

PUBLIC SECTOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN BANGLADESH: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN LIGHT OF THE WPSR 2005

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Introduction

In today's globalized world, for any country to attain and ensure good governance in support of enhanced development, the issues of efficiency, effectiveness, capacity and quality of public administration system is of utmost value. At the beginning of the millennia, the *World Public Sector Report 2001* asserted that countries with the most developed and comprehensive public sectors, compared to the weak, inefficient and sluggish ones, have been more successful in reaping the benefits of globalization (United Nations, 2001). But public service efficiency is of diverse nature in developed and developing countries because of different attributes of public administrative systems (Jreisat, 2002). While these attributes led to negative citizens' perception of the bureaucracy with subsequent delivery of unsatisfactory services in most of the developing countries, the case is different in the developed world. For this reason, public administration system in general and public sector human resource management (PHRM) in particular in the context of a developing country like Bangladesh is the focal point of this paper.

People, coordinated by institutions to deliver public services efficiently, are considered the most integral part of human resource management (HRM) in effective public administration (United Nations, 2005). However, due to lack of appropriate HRM framework¹, public administration systems in the developing countries are believed to develop negative attributes (table 1) that the citizens dislike. In this paper, it is thus hypothesized that *the weaker the human resource management framework in a country, the less efficient, effective, impartial, capable, and responsive is the public administration system in the country*. The significance of appropriate human resource

management framework does not need to be exaggerated in the face of the changing role of public administration in recent decades due to external and internal pressures that have forced governments worldwide to redefine the role of the state and recalibrate public administration capacities (Keuleers, 2004). It is well understood that without an efficient, capable and service oriented public administration, it would be impossible to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Millennium Declaration also recognizes good governance, of which public administration is a central part, as the means for achieving the goals of the Declaration (Alam, 2006). Thus, the connection among effective public administration, good governance and development are comprehensible and need no further elaboration. Against this backdrop, the essay focuses on Bangladesh which is still one of the least developed countries striving towards good governance and development despite well-claimed range of weaknesses in its public administration system (World Bank, 1996; 2002). The essay thus explores whether Bangladesh has the appropriate PHRM framework for sustainable high performance from the public servants for efficient public administration.

Table 1: Attributes of Developed & Developing Countries' Administrative Systems

Common Attributes of Administrative Systems of Developing Countries		
Fred Riggs	Ferrel Heady	Others
Overlap	Imitation rather than indigenous	Overstaffed public organizations
Heterogeneity	Deficiency of skills	Underpaid public employees
Formalism	Nonproduction-oriented	Low productivity
Diffusion	bureaucracies	Lack of innovative and skilled public managers
Particularism	Formalism	Excessively centralized decision-making
Ascription	Autonomy	Corruption that regularly impedes reform
		Administrative structures that mirror the political context

Common Attributes of Administrative Systems of Developed Countries

- Balanced system of power distribution
- Focus on results
- Technology at the service of management
- Profound concern for ethics and accountability in public service
- Redefined role for public administration and its linkages with the private sector

Source: Jamil E Jreisat (2002), pp. 105-163.

The paper primarily aims to (a) survey the challenges of the structural and management aspects of PHRM of Bangladesh and (b) explore whether the theoretical framework proposed by the World Public Sector Report (WPSR) 2005 is applicable and implementable in Bangladeshi perspective. In doing so, the paper has been divided into few sections. After the introductory discussions, the paper focuses on the theoretical perspective and associated themes derived from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs' (UN/DESA) WPSR 2005 titled *Unlocking the Human Potential for Public Sector Performance*. The paper then sheds light on the PHRM framework of Bangladesh in terms of selected structural and management issues followed by an analysis of where Bangladesh stands in terms of the WPSR 2005 theoretical framework and what sort of reforms are necessary in Bangladesh. It then concludes with identifying a broad range of recommendations which will, if considered, enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness and quality of public administration system.

