Azizuddin, 2012). Many countries have, often with the help of the international donors, sought to promote good governance through reforms along the lines of the developed countries (Azizuddin, 2008). Nonetheless, administrative reform has been proven to be the most difficult of development reforms and there has been little evidence of nationally or donor sponsored reform efforts to be successful (Shepherd, 2003).

The current reform agenda adopted by most developed and developing countries includes approaches such as liberalization, deregulation, public sector downsizing, privatization, de-bureaucratization, civil service reform, fiscal reform, performance measures, businesslike management practices, efficiency, accountability and transparency (Caiden, 1991). The aim of these reforms is to improve effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness of administrative apparatus. It may be imperative for a country to keep up with administrative reforms in other countries, or risk increasing damage to its reputation and hence its competitiveness. However, these reform challenges have been met in different ways, with different nomenclatures, depending on the context (Ocampo, 1998). In relatively underdeveloped countries such as Bangladesh, these models may have not been entirely appropriate (Atreya & Armstrong, 2002). Among different reform strategies, NPM is a new



paradigm replacing the classic bureaucratic culture (Gow & Dufour, 2000; Batchelder & Alexander, 2009), which was used as a motivation for administrative reforms in this study.

New Public Management: A Paradigm Shift

The NPM has emerged as an improved model of public administration (Table 1) compared to traditional administration over the last few decades. The term NPM itself has several incarnations such as managerialism (Pollitt, 1993), market-based public administration (Lan & Rosenbloom, 1992), entrepreneurial government (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993) etc. Among various definitions, Borins (1995) focused on managerial improvement in public administration.

Table 1: Traditional vs. NPM based Public Administration

Elements	Traditional	NPM
Style of Management	Centralized pattern following a pyramid structure	Decentralized approach with accountability in various stages
Performance measures	Unit performance is rarely measured, focus on overall performance	Professionally managed and key performance indicators are used to measure performance
Control measures	Prioritize on input and procedure	Prioritize on result and output control
Management philosophy	Traditional bureaucratic system	Run like private sector with the focus on profitability and sustainability
Resource utilization	Political consideration with focus on tax, grants, donations and subsidy	Business consideration with focus on efficiency, effectiveness and economy
Accountability framework	Accountable to politicians through parliamentary discourse	Accountable to citizens through citizen charter
Guiding Principles	Traditional bureaucracy	Efficient service delivery

Source: Authors based on Ferdousi & Qiu, 2013

Hood (1991) describes NPM as a doctrine comprising seven components, viz., practical professional management in the public sector, explicit standards and measures of performance, greater emphasis on output controls, shift towards disaggregation of units in the public sector, shift towards greater competition in the public sector, emphasizing on private sector styles of management practice, and stress on greater discipline and parsimony in the use of resources. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has listed a group of managerial features in its NPM model of reform. According to OECD, the central theme of NPM is to provide managerial and financial flexibilities in the public sector. Osborne & Gaebler (1993) have also described the main principles that have resulted in new approaches and orientations in the NPM-based reform movement.

Private is better than public, a new phenomenon, is being practiced as the private sector is believed to be considered more efficient in operation and public administration could follow in the footsteps of private management to be better able to allocate and use resources efficiently. Based on the key concepts of NPM, market and management are two dimensions that could explain the factor behind the success of private sector. Kalimullah et al. (2012) realized that market means competition and competition pushes private organizations to be more effective and efficient through innovation, quality as excellence and reliability, and proximity to customers; otherwise, other companies will take over and they will not survive. But, in case of public administration, it is not exposed to competition and operates as a monopoly, which gives it the right to dominate and they are not driven for improvement; hence, cost effectiveness and productivity are not achieved, and the



allocation of resources would be suboptimal. To remedy this situation, NPM proposes a number of ways to expose public sector organizations to be more competitive.

The traditional concepts of public administration have been transformed to meet the emerging geopolitical and economic challenges. The paradigm shift from public management to NPM involves a change in the fundamental design of public sector organization that is less different from private sector and operates like private firms, and increases the degree of discretion exercised by public managers (Kalimullah et al., 2012). Government reworks budgets to be transparent in accounting terms, with costs attributed to outputs not inputs, and outputs measured by quantitative performance indicators. Public sector organizations should be viewed as a chain of low-trust principal/agent relationships (rather than fiduciary or trustee-beneficiary ones) and a network of contracts linking incentives to performance. Government dissects separable functions into quasi-contractual or quasi-market forms, particularly through the introduction of buyer/supplier distinctions; Open provider roles to competition between agencies or between public bodies, companies and non-profit organizations; and deconcentrates provider roles to the smallest possible agency size, giving users more leeway to switch from one provider to another rather than relying on 'voice' options to influence how the delivery of public services affects them (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994).

