

Bureaucratic Reforms in Bangladesh

Bureaucratic Reforms in Bangladesh:

Interactions with Legacy

By

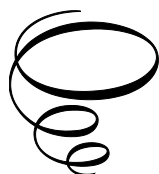
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By Md Zohurul Islam, Parimal Kumar Roy, Md. Moshiur Rahman
and Salahuddin M. Aminuzzaman

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	ix
Foreword	xii
Acknowledgements	xiv
Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Problem Statement.....	3
1.3 Study Objectives.....	4
1.4 Study Research Questions.....	4
1.5 Rationale of the Study.....	5
Literature Review	6
2.1 Background.....	6
2.2 Administrative Reform: Concepts and Issues	6
2.3 Need for Administrative Reform in Bangladesh.....	7
2.4 Reforms in Bangladesh (1971-1975).....	8
2.5 Reform Initiatives in Bangladesh during Military Regimes	10
2.6 Involvement of Development Partners.....	12
2.7 Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC): NPM Influenced Drive.....	14
2.8 Good Governance Programme: Influenced by NPG or Responsive Governance	18
2.9 ‘Digital Bangladesh’: The Recent Wave of Reform	20
2.10 Reasons for Reform Failure	24
Research Methodology	27
3.1 Introduction.....	27
3.1.1 Study Area.....	27
3.1.2 Population and Sample Size for survey questionnaire	27
3.1.3 Data Collection Tools.....	28
3.2 Qualitative Research Approach	28
3.2.1 Key Informants Interview (KII) and Expert Opinion	28

3.2.2 Analytical Technique for expert/KII descriptive explanation	28
3.3 Quantitative Research Approach with Construct Measurement Scale	29
3.3.1 Demographic variable	29
3.3.2 Reasons for Administrative Reform	29
3.3.3 Benefits of Administrative Reform	30
3.3.4 Reforms for Good Governance	30
3.3.5 Reform Evaluation	30
3.3.6 Reform Failure	31
3.3.7 Force for Reform	31
3.3.8 Future Directives	31
3.4 Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis	31
3.5 Reliability.....	32
3.6 Validity	32
Data Analysis, Results and Findings	33
4.1 Introduction.....	33
4.2 Demographic Data Analysis	33
4.2.1 Gender Distribution:.....	33
4.2.2 Age Group Distribution.....	34
4.2.3 Respondent Involvement in Different Role in the Office.....	34
4.2.4 Respondent Working Level in the Office.....	35
4.2.5 Respondent Academic Attainment.....	35
4.2.6 Respondent Length of Service.....	36
4.3 Reasons for Reform	37
4.3.1 Global or Regional Commitment	37
4.3.2 Political Manifesto or Vision Plan for Bangladesh	37
4.3.3 Development Partners' Expectations	38
4.3.4 Parliamentary Oversight.....	38
4.3.5 Media Oversight as a Reason for Administrative Reform....	39
4.3.6 Public Awareness of Administrative Reform	40
4.3.7 Transparency and Openness	40
4.3.8 Digitization and Technology	41
4.3.9 Reasons for Reform-Descriptive Analysis	42
4.3.10 Reliability through Cronbach's Alpha of Reform Reasons items	43
4.3.11 Pearson Correlation Matrix with Reason for Reform Items	44
4.3.12 Differences Identified by Respondents on the Issues of Reason for Reform	46

4.4 Benefits of Reform initiatives in Bangladesh	46
4.4.1 Structure, Process and Behavior Change in Public Administration System	47
4.4.2 Bring New Type of Management	48
4.4.3 Present System Loopholes.....	49
4.4.4 Bring Political Value.....	49
4.4.5 Bring Economic Value	50
4.4.6 New Public Management/Governance	50
4.4.7 Bring Decentralization to Administration	51
4.4.8 Descriptive statistics of the Benefits of Reform in BD	52
4.4.9 Correlation Matrix among the Benefits of Reform Variable Items.....	53
4.4.10 Reliability Test through Cronbach's Alpha.....	55
4.4.11 Differences Identified from Respondents on the Issue of Benefits from Reform Items.....	56
4.5 Reform for Good Governance.....	56
4.5.1 Make the Public Administration more Accountable	57
4.5.2 Make the Public Administration More Transparent	58
4.5.3 Make the Public Administration more Responsive	59
4.5.4 Equitable Public Administration	60
4.5.6 Rule of Law Oriented Public Administration.....	60
4.5.7 Make Participatory Decision-Making Public Administration	61
4.5.8 NIS/RTI/GRS/Citizens' Charter in Public Administration ..	61
4.5.9 Descriptive Statistics on Good Governance: Variable Items	62
4.5.9 Reliability through Cronbach's Alpha (.702).....	63
4.5.10 Correlation Matrix among Good Governance items	64
4.5.11 Differences Identification through One Sample T Test of Good Governance items	65
4.6 Reform and Government That Works (1996) Evaluation	66
4.6.1 Enough Compensation Introduced in Government Structure	66
4.6.2 Legal System reformed for Effective Public Administration	67
4.6.3 Simplification of Policy Formulation	68
4.6.4 Introduction of Good HRM Practices in Public Administration	69
4.6.5 Descriptive statistics on Government that Works	69
4.6.6 Reliability.....	70
4.6.7 Correlation Matrix.....	71