PHRM in the Public Sector: WPSR 2005 and the Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical framework of this paper is borrowed from the WPSR 2005 which outlines the contents and reform measures required in the PHRM – especially in developing and transitional countries. In constructing the theoretical framework, the WPSR 2005 first distinguishes among three models of public administration and management underlining the fact that they are chronological but overlap in both historical time and substance (United Nations, 2005). Understanding the characteristics of these public administration models, outlined in table 2, is thus important as the theoretical framework of the WPSR includes important attributes from all these models:

Table 2: Three models of public administration

Paradigm Key element	Traditional Public Administration	Public Management	Responsive Governance
Citizen-state relationship	Obedience	Entitlement	Empowerment
Accountability of senior officials	Politicians	Customers	Citizens and stakeholders
Guiding principles	Compliance	Efficiency & results	Accountability, transparency & participation
Criteria for success	Output	Outcome	Process
<i>Key attribute</i>	<i>Impartiality</i>	<i>Professionalism</i>	<i>Responsiveness</i>
Nature of state	Unitary	Disaggregated	Plural and pluralist
Focus	Policy system	Intra-organizational management	Inter-organizational governance
Theoretical roots	Political science and public policy	Rational/public choice theory and management studies	Organizational sociology and network theory
Governance mechanism	Hierarchy	The market and classical/neo-classical contracts	Trust or relational contracts

Source: WPSR (2005), p.7 and Osborne² (2006), p. 383.

Without appreciating the trends of changes in public administration (models), it would be difficult to understand the changing role of public service in modern administration as this evolution is basically built on a longer history of the thought and practice of public sector personnel management (Alam, 2006; United Nations, 2005). The WPSR 2005 recommends that governments around the world adopt a holistic approach to HRM reform and employ an HRM strategy that is framed on the best attributes of these three models suitable in a specific country context. Outlining the HRM features of the three models (table 3), the WPSR 2005 proposes a synthetic HRM framework for the civil service composed of the following components (United Nations, 2005):

- “A politically impartial, professional and merit-based civil service;
- A core ‘guardian’ agency, exercising strategic leadership and monitoring a system of dispersed management rather than operating through bureaucratic controls;
- A strong focus on results-oriented management in the public service through the use of effective performance standards and indicators as well as promotion criteria giving greater weight to relative efficiency (rather than relying only on seniority);
- Though, objective anti-corruption rules and agencies;
- Legislative provisions and professional norms that facilitate making the civil service open to external scrutiny; and
- Systems and skill sets that provide high levels of communication capacity through being networked by the effective deployment of information technology.”

Table 3: Selected HRM features of the three models of public administration

Paradigm	Traditional Public administration	Public management	Responsive governance
Key element			
Civil service system	Close and bounded Career civil service Tenure	Open and decentralized Position-based system Fixed-term	Open and regulated Core career civil service; other position-based Tenure and fixed-term
Institutional arrangements	Independent central personnel agency Personnel administration Unified pay system	HRM decentralized to line ministries Human resource management Individual contracts	Lead HRM regulator; decentralized HRM Strategic HRM and development Unified and performance-based pay system
Career development	Seniority-based	Performance-based	Range of competencies
Pay policy	Qualifications and experience-based	Job-based criteria with performance element	Job-based criteria with performance element
Performance management	Professional ethics	Performance agreement	360-degree accountability
Human resource development	Functional skills	Competencies	Competencies and relational skills

Source: WPSR (2005), p.70.

The WPSR 2005 considers demographic changes (aging population), labor migration (brain-drain) and HIV/AIDS as the major challenges affecting public sector HRM and recommends, among others, that (a) the best person is recruited for the job (merit appointment), (b) adequate remuneration is there to balance motivation, equity and ability to pay, (c) greater performance management orientation exists supporting and developing staff, (d) utilization of outsourcing strategy for improved efficiency, (e) outstanding leadership in the public sector motivating staff for best performance (less emphasis on command and control), (f) turning public sector as learning organization and (g) professionalization of HRM. All these recommendations and associated issues of WPSR 2005 have been eloquently summarized through a simplified figure by Kim and Hong (Kim and Hong, 2006) (see figure 1). It clearly indicates that attaining the goal of sustainable high performance in the public sector requires the establishment of an effective HRM institutional framework as its building block for transforming the public sector as a learning organization through transformational leadership and the public service must possess the principles of impartiality, professionalism and responsiveness to support this system/framework. This simplified framework also includes the above mentioned recommendations as the core HRM systems.