NPM has become a leverage of managing public sector organizations with two key features, for example, one is the separation of policy formulation from operation and secondly, the importance of management inspired by private sector management. This new approach to public management founded a sharp critique of bureaucracy as the organization principle within public administration and promised a small but better government, emphasized on decentralization and empowerment, focused on customer satisfaction, promoted better mechanism of public accountability and institutional development. It is also concerned with the ability of public administration to secure the economic, efficient and effective provision of public services, and concern for professional power within public services and consequent disempowerment of service users (Kalimullah et al., 2012).

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Public Administration of Bangladesh – Across Different Political Regime

Entire public administration system of Bangladesh still bears a colonial legacy as British ruled the country for 200 years. Especially in political and administrative arrangements, a colonial imprint persists in Bangladesh. At the same time, it is accused of following the "Pakistani tradition of involvement in power politics" (Haque, 1997). Bangladesh conquered a fully operating democratic structure, for the first time in 1990, even though the nature and role of bureaucracy remained almost the same in both pre- and post-democratic period, except for an increase in the number of ministries, divisions, departments and statutory bodies.

No matter how much a government tries to achieve its target, the attainment of success will hinder due to lack of competent institutions for implementing policies. In a country like Bangladesh, where global pressure is eminent and the domestic political institutions are ill structured, the colonial legacy places the bureaucracy in a difficult position. As globalization or market liberalization changes both the domestic context and the functioning of the bureaucracy, it is possible, but not necessarily desirable, that the two primary state institutions, politics and bureaucracy, forge an alliance (Ferdous, 2016). To understand the situation of bureaucracy in Bangladesh, we have to look first three separate phases: the British era (1757-1947), the Pakistan era (1947-1971) and the Bangladesh era (1971-till) (Rahman, 2002).

The British Era (1757-1947)

In the British imperial rule, the bureaucracy was to be fitted so isolated and advantaged section in the society, and was very obedient and devoted to the colonial rule in the conservation of the imperial wellbeing of the colonial rulers that general crowds practiced extreme troubles in interconnecting with the bureaucrats and in getting government facility (Islam, 2011). Ruling over for more than 200 years, the British rule had set in a different administrative and organizational legacy. The British colonial administration mechanism, named as



the Indian Civil Service (ICS), had a target of accomplishing two major tasks, such as, corrective and revenue management, with certain contribution to judicial matters. Their intention was to retain the British colonial customs and standards. The ICS officers were educated and trained in Britain to apply imperial mechanisms and link the gap concerning the ruler and the ruled. Actually, the British colonial rulers utilized the exclusive and consolidated bureaucratic mechanism as a tool of suppression and regulate the Indian inborn inhabitants so as to make stronger the base of imperial dominance, even after the Indianization of British Indian civil Service (Ferdous, 2016).

The Pakistan Era (1947-1971)

In 1947, after the liberation from British, central stage of bureaucratic structure was civil service of Pakistan (CSP). The essence of CSP was extracted from ICS in arrangement and philosophy (Bribanti, 1966). Its exclusive character confirmed its special domination over significant policy formulating and policy-implementing point in the territory of public service (Khan, 1979). The CSP measured itself as the legitimate successor to the ICS of entire India (Ferdous, 2016). A lengthy period of military-bureaucratic domination above the state device, constant political domination, economic disparity between provinces, and disturbing policies to abolish cultural ethics of the Bengalis were contributory in the political fragmentation of Pakistan (Zafarullah & Khan, 2001).