4.7 Failure of Reform Initiatives.....	73
4.7.1 Less Stakeholder Consultation	74
4.7.2 Political Commitment.....	75
4.7.3 Incremental Approach not focused.....	75
4.7.4 Time Plan for Reform or No Strategy for Reform	76
4.7.5 Descriptive statistics for Reform Failure.....	77
4.7.6 Reliability Test Results with Cronbach Alpha for Reform Failure Items	77
4.7.7 Correlation Matrix with Reform Failure initiative	78
4.7.8 Individual Differences with Reform Failure Items.....	79
4.8 Force for Reform.....	80
4.8.1 Political Will	81
4.8.2 Proactive Demand by Policy Makers	81
4.8.3 Mobilization of Human Resources (HR).....	82
4.8.4 Economic Resource Mobilization	82
4.8.5 Descriptive Statistics of the Force for Reform	83
4.8.6 Reliability of Force for Reform items	83
4.8.7 Correlation Matrix.....	84
4.8.8 Individual Differences with T test results for Force for Reform.....	85
4.9 Way Forward for Administrative Reform.....	86
4.9.1 Trained Policy Makers	86
4.9.2 Understanding of Vision 2041.....	86
4.9.3 Understanding of the Delta Plan.....	87
4.9.4 SDGs Implementation	88
4.9.5 Capacity Development of Public Administrators	88
4.9.6 Pearson Correlation Among Reform Way Forward Items ...	89
4.9.7 Individual Differences with T test results for Reform Way Forward.....	89
4.10 Summary of Major Findings.....	90
4.11 Qualitative Data analysis and Findings.....	91
4.12 PARC as the Apex Guideline for Reform towards NPM.....	98
Conclusion.....	101
5.1 Conclusion	101
5.2 Policy Recommendations.....	104
5.3 Future Research Direction	104
References	106
Annexure-1	110

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Reform Initiatives Undertaken by Government of Bangladesh (GoB).....	16
Table 2.2 : Reports Prepared with the Assistance of Development Partners	119
Table 3.1: Details of Respondents	27
Table 4.1 : Gender Distribution	34
Table 4.2 : Respondent Age Group Distribution	34
Table 4.3 : Respondent Role at office	35
Table 4.4 : Respondent Job level	35
Table 4.5 : Respondent Academic Attainment	36
Table 4.6 : Respondent Length of Service.....	36
Table 4.7 : Global or regional commitment.....	37
Table 4.8 : Political manifesto or vision plan	38
Table 4.9 : Expectation from Development Partners’	38
Table 4.10 : Parliamentary Oversight	39
Table 4.11 : Media oversight in administrative reform	40
Table 4.12 : Public Awareness in administrative reform.....	40
Table 4.13: Transparency and Openness for reform.....	41
Table 4.14 : Digitization and Technology for reason of reform	42
Table 4.15 : Descriptive statistics of reason for reform in Bangladesh	43
Table 4.16 : Reliability test result for reason of reform items	44
Table 4.17 : Correlation matrix with reform reason in BD items	45
Table 4.18 : One Sample T Test for differences identification.....	46
Table 4.19 : Bring changes in bureaucratic role in public administration	47
Table 4.20 : Structure, process and behavior change in public administration	48
Table 4.21 : Bring New Type of Management	48
Table 4.22 : Present System Loopholes.....	49
Table 4.23 : Bring Political Value	50
Table 4.24 : Frequency on bring economic value.....	50
Table 4.25 : Introduce New Public Management or Governance.....	51
Table 4.26 : Bring Decentralization in Administration	52
Table 4.27 : Descriptive Statistics on reform benefits	53
Table 4.28 : Correlation matrix among benefits of reform items	54
Table 4.29 : Cronbach Alpha Test Result.....	55

Table 4.30 : One Sample T Test	57
Table 4.31 : Accountable Public Administration.....	58
Table 4.32 : Transparent Public Administration.....	59
Table 4.33 : Responsive Public Administration	59
Table 4.34 : Equitable Public Administration	60
Table 4.35 : Rule of Law Oriented Public Administration.....	61
Table 4.36 : Participatory decision-making public administration	61
Table 4.37 : Practice of NIS/RTI/GRS/CC.....	62
Table 4.38 : Descriptive Statistics on Good Governance	63
Table 4.39 : Reliability test result for good governance items	64
Table 4.40 : Correction matrix of good governance items	65
Table 4.41 : One Sample Test on Good Governance.....	66
Table 4.42 : Introduced compensation in government structure.....	67
Table 4.43 : Legal System for Effective Public Administration.....	68
Table 4.44 : Simplified Policy Formulation	68
Table 4.45 : Good HRM Practices in Public Administration	69
Table 4.46 : Descriptive Statistics on Government That Works Components	70
Table 4.47 : Reliability Cronbach's Alpha	71
Table 4.48 : Correlation Matrix among the Government That Works (1996) items	72
Table 4.49 : T Test of Government That Works items	73
Table 4.50 : Big Bang Approach	74
Table 4.51 : Stakeholder Consultation.....	74
Table 4.52 : Less Political Commitment	75
Table 4.53 : Incremental approach not focused	76
Table 4.54 : Time Plan for Reform or No Strategy	76
Table 4.55 : Descriptive Statistics on reform failure	77
Table 4.56 : Reliability Cronbach's Alpha	78
Table 4.57 : Correlation Matrix Result of reform failure	79
Table 4.58 : T Test result failure of reform	80
Table 4.59 : Frequency distribution on Political will	81
Table 4.60 : Proactive Initiative by the Policy Maker	82
Table 4.61 : HR Mobilization for reform	82
Table 4.62 : Mobilization for Economic Resources	83
Table 4.63 : Descriptive Statistical Result on Catalyst for Reform	83
Table 4.64 : Reliability Cronbach Alpha result 'Force for reform'	84
Table 4.65 : Correlation Matrix with force for reform items.....	85
Table 4.66 : One Sample T Test Result.....	85
Table 4.67 : Policy Maker Need to be trained	86
Table 4.68 : Understanding of Vision 2041.....	87