The holistic viewpoint of the strategic HRM discussed in fifth chapter of WPSR 2005 is expressed by Kim and Hong in such a way (table 4) that it demonstrates the necessity of all the public administration models by putting each recommendation under particular model. Besides all these important issues, the WPSR also sheds light on the contingent factors that affect public sector HRM reforms. Indeed, these factors are crucial in shaping the ways developing countries approach public sector HRM reforms and in many ways the restraining forces of reforms stem from these contingent factors.

Figure - 1

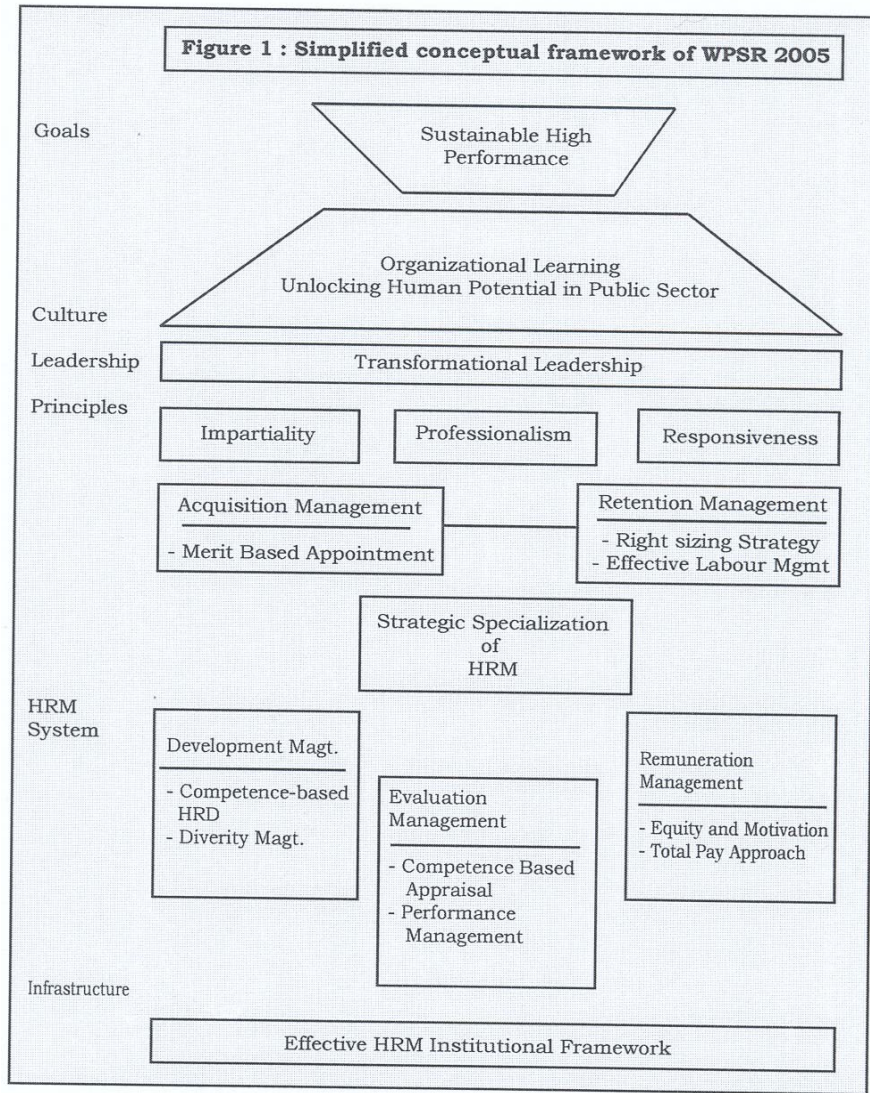
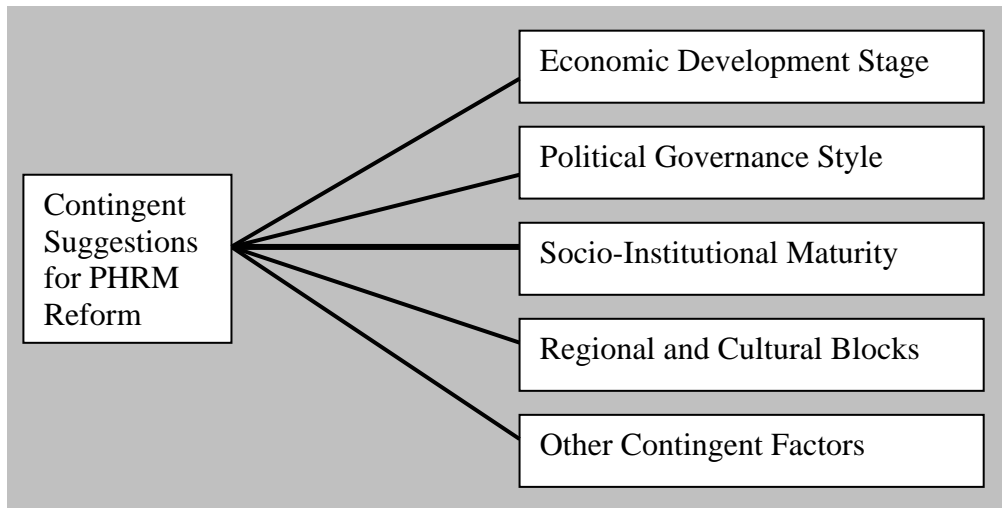