The Bangladesh Era (1971- Till Today)

Since independence of Bangladesh in 1971, though various reform efforts have been commenced to redesign the functioning and the interaction pattern of the bureaucracy in Bangladesh, the exclusive and influential organizational system is still predominant in Bangladesh (Ferdous, 2016). Organizationally no key modification was carried in the civil service after the liberation. Presently the secretariat comprises of 37 ministries and 43 divisions. Ministries and divisions are largely involved in formulating policy and managing the execution. Every ministry or division has a number of directorates, departments, and attached offices, that effort together by means of the field offices for that ministry or division. Field offices are liable for executing programs, plans, and assignments accepted by the related ministry or division. Most of the ministries have their field agencies at every hierarchical executive entity that is divisions, districts, and upazilas. Field agencies of all ministries or divisions of a specific executive entity organized consist of the field administration of the related entity. Since the British era, the functional cadres have been the top services of the state. Right now, there are 28 cadres in the BCS. Every cadre official has his place in Class 1 salary positions and enjoys the equivalent prominence and remunerations (Khan, 2013).

Public Administration Reforms in Bangladesh under NPM Ideals

The primary motive behind public administration reform process was modernization (Sarker, 2004). Bangladesh, from the very beginning of its administrative journey, has formed a number of commissions and committee for reforms (Mollah, 2014). The reforms are built to ensure efficiency, professionalism, accountability, responsiveness and democratic control of administration by elected officials (Khan, 1989). The first political government stayed in power only for three and half years after emerging as a sovereign country. Military regimes in different shapes ruled the country from mid-1975 to 1991. Since 1991 democratic governments are ruling the country so far. All of these attempts have been made to reform the administrative systems. So, it can be mentioned that Bangladesh has experienced a good number of reform attempts over the years (Rahman, 2018). Since independence, the government constituted 17 reform Commissions or Committees with a view to reorganize/reform of civil service and public sector. More than 20 reports on Public Administration Reform have been prepared by these Commissions and Committees. The major reform attempts in Bangladesh and their focus and recommendations along with reports are summarized in Table 2 and 3.

The system of administration that Bangladesh inherited at independence was basically of a colonial nature and had been handed down to Pakistan by the British following the partition of India in 1947. The government of Pakistan seemed to have tried half-heartedly to overhaul it and to do away with the colonial



legacy. What resulted was brown shahibs substituted for white ones. Administrative reforms since the independence of Bangladesh appear to be a veritable obsession of every successive government. Managing public affairs without resorting to administrative reform entails a total disregard of efficiency, public opinion and internal cohesion. It was evident that the primary obstacles to development of a new nation were administrative, political, and economic bottlenecks. In order to streamline an age-old and anachronistic administrative structure that was totally unsuitable to meet the rising expectations of the people, the government has appointed several major administrative reform commissions/committees since independence.

Table 2: Major Commissions and Committees Formed by The Government of Bangladesh

Committees/ Commissions	Year	Focus	Objectives	Recommendations
Civil Administration Restoration Committee (CARC)	1971	Restoration and continuity of the government	To examine and suggest ways and means for restoration of civil administration at various levels as well as for absorption of officials and employees of the ministries / departments after the emergence of Bangladesh	To transform the provincial secretariat into the national secretariat with 20 ministries and related directorates/departments and corporations
Administrative and Services Reorganization Committee (ASRC)	1972	Reorganization Committee	To suggest measures towards reorganizing the central bureaucracy, including local government accompanied by devolution of power from the central to the local level	To develop a single classless unified grading structure covering all services into 10 grades in which there would be an appropriate number of pay levels of skills and responsibilities and the correct grading for each post would be determined by an analysis of the job. The committee also argued strongly for the democratization of administration at all levels. It called for increasing devolution of authority to the elected local government and clearly delineated the areas of responsibility between the national government and local bodies.
National Pay Commission (NPC)	1972	Pay issues	To suggest a national pay structure with reference to proposed grading of ASRC	The NPC worked in close cooperation with ASRC and dealt with several variables, such as cost of living, governmental resources, existing pay disparities, attraction and retention of specialists and achievement of efficiency, equity, and work incentives to formulate a pragmatic pay policy. The NPC eventually recommended a national pay scale consisting of 10 grades. However, this was only partially implemented, and that too for only 3 years.