Table 4.69 : Understanding Delta Plan.....	87
Table 4.70 : SDGs Implementation	88
Table 4.71 : Capacity Development of Public Administrator/Manager ...	88
Table 4.72 : Pearson Correlation Matrix among reform way forward items.....	89
Table 4.73 : One Sample T Test Result.....	90

FOREWORD

The July–August uprising of 2024 represents a pivotal moment in Bangladesh’s history, comparable to the 1971 Liberation War. This event was not an isolated outburst, but rather the culmination of deep-seated frustrations stemming from the authorities’ persistent disregard for the public—despite the Constitution’s clear recognition of the people as the ultimate source of power. For decades, the prevailing conception of authority—rooted in colonial legacies and subsequently shaped by political instability, military rule, and fragile democratic governance—has placed greater emphasis on legacy and the mere possession of power, often at the expense of an engaged and empowered civil society. Over time, this approach has eroded the morale of civil society itself. The July–August uprising thus stood as a decisive reminder that ultimate sovereignty rests with the people.

Bureaucratic Reforms in Bangladesh: Interactions with Legacy offers a timely and critical examination of the nation’s administrative reform efforts at this crucial juncture. It moves beyond standard reformist rhetoric to confront the deeply embedded historical and institutional forces that have repeatedly hindered progress. In particular, it interrogates the “legacy” of colonial administrative traditions, political entanglements, inter-cadre rivalries, and a culture of sycophancy—each of which has complicated, and at times derailed, the path toward meaningful bureaucratic transformation.

This work will be indispensable to anyone seeking to understand the intricate realities of public administration in Bangladesh. The authors’ deep engagement with relevant institutions provides an essential foundation for developing reform strategies that are both forward-looking and grounded in historical awareness. For students and scholars, the volume offers a rich repository of empirical evidence and theoretical insight. For citizens, it opens a window into the inner workings of a system that shapes their daily experiences, from public service delivery to governance practices.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the authors of this volume—a distinguished group of academics, practitioners, and policy analysts—who have resisted the lure of simplistic prescriptions. Instead, they present measured,

evidence-based proposals informed by meticulous research and critical analysis. Their work traces the evolution of the administrative system from the Mughal and British eras to the present, revealing the enduring structural and cultural features that have left it, in many respects, inflexible, unresponsive, and more concerned with process than with outcomes. They also revisit past reform initiatives, identifying recurring challenges such as the absence of sustained political commitment, entrenched bureaucratic resistance, and persistent institutional constraints. I trust readers will find this volume both illuminating and thought-provoking. Finally, I wish to acknowledge Cambridge Scholars for making this important contribution possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Akhlaque Haque". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'A'.

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we worked on the manuscripts.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Public administration has been in existence since the beginning of human civilisation, during which time, as many as six paradigms have become prevalent. The *1st paradigm* (1900-1926) emphasised the non-politicisation of administration. Another key feature was the separation of power between the three organs of government, namely: the executive, legislature and judiciary. The *paradigm* argues that policies will be formulated by politicians and implemented by non-partisan public servants.

In the *2nd paradigm* (1927-1937), social scientists sought to set the principles of public administration. For example, social scientists broadly set the principle that the public administrators needed to formulate only policies and to execute those. In administrative theory, Henry Fayol enunciated 14 principles of management that included essentially the division of work, authority, discipline, unity of command, unity of direction, equity, remuneration of personnel, stability of tenure, subordination of individual interests to the general interest.

The 3rd paradigm (1950-1970) was an exercise to re-establish the linkage between public administration and political science.

In the *4th paradigm* (1956-1970). Part of the concept was that public, private and non-profit administrations were indistinguishable from one another. Management provided a focus but not a locus. It offered techniques, often highly sophisticated techniques, that require expertise and specialisation, but in what institutional setting that expertise should be applied is undefined.

Paradigm 5 (1970-onwards) refers to the successful distinction of public administration from both political science and management followed by its emergence as a separate discipline containing both study and practice. It admitted that public administration was emerging with new thoughts in a world of globalisation, devolution and a tendency to redefine government. Government works as a changing phenomenon, involves various groups, including private and non-profit organisations to deliver public goods. This

kind of *paradigm* shift requires knowledge about both the institutions of government and networking.

New Public Management (NPM) was introduced in the 1980s in the public sectors of a few countries to insert business-like nature into public sectors treating the citizens or service seekers as customers. NPM focused on value for money, increased efficiency. In this paradigm, public administration focused on public affairs and the public policy making process and its analysis. New Public Administration (NPA) emerged as a new concept as a reaction against the traditional one. It placed greater emphasis on a citizen centric service delivery approach that focuses on the 'voice of common man' in politics. Keeping citizens' engagement is the main thrust in this approach, which demands that the public administration should be more responsive.