Table 4: Rearrangement of WPSR’s proposed recommendations

Three models HRM areas	Public administration	Public management	Responsive governance
		Impartiality Merit-based	Professionalism Performance-oriented
Legal & regulatory reform	Merit-based career Integrity & impartiality		
Central-line HRM responsibility	Negative evaluation on centralized HRM	Strategic HRM at core devolution to line	Oversight & quality control mechanism
HRM units and function		Strategic specialization	
HR acquisition management	Merit-based appointment		
HR development management		(competence-based)	(competence-based) diversity management
HR remuneration management	Equity & motivation	Negative evaluation on performance-related pay	
HR evaluation management		Negative evaluation on performance management	
HR retention management		Negative evaluation on downsizing	Effective rightsizing

Source: Kim and Hong (2006), p.204.

Figure 2: Framework for contingent public sector HRM reform model

Source: Kim and Hong (2006), p.208.

The above discussions on WPSR 2005 form the theoretical base for this paper which will be analyzed in the perspective of Bangladesh public sector HRM. An attempt is also made to explore whether the country is converging or diverging in the perspective of the WPSR's conceptual framework.

PHRM in Bangladesh: The Challenging Status Quo

Despite several attempts of reforms in the last thirty-five years of its existence, Bangladesh public administration system in general and PHRM in particular still exhibits the common attributes of developing countries' administrative systems (outlined in table 1). Though the size of the public service has increased over the years along with the complexities stemming from the dynamics of different types of public administration models, it still reflects the divergent hereditary traditions it inherited from the "feudal chiefs, independent kings, landlords, and representatives of the rulers at Delhi and Islamabad as well as Great Britain" (Huque and Ahmed, 1992). Like most other developing countries, Bangladesh possesses an overdeveloped bureaucratic apparatus as its colonial legacy in spite of all the postcolonial rehabilitation and reforms in the administrative superstructure along with underdeveloped political, economic and cultural realms (Haque, 1997).