Pay and Services Commission (P&SC)	1976	Civil Service Structure and Pay	To conduct a fresh inquiry into the services and pay structure and to suggest necessary reforms	The most important recommendations of the P&SC with regard to services/central bureaucratic structure were the amalgamation of all erstwhile services and thereafter the creation of an all-purpose civil service to include all functions within the traditional government sector; emphasis on the merit principle as the determining factor in recruitment and promotion; removal of existing barriers between the CSP and other services through the introduction of equal initial pay scales and provisions for equitable scope of advancement in the administrative hierarchy resulting in the creation of 28 cadres of Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS), constitution of the Senior Services Pool (SSP), and the introduction of new national grades (21) and pay scales.
Martial Law Committee	1982	Reorganization and Rationalization of manpower	Entrusted with the responsibility of examining organizational set-ups of ministries/divisions and departments/offices under them and to recommend measures to improve efficiency in the civil services	The recommendations put forward by the MLC included reduction in the number of ministries/ divisions and civil servants mostly at lower levels; a scaling down in the layers of decision making at the secretarial level; restructuring the role of the secretariat and other executive organizations; formalization and regularization of the recruitment process and delegation of financial and administrative powers down the hierarchy.
Committee for Administrative Reform and Reorganization (CARR)	1982	Structure and Organization of the civil administration	Entrusted with the responsibility of recommending appropriate, sound and effective field level administrative system based on devolution of authority and people's participation.	The recommendations of CARR included a directly elected chief executive (chairman) and a representative council (parishad) at each successive local level i.e. district, upazila and union with an elected chairman as the chief coordinator with adequate staff support; elected councils at each level with full functional control over the officials working for them; adequate devolution of administrative, judicial



				and financial powers at district and upazila levels; elimination of sub-divisions and divisions as tiers of administration; appointment of elected chairman of lower councils as ex-officio members of immediate higher councils; and the development of an infrastructure at the upazila level.
National Implementation Committee for Administrative Reform and Reorganization (NICARR)	1982	Reorganization of District and Field Level Administration	Suggesting ways and means for implementing the recommendations of CARR	The implementation of the NICARR recommendations resulted in the creation of upazila administration at the local level.
Special Committee to Review the Structure of Senior Services Pool	1985	Structure of the Senior Services Pool		Continuation of SSP as a cadre; promotion within SSP to be strictly on the basis of merit; fixed tenure of secretaries
Cabinet subcommittee	1987	Review of SSP and Promotion Aspects	Recommend policy measures for implementing recommendations of the Special Committee on the structure of the senior service pool (SSP) and the Secretariat Committee relating to the problem of unequal prospects of promotion of officers of different cadre services.	Endorsement of the recommendations of the special committee.
Commission for Review of Local Government Structure	1992	To study the structure of local government	Review the local government system and structure and recommend a representative, participatory and accountable local government structure	The key recommendations were a two-tier system of local government, constitution of Gram Shava at each village and Thana Development and Coordination Committee.
Cabinet Committee for Administrative Reform (CCAR)	1993	To institutionalize administrative reform initiatives	To recommend proposals for an effective, transparent and accountable administrative system	Improving the quality of staff, efficiency, accountability, reducing inter- cadre conflict, creation of Efficiency Unit in Prime Minister's office, Efficiency Cells in six important ministries were among the major recommendations of the committee.
Administrative Reorganization Committee (ARC)	1993	To monitor reorganization	To review the government's administrative structure and staffing patterns in ministries, to ascertain actual personnel	The key recommendations were reduction of the number of ministries and administrative organizations, provincial structure for the office of



			needs and to make proposals for reorganizing the machinery of government	the ombudsman and creation of a secretariat for the Supreme Court. The recommendations were not adopted.
National Pay Commission	1996	Review pay issues	To revise national scales of pay introduced by government	20 revised nation scales of pay were introduced
Local Government Reform Commission (LGRC)	1996	To monitor reform	To examine the structure of local government and provide recommendations for strengthening the local government institutions	The commission recommended for a four-tier system of local government and suggested representative and participatory character of all the tiers.
Administrative Reforms Commission	1996	Structure and organization of manpower	To reorganize the local government system of the country.	The commission suggested a four-tier local government, namely gram parishad, union parishad, thana parishad and zila parishad. To strengthen the local government system, the commission stressed the need for creating a permanent local government commission, independent of the executive control, to supervise, review, control and monitor functions of the local government units and to suggest appropriate measures.
Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC)	1997	Public sector reform	To advise the government on issues of good governance	Improving the delivery of services; restructuring field administration; establishment of an independent commission against corruption.
National Pay Commission	2009	Pay Issues	To revise national scales of pay introduced by government	Doubling the basic salary of the civil servants.