Paradigm 6 (1990-onwards) views public administration as governance. As a result, public administrator roles are changing and public administration has to equip itself with the necessary knowledge and skills to cope with the changing scenario. To some extent, these various sectors should play complementary roles.

Public Governance (NPG) emerged severely criticising New Public Management (NPM) for its over emphasis on profit, efficiency and targets fulfilment keeping aside welfare, human relation issues and procedural correctness. NPG, recognises the strengths of both traditional public administration and NPM. In a nutshell, the main focus of NPG includes treating organisations as social units, an inter-organisational relationship emphasising competition in public service delivery, neo corporatism (monitoring activities of private organisations by government), the reviewing role of voluntary organizations in delivering public (Osborne, 2010).

In Bangladesh, many changes have occurred in public administration since its independence. Both parliamentary and presidential forms of government were faced by the citizens of Bangladesh after its birth in 1971. In terms of administrative reforms, several reports (from 1972 to 2000) were prepared. However, the suggestions were not implemented fully. Managerial dynamism, a merit-based system, solving intra-service conflict, openness, decentralization, were some of the recommendations of the reforms. The World Bank Study (1996) and the Public Administration Reform Commission (2000) strongly emphasized the characteristics of NPM. However, important reforms were not implemented due to the lack of political and bureaucratic willingness and many other reasons.

Despite this, the government of Bangladesh motivates public officials to practice and bring innovations to public service delivery using emerging technologies and through the tools of business process re-engineering (BPR). Maintaining ‘e-nothi’ or an electronic filing system is another initiative to reduce time in the decision-making process. Many field-level offices have introduced small changes under Total Quality Management (TQM) measures to provide services easily. The government has introduced five machineries to ensure governmental accountability and to bring good governance to this country. These tools are a Citizens’ Charter, Right to Information (RTI), Annual Performance Agreement (APA), National Integrity Strategy (NIS), and Grievance Redress System (GRS). APA is the initiative to appraise the performance of an institution or organization by the government. From the citizens’ point of view, they can seek services from any office as per the Citizens’ Charter and if they cannot obtain adequate service based on their logical demand, they can seek redress through the GRS. NIS is the strategy to motivate civil servants to maintain honesty in their career. The development agenda of the government ‘Bangladesh on the March towards Prosperity’ consists of many innovative initiatives to be fulfilled, such as: an efficient, service-oriented and accountable administration, developing a citizen friendly law and order enforcing agency my village, my town, blue economy-the opening of the horizon of development. However, all these plans are yet to be followed through or implemented.

1.2 Problem Statement

The Bangladeshi Public Administration has experienced a number of paradigm shifts, which initially started with rotating the focus on a citizen-friendly administration to the contemporary concept of technology driven innovative public service delivery. Soon after the independence of the country, underlined time and again the importance of the service delivery orientation and accountability of the civil service, with a clear view to replace the colonial bureaucracy. Presently, the development agenda of the government, such as its ‘March towards Prosperity’ drive, including many unconventional and innovative initiatives offer a focus on efficient, service-oriented, open and hassle-free administration; at the same time, the Government wanted to shape the public administration so that the economic goals would be achievable. In between, the country, particularly the public administration, has faced many other exercises to bring changes in terms of restructuring institutions, updating legal systems, capacity building, strengthening good governance, rebalancing state organs through

redistribution of authorities, and in terms of setting priorities, too. At least seventeen major committees and commissions for administrative reform and pay commissions have been formed and all of them have submitted recommendations. Out of these (17), only seven reform bodies dealt with the entire civil service. Six were concerned with issues related to micro-restructuring in the civil service. Three bodies worked exclusively on the pay structure of the civil service, while the remainder dealt with specific issues, such as recruitment and promotion.

However, a thorough review of the reform initiatives, including scrutiny of the relevant suggestions laid down in the different reform reports are yet to find any systematic study. As there remain a number of reform endeavours carried out by different commissions and committees, it is equally important to capture the trend of implementation of public administration reform-recommendations in Bangladesh. It is also a matter of interest to study how those suggestions and subsequent reform initiatives are relevant to offering good governance and better service delivery.

1.3 Study Objectives

This research work is an exploratory one, by nature. The overall objective of the study is to review the reform initiatives in the Bangladesh Public Administration and to capture the trend of public administration reform in the country. In particular, the research objectives are: (i) to review post-independence public administration reform initiatives and the status of their implementation; (ii) to examine the current practices of good governance and focus on public administration reform; and (iii) to identify future requirements and change actions for better public service delivery; and finally (iv) to provide policy suggestions for public administration reforms in Bangladesh.

1.4 Study Research Questions

(i) What were the post-independence reform initiatives and to what extent were these recommendations implemented? (ii) What are the forces and focus of government reforms in Bangladesh? (iii) To what extent could the reform agenda fit into reality or be implemented? (iv) How has reform contributed to bringing changes to public administration for better governance and service delivery? (v) Looking at the trend of reform initiatives and the tendency of implementation, what policy suggestions could be proposed in this respect?

1.5 Rationale of the Study

History reveals that a well-structured public administration system was in existence in ancient India, and Bangladesh was part of that tradition. Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' is considered as one of the oldest books on public administration. Kautilya argued that Arthashastra is a science which deals with the acquisition and protection of the means of livelihood. Moreover, public administration is the most effective means for welfare of the people (Banerjea, 1916).