The problems, issues and challenges of public administration apparent in Bangladesh are not new. Almost all the reforms commissions³ analyzed and recommended solutions albeit mostly not implemented by the ruling elites amid strong resistance within the bureaucracy. While describing the state of public administration in Bangladesh more than a decade ago, World Bank in a report argued that most civil servants are impervious to public sensitivities, highly bureaucratic and self-serving and increasingly incapable of managing a modern government within a pluralist democracy (World Bank, 1996). The situation has not changed much since then. In the eyes of the citizenry, who lack effective means of obtaining redress in the case of abuse of power, the civil service is portrayed as inefficient, ineffective, non-transparent, unaccountable and largely insulated from the public, unethical and unfair, non-responsive to societal demands, largely pre-occupied with process, rules and procedures and mainly interested in enhancing their own status, power, prestige, income and sub-system autonomy (UNDP, 2004). In an internal report on the HRM aspects of Bangladesh public administration, ADB (2007) reiterates that:

"Public administration in Bangladesh remains largely centralized, excessively reliant on hierarchy and multiple layers of decision-making. Human resource planning is hardly existent and although frequent changes arrive in postings, inter-departmental mobility is rare. There are no incentives currently in place that encourage initiative and award excellence. The performance management system is obsolete and subjective. Training is neither linked to career planning, nor related to other dimensions of personnel management. Career opportunities are generally confined within a cadre⁴ and thus dissimilar"

Against this background, the paper argues that the situation is as it is due to, among others, the lack of appropriate HRM framework. It hypothesizes that *the weaker the human resource management framework in Bangladesh, the less efficient, effective, capable, impartial and responsive is the public administration system*. While many rightfully raise questions concerning the competence of Bangladeshi public servants for their poor performance, the Human Development Centre (HDC) rated the country's bureaucratic efficiency at 4.7 on a 0 to 10 scale where 10 was considered best (Jahan, 2006; HDC, 1999).

The “bureaucratic quality” and “government effectiveness” were also graded low in comparison with the South Asian mean by the World Bank (World Bank, 2001). This statistic can be related with the hypothesis to prove that Bangladesh indeed requires an appropriate HRM framework for efficient public administration system. However, for certainty and wider understanding, we need to go beyond the above-mentioned data/information and analyze briefly the challenges of Bangladesh PHRM in ensuring effective public administration. The essay thus, based on the theoretical HRM framework and analysis of WPSR 2005, discusses the major issues and challenges faced by PHRM and explores whether the suggested framework is applicable and implementable in Bangladesh. In doing so, this section thus focuses on (a) the institutional framework of Bangladesh PHRM and (c) few important aspects of the PHRM systems in Bangladesh.

Institutional Framework of Bangladesh PHRM

The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh provides the framework for PHRM under whose authority a plethora of statutory and non-statutory rules and regulations have been adopted in Bangladesh for managing the civil service (Siddiquee, 2003). Under the constitutional framework, different governments of Bangladesh have enacted major rules regulating the structural and functional aspects of Bangladesh public service. These include, among others, Bangladesh Civil Service (Recruitment) Rules, 1981; Government Servants (Discipline and Appeal) Rule, 1985; Government Servants (Conduct) Rule, 1979; Government Servants (Special Provisions) Ordinance, 1979; Public Servants (Retirement) Act, 1974 and so on⁵. The supervision of the PHRM in Bangladesh is done by a number of authorities including government ministries and a constitutional body. While Ministry of Establishment and Public Service Commission (PSC) act as the central personnel agencies of the government, there are few other ministries that are also associated with PHRM related activities. The importance of PHRM is evident from the fact that the head of the government in Bangladesh has always taken the leadership of the Ministry of Establishment portfolio⁶.