Source: Authors based on Ferdous, 2014 and Sarker, 2004

During the thirty years since independence there have been some reforms in the central administration. But reform at the local level has been in real doldrums owing to continuous experiments after every change of government. The real issues of development, people's participation and devolution of authority in particular, seem to have been lost in the political motive of establishing one's own support-base and in destroying the support-base of predecessors.

**Table 3: Reports Equipped with the help of Development partners**

Committees/ Commissions/Study Groups	Year	Focus	Recommendations
Towards Better Government in Bangladesh (Four Secretaries Report)	1993	Civil Service	Merit-based recruitment and promotion; incentives for better performance; improvement of accountability and transparency; improvement of training programs.
Government That Works: Reforming the Public Sector	1996	Comprehensive Administrative Reform Privatization, Reduced Levels of Government	Enhancing nature of accountability and responsiveness of public organizations to different, stakeholders; maintaining efficient, committed, and professional public service.
Local Government in Bangladesh- An Agenda for Governance	1996	Local Government Issues	Decentralizing the power, Strengthening the local government structure.
Public Administration Reform in Bangladesh	2004	Civil service	Building strong civil service for better services.
Building a 21st Century Public Administration In Bangladesh	2007	Civil Service	Restructuring and Reorganization of the civil service

Source: Authors based on Ferdous, 2014

As documented by Ferdousi and Qiu (2013), most of the failed attempts of reforms have been evident from each of the successive governments. Now it has become a general tradition that at the very beginning of their regime they ensure or try to ensure some administrative measures in the interests of the patron-customer relationship, but with time they will end up blaming everything on the previous government and repeat the same situation. In spite of several isolated attempts in the past to improve governmental performance, the bureaucracy remains insulated from the people and thereby non-responsive to their demands for basic goods and services. Report of the Administrative and Services Reorganization Committee & Report of the Pay and Services Commission claimed that, none of the reform plans addressed the inadequacies of the organizational dimensions of the public administrative system and suggested measures to correct them (GoB, 1977).

Current Status of the Reform Initiatives in Bangladesh

Bangladesh with no exception, also has adopted the new reform. Some of the reforms adopted by Bangladesh are privatization of public enterprises, contracting out of public services, reduction of manpower in the public sector, professionalism, performance standards, citizen's charter, market-based salary structure, devolution of authority to local elected bodies, e-governance, and combating corruption measures.

These are some of the recommendations adopted by government of Bangladesh that reflects the spirit of NPM. The present government is now giving stress on information technology which is one of the prerequisites of NPM. All these efforts have the reflections of the OECD listed trends of NPM (Ferdousi & Qiu, 2013). But as Bangladesh is a developing country, it has faced various constraints. Lack of advance technological knowledge slow down the process of reform implementation. Another major constraint is the prevalence of traditional bureaucracy. A bureaucrat is subject to a combination of conflicting social, political and other pressures; the bureaucrat learns to contend with these pressures by internalizing organizational norms and



avoiding risks (Alkadry, 2003). However, no government can disregard the significance of sustaining a proficient bureaucracy (Siddiquee, 1999). In case of Bangladesh, the worst-case scenario is, the country has inadequate, faulty recruitment procedure that can place a non-qualified person in a formalized organization, and also politicization plays a role here by prioritizing a political party. Faulty recruitment and politicization manifestly create a vicious cycle of fewer candidates entering civil service who has ambition, merit and intellectual to run the administration, as a result, it creates inefficiency, corrupting the system. Not to mention, politicization declines the morality of civil servants (Ferdous, 2016). Adding to it, performance measurement is another issue. Because of bureaucratic elitism, the officials are deliberately opposing the implementation of major administrative reforms. The unwillingness to implement the new culture has a bad impact on NPM (Ferdous, 2014). Here are some dimensions which determines the current situation of Bangladesh bureaucracy and even though Bangladesh has adopted the reform based on NPM, the practice of rigorous bureaucracy contributes to the failure of implementation of NPM.

Incapacity of the state: To identify the incapacity of the state in reaping the benefits from NPM based reforms, Ferdousi and Qiu (2013) highlighted few points as mentioned below:

- a) Political incapacity resulting in nepotism, favoritism & factionalism.
- b) Institutional incapacity results in corruption in accumulating & distributing resources.
- c) Technical incapacity increases the absence of appropriate manpower, lack of performance control and accountability.
- d) Administrative incapacity fails to provide goods and services, stable economic infrastructure and accountability.