It is observed that the success of public administration in ancient India was due to a number of factors: a high performing bureaucracy along with restrained royal power; the prudence of the king and bureaucracy in the formulation and implementation of laws respectively; and the active role of the state in every sphere of the overall production system. Particularly, the Mauryan rulers were able to strike a balance between the interests of the regime and those of its subjects by dint of the efficient and effective administrative machinery (Khan, 2013).

During the medieval age, the emperor Akbar the Great successfully implemented administrative reforms in various sectors of administration, particularly in the area of land management. 'Inclusiveness' was one of the basic principles of this great ruler (Rashid, 2008). A well organised check and balance system was established to ensure internal administrative accountability (Khan, 2013).

Effective and efficient public administration is now a future demand to realize the country's vision by 2030 and 2041 as well as the scope of the Delta Plan by 2100. The Bangladesh Government has formulated its Delta Plan, which has placed the focus on economic growth, environmental conservation, and mostly climate resilience. In order to implement this plan, inclusive governance, minimized disaster risks and improvement in productivity vis a vis work performance are all required. It is estimated that if the Delta Plan is implemented successfully, poverty will be reduced and a number of jobs will be created in different sectors. Moreover, the Delta Plan will help to minimize urban migration and business opportunities will be enhanced. Therefore, in order to harvest optimal benefits from the Delta Plan, public administration reforms and earlier recommendations need to be implemented, which ultimately requires a corps of efficient and effective civil servants.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Background

Since its emergence, Public Administration has been marked by its pronounced bias towards change and reform. The roots of the contemporary reforms can be traced to the Thatcherite reforms (UK) and Reaganomics (USA) in the 1980s, which developed from neo-liberal politico-economic thinking. In the same period, the collapse of the USSR and the socialist bloc occurred, which paved the way for the rapid transition to a market-lead liberalisation of the economy and democratisation of politics in many countries. The wave against state intervention in economic activities swept across the globe, which demanded the downsizing of bureaucracy. At the same time, this change gave prominence to the voice of the people and the rise of civil society. Another decisive factor was ‘globalisation’, which was characterised by the free flow of goods and services across national boundaries (Bhattacharya, 2006). The state came under enormous pressure to become more efficient in the contemporary world of changes in markets, civil societies and global forces (World Development Report, 1997). Moreover, it is argued that in the 21st century, governments are facing challenges to create a system of governance aimed at supporting and promoting efficient economic interaction. Added to this, they have to ensure improvements in the health, safety, welfare and security of their citizens (Khan, 2013).

2.2 Administrative Reform: Concepts and Issues

Actually, public sectors, throughout the globe, are in a ‘cyclone of change’. It is argued that a motivation for implementing public sector reform is to have a sustainable competitive advantage over other nations. Six prominent themes related to reform are: performance, horizontal government, responsiveness and political management, improving service delivery and implementation, e-governance, and flexibility and balance (Halligan, 2006).

‘Change’ and ‘reform’ are terms which are often used almost synonymously. Other commonly used concepts are ‘modernisation’, ‘reinvention’, ‘reorganisation’, ‘renewal’ and ‘innovation’. Generally, ‘reform’ means a planned and deliberate action to bring about significant change in an

important segment of administration or the entire public sector (Bhattacharya, 2006). Most reforms face opposition from bureaucrats because of their inherent nature to resist change (Khan, 1998).

Administrative reform is termed as the reorganisation of state institutions which aim to rationalise the state machinery for the purpose of improving the quality of services through the increased capacity of the civil service. It consists of a number of efforts that call for or lead to major changes in civil services in the form of transformation in the existing behaviour, practice and structure. Change for the sake of improvement is the essence of administrative reform (Jahan, 2013). Circumstances that are likely to result in reforms include: the existing administrative machinery may fail to produce desired outcomes, the administrative system may be identified as problematic, and a number of elements of the administrative set-up may be obsolete or ineffective (Huque, 2002).

A public administration system streamlined by reforms may result in optimising its capacity in terms of public management and the implementation of the development programmes of a country. In other words, reform is a 'special public policy' to enable the administrative machinery to adapt to the changing environment (Cripton, Gabriela and Davis, 2010; Azizuddin, 2019). Improving the efficiency of the civil service and the performance of the public sector are key elements of administrative reforms in developing nations (Zafarullah, 2002).

Bangladesh achieved independence in 1971 after a nine-month long war of liberation against the erstwhile West Pakistan and at the cost of innumerable loss of lives and assets. One of the priorities of the government of the new state was to replace and overhaul the archaic, anti-people, inefficient colonial administrative system that had led to fragmented economic growth in Pakistan (Sarker, 2004).

2.3 Need for Administrative Reform in Bangladesh

Historically, Bangladesh was a British colony for almost two centuries (1757-1947), after which it was a part of Pakistan (1947-1971). The common features of these two periods were exploitation and disparity. The colonial legacy was prevalent in all spheres of the administration, and the following issues emerged in the newly independent country:

- the pervasive role of the government was in demand in all spheres of citizens' lives. The government was overburdened with so many

tasks. The private sector including NGO initiatives could partner many of these tasks;

- the dominant role of the bureaucracy was prevailing in absence of developed political and other institutions;
- there was centralised decision making that made subordinate offices powerless;
- the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery was in question;
- the existence of a culture of secrecy;
- inherent weakness in the control and accountability mechanism;
- the ‘resistance to change’ mindset of the civil servants;
- poor service delivery and generalist-specialist conflict; and
- general corruption and lack of motivation including career planning (Sarker, 2004).