Ministry of Establishment (MoE) is the lead personnel agency in Bangladesh responsible for framing the broad policies, principles, rules and regulations for civil service management. Major decisions concerning creation of cadre services, recruitment and promotion,

classification of services and their status, performance management, career development of government servants are taken in the MoE. It also plays the key role in PHRM areas such as training, placement, promotion, transfer, discipline and welfare of officials (Ahmed, 1986; Khan, 2005). Though the MoE is charged with the general responsibility of overseeing the above-mentioned important aspects of PHRM, the routine control of personnel belonging to various ministries/cadres remains the responsibility of concerned ministries (Siddiquee, 2003). Despite the fact that substantial authority has been delegated from MoE to other ministries in 1989 in such areas as deployment and promotion, but it is still a centralized personnel agency (Ali, 2007). Though MoE is the central agency, it is supported by few other ministries and a constitutional body in discharging its mandated duties properly.

Public Service Commission (PSC) of Bangladesh, a constitutional body, is the other central agency responsible for recruiting suitable candidates for appointment to the civil service by the MoE. It is also involved in the decision processes relating to other PHRM matters such as promotion, posting, transfer, discipline and appeal of the government servants (Ahmed, 2007). Besides conducting competitive examinations and interviews for recruiting eligible candidates, PSC also, among others, conducts tests/interviews for promotion of government servants from one service to another (e.g., from class II to class I) and advise the government on matters relating to PHRM aspects, especially the terms of conditions of service of government servants. However, due to lack of executive power, PSC fails to act as a watchdog body in monitoring the government’s dealings with civil servants and their conditions of service and in most of the time, PSC’s recommendations, put forward through its annual report, are not implemented for streamlining the civil service management (Siddiquee, 2003). However, in recent years, the public image of PSC has been drastically affected by allegations of politicization and lack of impartiality, leakage of examination questions, incompetent and corrupt officials, lengthy recruitment procedure, irregularities in conducting examinations, corruption in the interview process and partisan recruitment (UNDP, 2007; Karim, 2007).

Besides MoE and PSC, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) plays the instrumental role in determining the salary of the civil servants as well

as the size of the civil service. While the need assessment is done before every entry-level Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations, Ministry of Finance always takes a strong position in determining the final number for advertisement (Ali, 2007). This is the case where MoE is at loggerheads with the MoF in determining the size of the public service. Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs is also an actor in the process as it opines on the legal aspects of PHRM. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is also involved in the PHRM process as certain appointments, promotions and terminations need its approval and endorsement (Huque and Ahmed, 1992). Thus, it is clear from the above discussion that many actors and institutions are involved in Bangladesh PHRM resulting in "overlapping jurisdictions" and "lack of coordination" in the civil service management.

Major Issues of Bangladesh PHRM

There is no doubt that a well managed civil service is required for efficient delivery of services and consequently a well performed government. But for developing countries like Bangladesh where the bureaucratic quality is low and civil service is less efficient, the necessity of sound civil service management is a top priority for ensuring good governance, enhanced development and attainment of the MDGs. There is strong evidence that a skilled, motivated, efficient and ethical civil service is mandatory for quality public service (Keuleers, 2004). Therefore, the characteristics of an efficient civil service identified as the prerequisites of good governance are very important to be considered in Bangladeshi perspective too which are as follows (ibid, 2004):

- "Adjusted to the level of social and economic development in the country;
- Efficient and effective in the delivery of services;
- Highly professional and capable of offering the best technical advice to the democratically elected government;
- Operated according to merit-based principles, combined with culturally sensitive management practices;
- Loyal in the execution of the policies of the acting government, while operating in accordance with the Constitution and laws;
- Strongly committed to the public interest;
- Disciplined and intolerant of unproductive or unethical behavior;

- Honest and devoted to serving the population in an unbiased and impartial manner;
- Broadly representative of society;
- Upholding fair administrative practices, transparent in its operations and accountable to the citizens and their representatives;
- Willing to hire the best people available at each level, based on a fair and transparent recruitment process and to maintain competitive pay practices that will foster a motivational climate for state employees;
- Strongly in support of proper training and development at all levels;
- Capable and willing to develop partnerships with various groups and organizations in civil society."