Cosmetic Change: Bangladesh's system of government aims to resist change. Ferdousi and Qiu (2013) identified the reasons for bureaucratic failures in implementing innovative and changed policies as resistance from high-level bureaucrats, short-lived attempts at reform, and failure to involve stakeholders in the decision-making process. The Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC) projected the provision of performance criteria, mentioning, for example, the Citizens' Charter for five major organizations and three ministries (Ferdous, 2014). However, donor organizations have failed to pursue reforms, either because reform agendas are imposed before the country recognizes the need for reforms, or because reform policies are overly ambitious, ill-conceived, and not adapted to the local context and political reality (Ferdousi and Qiu, 2013).

Elitism in Bureaucracy: The Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) shows the promises of an established bureaucracy. Repeated government failures in previous periods and miserable performances by successive political leaders have led to greater reliance on a heavy bureaucracy. The entire BCS is an elite created by sub-elites and taken over by organized methods by the elite, the particular favored group in society. All officers hired through a specific selection process receive the same pay scales and the same type of retirement benefits, giving them a certain career apart from those who don't take BCS. This dominance complex keeps them detached from society (Ferdous, 2016).

Bureaucratic Resistance: Efforts at administrative reform have been stalled due to a lack of gratitude and caring from officials responsible for implementing reforms likely to affect them. They perceive the reform efforts as a decline in their existing rank, position and power and organize resistance to prevent the reforms from being implemented. Political leadership promotes and supports bureaucratic resistance to administrative changes. This matter is of vital importance especially when the Bangladesh government is drafting an NPM-style reform program on the stand (Sarker, 2004; Ferdous, 2016).

Factionalism in the Public Sector: Prevailing factional conflicts within the bureaucracy interrupt the execution process. Conflict between the generalists and the specialists, booty system, candidates versus recruits through selection processes, freedom fighters versus non-freedom fighters, officers with military affinity versus



officers with civilian experience, and factionalism based on district affiliation—these groups negotiate difficulties with the political leadership, who interfere with their own interests (Sarker, 2004; Ferdous, 2016).

Unproductive Public Management Practices: Despite good goals, most developing countries have failed on this path. Critics argue that the guidelines of the NPM, e.g. strategic management, performance management etc., can only work if the fundamentals of management are in place. Bangladesh public administration has acknowledged its inadequacies in forming a rules-based agreement and administering a control agreement, often resulting in dysfunctional costs (Sarker, 2004; Ferdous, 2016).

Administrative Structure and Decision-making Problem: Centralized decision-making arrangements, strict hierarchical structures and a formalistic approach to administrative work have led to inflexibility, which as a result has hampered the process of policy formulation and implementation (Ferdous, 2016).

Gap between bureaucrats and citizens: Bureaucrats work to maintain the status quo rather than change the structure for the benefit of the masses (Ferdous, 2016). The gap between bureaucrats and citizens has emphasized the obsession of officials for authoritarian practices and strict adherence to rules and instructions.

Problems of Recruitment: The BCS exam has been structured in a similar style over the years, helping candidates learn instructions, put pen to paper to routinely answer and pass the exam (Ferdous, 2016). Severe claims, for example, the leak of question has been made against the Public Service Commission (PSC). The PSC has not yet resolved this difficulty or view as leak claims have continued to mount with each preliminary and written examination. The ongoing fear of leaks, coupled with politicization, is costing the reliability of the public service examination process and producing meritorious students who are reevaluating the pursuit of public sector jobs.

FUTURE DIMENSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Bangladesh has embarked on the NPM-led administrative reform agenda during last couple of decades. From the strategic vision of the country, few of them become operational. Achievement of Millennium Development Goals, promoting the country into a middle-income country status, harnessing to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, setting Vision 2041 to bring the country to developed country status, commissioning of various mega-projects and the 100 years plan of the country (the Delta Plan) are just a few examples of the political commitment of the current government in power. The introduction of corporatization, privatizations, decentralization, Citizen Charter, Digital Bangladesh slogan, Annual Performance Agreement, Medium Term Budgetary Framework and ibas++ accounting system are some examples of adherence to NPM ideals. The continuation of the current government for the past 15 years supports the continuation of the policy and the country thus reaps the benefits. However, due to some political traditions and well-established rituals combined with the country's demographic profile, we need to fundamentally overhaul the system in order to get the maximum benefit from the successful implementation of administrative reforms. Based on the analysis and discussions, few recommendations are proposed here to implement NPM-led administrative reform initiatives in Bangladesh.