There is no denial of the fact that in Bangladesh, colonialism was deep-rooted everywhere, including in the civil service. History reveals that the colonial rulers used bureaucracy as an institutional tool for the sake of serving their own interests (Huque and Ferdous, 2019). Soon after the independence of the country, underlined time and again the importance of the service delivery orientation and accountability of the civil service with a clear view to replace the colonial bureaucracy. However, the vested interest group remained silent and aggressively dealt with change-related initiatives in the administration and ultimately there were no major changes. In countries like Bangladesh, most of the prevailing laws had been legislated under the colonial regime. Ironically, the bureaucrats of such countries claimed with pride that they were practicing the colonial system introduced by the British rulers. Due to this kind of mindset, they failed to realise that the age-old laws and systems were obsolete and ineffective; and thereby the legal and institutional systems remained almost unamended (Hughes, 1998).

2.4 Reforms in Bangladesh (1971-1975)

Most developing nations inherited a colonial legacy with much dependency on western countries and they suffered difficulties in working with such systems effectively. However, many newly independent countries successfully transformed their civil services in line with the purpose of development. Others failed, lagged behind and remained dependent on assistance from the West (Farazmand, 2002). As in other decolonised countries, the leaders of newly independent Bangladesh faced constraints with the outdated laws and archaic public institutions that were not pro-people or development

oriented. Therefore, various regimes including democratically elected and military dictatorships introduced administrative reform initiatives aimed at the organisational, technical and behavioural transformation of the civil service (Haque and Ferdous, 2019).

It is evident that almost all the regimes of Bangladesh, irrespective of their nature, i.e., civil or military, appointed committees and commissions for the purpose of administrative reform. At least seventeen major committees and commissions for administrative reform and pay commissions were formed and all of them submitted recommendations. Out of these (17), only seven reform bodies dealt with the entire civil service. Six were concerned with issues related micro-restructuring in the civil service. Three bodies worked exclusively on the pay structure of the civil service. The remainder dealt with specific issues, such as recruitment and promotion (Khan, 2016).

Soon after independence in 1971, the Bangladeshi government felt the need for administrative reform, i.e. reshaping the colonial administrative set-up in line with the needs of a sovereign country. One of the aims of the liberation war was to end socio-economic exclusion and exploitation in Bangladeshi society, and to terminate the civil-military bureaucratic regime. Socialism, secularism, nationalism and democracy were made the basic principles of the state by the constitution in order to establish a socialist egalitarian society free from exploitation (Rabbi and As-Saber, 2012).

In order to suggest ways of re-establishing and re-vitalising the administrative machinery, the Civil Administration Restoration Committee (CARC) was appointed soon after independence. The Committee recommended a secretariat structure consisting of twenty ministries. It also submitted plans for the rehabilitation of field level administration. However, the CARC did not make any recommendations indicating any 'significant departure' from the system established by the Pakistani government. Rather it anticipated that radical changes including civil servants in important positions may result in difficulties (Huque and Ferdous, 2019).

It is argued that pressure from the reformists within the ruling party (Awami League) and other intellectual groups paved the way for the formation of the high-powered reform body called the Administrative and Services Re-Organisation Committee (ASRC) in 1972 (Zafarullah, 2002). The four-member committee was headed by a professor from the University of Dhaka, Muzaffar Ahmed Chaudhuri. One member of parliament, one academic and one senior civil servant were the other members (Huque and Ferdous, 2019). The Committee thoroughly examined the existing public

administration system and made some significant recommendations. These were fairly advanced and to some extent 'radical' (Zafarullah, 2002). The first National Pay Commission (NPC1) was formed during this period. The recommendations of the ASRC included a single, classless, unified grading structure with an appropriate number of different pay scales combining different levels of qualifications, skills and responsibilities. To develop an integrated public personnel management, the committee recommended the following measures: a merit-based rational selection process; long-term career planning; the formulation of a general training policy; coordinated institutionalised training; merit-cum seniority-based promotion. However, these 'radical' recommendations were not implemented by the government, whereas the recommendations of the NPC1 to replace the existing 2200 pay grades with 10 were implemented (Khan, 2009; Khan, 2016).

2.5 Reform Initiatives in Bangladesh during Military Regimes

The first military takeover occurred in 1975, the year when the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated. The military government formed a Pay and Services Commission (P&SC) in 1976 to work on the restructuring of the civil service. One of the major tasks was to recommend a suitable pay structure for public servants. The ten-member body included five full-time and five part-time members (Huque and Ferdous, 2019). It recommended an all-purpose civil service through the inclusion of all functions within the scope of the civil service. It underscored the need for a merit system for recruitment and promotion. It also suggested the creation of an apex cadre comprising talented, experienced and efficient members from all cadres through appropriate and systemic selection. The Commission recommended fifty-two pay grades for the purpose of overcoming redundancy (Khan, 2016).

A number of the major recommendations were implemented with few adjustments. These included the creation of twenty-eight services within fourteen main cadres; the creation of the Senior Services Pool (SSP); and the introduction of New National Grades and Scales of Pay-NNCSP (Khan, 2016).