In this sub-section, an attempt is taken to briefly describe the PHRM framework aspects which are identified as the components of HRM systems in our theoretical framework (figure 1). These are the life blood issues that can be considered as the throughput issues in systems perspective. In our theoretical framework, if we consider "effective HRM institutional framework" as the entry point for input variables and "sustainable high performance" as output, then everything in the HRM systems can be considered as the throughput in the sense that this is transforming all the input variables into expected outcomes. However, if the institutional framework and/or HRM systems are faulty, then sustainable high performance from the public servants is nothing but over expectation. Having said that, the following table briefly outlines the formal arrangements and concurrent problems in different aspects of PHRM system in Bangladesh.

Table 5: Bangladesh PHRM Aspects and Challenges

PHRM Aspects	Challenges
Recruitment and Selection (R&S)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MoE and PSC are involved in the R&S process. As per the BCS Recruitment Rules, 1981, once the MoE determines the staffing needs, it requests the PSC to conduct competitive examinations and interview for selecting eligible candidates based on merit. The PSC-selected successful candidates are then appointed to the civil service by the MoE Once selected for appointment, a person has to stay on probation for two years and attend the foundation training during this period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The principle of merit is violated by the reservation or quota system. As per the current quota system, only 45% of the gazetted posts are filled on the basis of merit and the rest are distributed among women (10%), wards of war veterans (30%), district (10%) and tribal population (5%) Overtly politicized PSC leadership resulting in politicized recruitment Corrupt practices in PSC is destroying the reputation of R&S process to be a fair and ethical system On an average, it takes more than two years to finish the examination process resulting in government failure to recruit candidates each year
Training	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Though there are more than 150 training institutions attached to different ministries, the two major training institutions are Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) and Bangladesh Civil Service Administration Academy (BCSAA). While BPATC is responsible for training of all the cadre officers, BCSAA is for the administration cadre service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training institutions lack qualified and well trained staff as well as professionalism Training methods, techniques, and syllabi are outdated which fail to provide the learners the opportunity to increase their knowledge and capacity As the link between training and promotion is poor, public servants are not motivated to take training seriously Trainers of the training institutes are not well-trained

PHRM Aspects	Challenges
Recruitment and Selection (R&S)	
Promotion	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion in Bangladesh Civil Service is based on merit, seniority and adherence to rules of conduct or good conduct 'Seniority' is determined from gradation list, 'merit' from Annual Confidential Report (ACR) and 'good conduct' from clearance from disciplinary actions At the request of concerned ministry or division, PSC conducts examinations and interviews for promotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion at the senior level is kept outside the purview of PSC and done by a government committee named Council Committee of Senior Appointments and Promotion The promotion process is politicized: government often rewards the partisan loyalists with undue promotion superseding the competent ones depriving the well-performed officers
Compensation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compared to the private sector, the pay structure in the public sector is indeed very low The current salary structure is made up of 20 salary grades The pay structure is revised six times since independence on the recommendations of Pay Commissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The salary of the civil servants are not related to performance Equal pay for unequal tasks Senior civil servants' salary is fixed with no possibilities of increments Underpaid civil servants are prone to corruption and low morale Even the revised pay structure is not rationalized on the basis of inflation and cost of living thus not fulfilling the expectations of the civil servants

PHRM Aspects	Challenges
Recruitment and Selection (R&S)	
Performance Appraisal	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Bangladesh Civil Service, Annual Confidential Report (ACR) is the system of evaluating the performance of civil servants by their superiors ACR is the only process through which a civil servant's ability and productivity is judged in the service ACR also determines the merit standing of a candidate which is used throughout his/her career for posting, transfer, promotion, deputation and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACR is believed to be very subjective and is widely criticized for not being very scientific ACR is not competence based Candidates are not allowed to see their ACRs written by their superiors, leaving them in the dark and without the opportunity to understand and improve on their limitations
Transfer and Posting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MoE and concerned ministry is responsible for transfer and posting A civil servant can be transferred within or outside his/her cadre and/or department but cannot be transferred to a post which affects his current pay in a negative way (i.e., lowered) Duration of tenure of a civil servant in a particular post is the only criterion for transfer in Bangladesh civil service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of rules and regulations outlining specific guidelines Civil servants are transferred too frequently even violating the long-standing conventions which is an impeding factor in career management Different actors responsible for public servants' transfers Transfer and posting are viewed as a routine government activity rather than a tool for achieving efficiency in disposal of public business