- a) Every department of public service should operate according to the mission statement and align it with the country's Vision 2041, and officials must demonstrate their commitment to it.
- b) Motivate public employees to feel connected to the organization.
- c) Both politicians and bureaucrats develop a link to ethical practice through education and training and through the development of relevant policies.
- d) Ensuring policy consistency by developing a culture so that policy change cannot disrupt policy continuity.
- e) Reformers must be preventive rather than curative with strong determination and long-term vision.



- f) Policies should be kept simple for easy understanding and change management should be handled professionally.
- g) The bureaucracy should be citizen-centric so that service quality can be delivered efficiently and effectively.
- h) Principles must be accessible and relevant to improve service quality.
- i) An all-encompassing policy for gender equality should be implemented along with other goals such as zero poverty and zero hunger.
- j) In order to keep up with the advanced age of technology, the practice of IT technologies for officials should be increased, so that officials become more receptive to the implementation of NPM models, since the success of NPM implementation depends on the optimized use of IT.
- k) Fair recruitment should be practiced, with the process being transparent, impartial and free from the influence of political interests.
- l) Up to this point, it has been proven that the incorporation of politics into bureaucracy has diminished the implementation of the NPM model. Therefore, it can be proposed to reduce the influence of politics, eliminate favoritism in the appointment of officials and the promotion of officials, so that fair and honest administration can be achieved. As a result, it will motivate the truly sincere employees, and proper service can be served.
- m) Finally, accountability as one of the dimensions of NPM is achieved by curbing corruption. When public service providers are held accountable for their actions, much proper documentation of events and transactions can be achieved and transparency leveraged. The anti-corruption commission needs to be further strengthened.

CONCLUSIONS

In response to inefficiency, mismanagement and incompetence, the public sector around the world has undergone a process of reform. The concept of the welfare state has been challenged by the neoliberal school of thought. The NPM has been evolved as an intervention to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and economy in the delivery of public services. Amid various reform initiatives, administrative reform receives greater attention in the research community. The transition from the old bureaucratic administration to a modern administration based on NPM ideals is a very challenging task. As NPM becomes successful in developed countries like Australia, New Zealand, UK and other European countries, developing countries have also joined this group to reconfigure their administration. Bangladesh has also emerged as an advocate of NPM ideals in various areas of the public sector, including public administration. It has already tested various initiatives to modernize its public governance mechanisms leading to mixed feelings.

Through an integrative review, this study examines the current status of various reform initiatives taken across diverse public administration agendas driven by NPM ideals. Based on various secondary sources, we present a critical analysis of the state of public administration, reforms in public administration, a comparative picture of the traditional and modern form of public administration, NPM ideals, historical backgrounds of reforms in the context of a developing country (Bangladesh), various reform initiatives, and status of reform initiatives. It also reveals the loopholes and makes some policy recommendations. It highlights the challenges in adopting NPM-based reforms due to legitimate stakeholders with conflicting interests. The study brings together relevant questions on administrative reforms to support future researchers and policy makers.

Various published literature indicates that initiatives have been taken in Bangladesh to achieve various forms of administrative reform through NPM ideals, but the bureaucracy must not be overlooked in the context of a developing country. In many ways, it has hampered the successful implementation of administrative reforms. While other developed and even some developing countries have successfully implemented NPM, Bangladesh still lags behind due to lack of socio-economic development, corrupt bureaucratic culture, politicization and significant centralization of power. Although Bangladesh has taken some measures, the reluctance of our bureaucrats to introduce a new system has prevented new reforms. Backwardness in technology is another reason for officials avoiding new system execution, though the current government has



taken 'Digital Bangladesh' as a slogan and is in the process of digitizing the entire system of public affairs. To give impetus to the reform process and look forward to efficient and effective delivery of public goods and services, involving all institutions of society (say, government, civil society, NGOs, private sector, business and consumer associations, media) to resolve while eradicating corruption, the politicization of bureaucracy will accelerate reform progress.

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