Immediately after the second military takeover in 1982, the new government formed a Martial Law Committee (MLC) to examine the organisational structure of the civil service, including Ministries, Divisions, Departments, Directorates and so on. It was also assigned to determine the actual need of

manpower by reviewing the existing and sanctioned manpower; formulating a charter of duties for public servants; identifying the requirements and use of various facilities of public servants such as accommodation, telephones, vehicles and equipment. MLC 2 was appointed in the later part of 1982 with the mandate to approve the revised organisational arrangements after examining the recommendations of MLC1. Both Committees were headed by in-service military officials (Huque and Ferdous, 2019).

The major recommendations included reducing the number of ministries and civil servants (mostly at lower levels); restructuring the role of the secretariat and other executive bodies; and the delegation of financial and administrative power. As recommended by MLC1&2, there was a trend to reduce the number of ministries and lower-level public servants. The number of ministries was reduced from thirty-six to nineteen. The existing 243 Departments, Directorates and subordinate offices went down to 181 and the number of officials mostly belonging to the lower levels were curtailed from 9440 to 3222. Moreover, the implementation of the recommendations resulted in the reduction of statutory public bodies from 155 to 109. A total of 28,740 posts were identified as surplus and thereafter abolished (Khan, 2013). Later on, the number of ministries and lower-level employees gradually increased again (Khan, 2016).

One of the important focuses of these administrative reform committees was to deal with the local government system of the country. They emphasised the decentralisation of government activities accompanied by an active network of local government bodies. Local level planning and the implementation of development initiatives/projects by local government bodies commonly remained in the reform recommendations. Particularly, two committees, namely the Committee for Administrative Reform and Reorganisation (CARR) and the National Implementation Committee for Administrative Reform and Reorganisation (NICARR) highly emphasised this process. The CARR was assigned to make recommendations in their given domain. On the other hand, the NICARR was formed to facilitate and implement the recommendations made by the CARR. It was also assigned to plan the phases for the changes recommended by the CARR. The preparation of a detailed plan to determine the number of offices and personnel from the defunct sub-Divisions to the new administrative unit Thana (renamed as Upazila) were included in its responsibilities (Huque and Ferdous, 2019).

The Committee for Administrative Reform and Reorganisation (CARR) made a number of important recommendations to pave the way to determine

administrative, functional and judicial powers to the field level to be exercised by elected public representatives. However, in reality the implementation of these recommendations led to the delegation of limited administrative and financial powers to the lowest administrative unit with real control still in the hands of the national government (Khan, 2016).

The Special Committee to Review the Structure of Senior Services Pool (SC) recommended the continuation of the SSP. Moreover, the Committee suggested that the Public Service Commission should conduct a competitive examination for the entrance of officers at deputy secretary level to the Senior Services Pool. The recommendations were referred to the Cabinet Sub-Committee, which recommended the abolition of the SSP and this was implemented accordingly (Molla, 2014).

2.6 Involvement of Development Partners

Initially after independence Bangladesh had a stand to maintain a distance from the Development Partners or Multilateral Development agencies. However, after being struck by a huge economic crisis, the country started softening its views about the International Development Agencies-IDAs. As a result, the relationship between Bangladesh and the IDAs became closer and the latter became involved in various matters including administrative reform (Rabbi and As-Saber, 2012).

The International Development Agencies spent considerable efforts and resources to bring about positive changes in the civil service in terms of efficiency, productivity and accountability. The main focus of the World Bank (WB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) sponsored studies rotated around organizational and personnel management including institutional and human resource capacity building for good governance. Those studies suggested a mechanism for improving efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector of Bangladesh. The enhanced capability of the civil service to implement the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) undertaken by the Bank was the particular focus of the WB (Sarker, 2004). The WB undertook a civil service reform programme and Bangladesh worked on various areas such as information systems, undertook diagnostic work, and restructured employment and management incentives for public servants (Rabbi and As-Saber, 2012).

The World Bank Study entitled 'Government That Works: Reforming the Public Sector' was conducted in 1996. The study recommended the introduction of a competitive and market based public administration in Bangladesh and

called for limiting the scope of public administration; enhancing the responsiveness of public service; streamlining and overhauling the rules regulations and processes; and maintaining an efficient, committed and professional corps of public servants (World Bank, 1996).

The World Bank expressed the view that the implementation of administrative reform is a difficult task in a country like Bangladesh. However, it cautioned that non-implementation of reform would be very costly, resulting in lower economic growth; continuous poverty; and less service for more pay by the citizens. However, none of the major recommendations by the WB were implemented by the government (Khan, 2016).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted a study entitled 'Public Administration Sector Study (PASS) in 1993. The study made a total of fifty-two recommendations (Khan, 2016). The major recommendations included introducing strategic management in all public sector offices; integration of planning and budgetary systems; and the establishment of result-oriented management systems through setting objectives and measures of outputs and impacts (United Nations Development Programme, 1993). The major change directions of this study included the infusion of responsiveness, transparency and accountability in the public sector (Roy et al., 2022; Zafarullah, 2004).

Another study entitled 'Building a 21st Century Public Administration in Bangladesh' was conducted by the UNDP in 2007. The study identified the drawbacks of the Bangladeshi civil service and recommended major changes to overcome these weaknesses. The proposed changes had a clear focus on managing changes, improving human resource management, human resource development, and organisational performance management (Molla, 2014).

A tour to the United Kingdom by a group of four secretaries was sponsored by the British government supported Overseas Development Agency (later renamed as the Department for International Development-DFID) to learn about and suggest more predictable and timely suggestions for administrative changes in Bangladesh. The group submitted a meticulous report containing suggestions for administrative reform to Government of Bangladesh on the basis of the study tour. The report suggested merit-based recruitment and promotion; incentives for better performance; improving financial management (Roy, 2023; Sarker, 2006).

'Taming Leviathan- Reforming Governance in Bangladesh' was another study conducted by the World Bank in 2002. Its main focus was the rapid and sustainable development of Bangladesh. The report emphasised that to achieve rapid and sustainable development, enhanced awareness and developing the capacities of civil society were imperative. Judicial reform for the proper application of the law, strengthening accountability within an organizational mechanism, side by side with the needs for human development had to be prioritised. It further suggested a coherent approach conducive to the improved governance and institution building of the country (Molla, 2014).

2.7 Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC): NPM Influenced Drive

Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC) was constituted in 1997 headed by ATM Shamsul Haque, a retired civil servant. The PARC submitted its report in 2000. It was mandated by the government to recommend policies, programmes and activities to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability in the public sector and thus enable the government to bring about even national development (Government of Bangladesh, 2000). The commission categorically mentioned in its report that it had taken New Public Management (NPM) measures to improve the performance of the public sector (Khan, 2006).

During the 1980s and 1990s, NPM was termed as a global paradigm emerging in contemporary public administration. Some commentators even argued that NPM was a world-wide phenomenon, moving swiftly from one country to another, manifesting a kind of global demonstration effect. It was an "irresistible force" rapidly spreading across Europe, leading to the "internationalisation of public management". In almost every government with developed political systems and highly institutionalised administrations there was a new emphasis on the well-designed administrative set-up for public management (Sozen and Shaw, 2002).

According to Hood (1991) and others, the key features of NPM are: improving human resources; staff involvement in decision making; usage of information technology; explicit standards of performance; removing unnecessary controls; treating the public as customers or clients; and contract out/ privatisation.

Pollitt (2001) suggested the following components of NPM: greater emphasis on output and outcomes rather than input and process; introducing

realistic and effective performance appraisal mechanism; replacing large, multi-purpose and hierarchical bureaucracies by more specialised, lean, flat and autonomous organisational forms; substituting hierarchical relationships by contract-like relationships; shift towards efficiency and individualism; and emphasis on public-private partnership.

The advocates of NPM have identified the following strengths of this new model: NPM enables organisations to produce more transparent budgets from an accounting perspective, with performance indicators for outputs and attributing costs to outputs; organisations engage themselves in principal-agent relationships consisting of networked contracts tied to efficient performance; public service functions become disaggregated and decentralised into quasi-market and/or quasi-contractual arrangements; foster public-private competition through the roles of provider and purchaser; and minimise the size of the provider agency, facilitating greater exit from and entry into the provision of public services to maintain an effective market for these services (Budd, 2007).

As stated, the recommendations of the PARC reflected the basic characteristics of New Public Management to a large extent. These include: improving service delivery; determining missions and functions; introducing performance monitoring and result oriented performance appraisal; delegation of power to subordinate and field offices; merit based recruitment, selection and promotion; separation of judiciary from the executive; market based pay and salary structure; privatisation and contracting out; reducing wastage; appointment of Ombudsman; introducing citizen's charter; establishment of an independent anti-corruption commission; enhancing users' fees in respect of utilities and services; turning public sector hospitals into limited companies; stopping irrational system loss (Khan, 2006).

A number of recommendations have been implemented, including: separation of judiciary from the executive; privatisation and contracting out of public enterprises; establishing an independent Anti-Corruption Commission; reducing the number of ministries. However, significant change in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness in managing public affairs has hardly resulted in the recent past as recommended by the PARC (Obaidullah, 2006).

Meanwhile, despite having much promise and success in countries like the UK and New Zealand, New Public Management has been criticised from different quarters. The public sector is treated as homogenous, while the

diversity of this sector in terms of tasks, values and relationships is often ignored (Sarker, 2006). NPM is arguably too lenient to the private sector. For instance, one of the assumptions of NPM remains that the private sector is more efficient than the public sector in terms of its management practices, i.e. delivering its products or services with greater economy and effectiveness (Norton, 2007). Criticising the businesslike approach, it is argued that running a business and governing state are quite different (Stoker, 2006). Moreover, NPM is said to ignore the distinct welfare nature of public sector and is more concerned with profit (Hughes, 1998).

Table 2.1: Reform Initiatives Undertaken by Government of Bangladesh (GoB)

	Commission/Committee	Year
1	Civil Administration Restoration Committee (CARC, 1971)	Appointed on 27 th December 1971 Submitted report on 4 th January, 1974
2	Administrative and Services Reorganisation Committee (A&SRC)	Appointed on 15 th March, 1972 Submitted report in two phases in April 1973 and May 1974
3	National Pay Commission (1 st NPC-Headed by MA Rashid)	Appointed on 21 st July 1972 and submitted report in 1973
4	Pay and Services Commission (P & SC)	Appointed on 20 th February 1976 and submitted report on 27 th May 1977
5	Martial Law Committee (MLC 1 headed by Brigadier Enamul Haque) for examining administrative set-up Ministries/Divisions/Directorates and other organisations	Appointed on April 1982 and submitted report in phases between 31 st May-August 1982
6	Committee for Administrative Reform and Reorganisation (CARR-Headed by Rear Admiral MA Khan)	Appointed on 28 th April 1982 and submitted report on 22 nd June 1982