PHRM Aspects	Challenges
Recruitment and Selection (R&S)	
Discipline and Grievances	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure disciplined behavior of civil servants and for taking actions against inefficiency, insubordination, misconduct and corruption, there are two major rules called Government Servants (Conduct) Rules and Government Servants (Discipline and Appeal) Rules Actions that can be taken against a civil servant include dismissal from service, suspension, demotion and reduction in pay Disciplinary measures are quasi-judicial in nature with the right of the civil servant to appeal against any action Opportunity for aggrieved civil servants to complain against the government in the administrative tribunals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The disciplinary rules are not modern and the penalties are not severe Penalties are rarely applied for misconduct Due to union and employee association pressures, authorities remain reluctant and cannot take actions against the wrongdoers Political connections of public servants make personnel control infeasible The disciplinary process is too cumbersome discouraging complainants/departments to take action
Diversity Management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reservation or quota system in place for women, ethnic/tribal people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite such effort, representation of women and ethnic people in Bangladesh civil service, compared to their population size, is negligible Women seldom reach the top positions in public administration

Source: Siddiquee (2003); Ali (2004 & 2007); Khan (2007); Zafarullah (2000); Khan and Zafarullah (2005); World Bank (1996), UN (2004)

Bangladesh PHRM in the Perspective of WPSR 2005

A careful review of the above structural functional aspects of Bangladesh PHRM and its associated problems along with its institutional framework very clearly shows that Bangladesh has many problems in the PHRM systems framework. Though we observe worldwide transition of public administration models from traditional towards responsive governance, Bangladesh seems to have the reminiscences of its colonial heritage expressed through the attributes of traditional public administration in its PHRM. Though thirty-five years have passed since its independence, it is still struggling to ensure the principle of 'merit' in its public service. If we look at the simplified WPSR conceptual framework and assess where Bangladesh stands, we find that the building block of HRM system, i.e., the HRM institutional framework is very weak and fragile. We can imagine how difficult it would be to attain sustainable high performance if the institutions regulating the PHRM are found weak. In recent years, both the MoE and PSC in Bangladesh have been engulfed in severe problems. While the first one is too centralized, the second one is found to be corrupt and inefficient in delivering on its constitutional mandate.

As the public administration system of Bangladesh is still revolving around its traditional virtues, modern HRM techniques like competence-based human resource development, competence-based appraisal, performance-related payment, effective labor management, mentoring system are not completely understood and thought about and strategic HRM is nothing but a mirage in Bangladesh. The principles of 'impartiality', 'professionalism' and 'responsiveness' which respectively represent the three models of public administration are also not well functional in Bangladesh. It seems to have tremendous problems in employing these principles in the HRM framework. Lack of transformational leadership motivating civil servants to act at their best possible extent is absent and due to the culture of centralization, superiors do not want to mentor their subordinates by sharing their knowledge and skills. Eventually, public administration system remains as a closed model of organization without the chance of turning into a place for organizational learning. Consequently, it is impossible to attain high performed public service capable of delivering quality services which fulfills citizens' expectations.

The WPSR 2005 rightfully discusses a two-stage HRM reform or development model (table 6), based on the *World Development Report of 2004*, recognizing the fact that all the countries are not in a position to implement "a blueprint model based on international best practice" and are not capable of overhauling their entire public sector HRM. "At the early (first) stages of reform, governments would be well advised to focus their efforts, whenever possible, on institutionalizing a unified, merit-oriented career civil service before embarking on more complex initiatives, such as devolution on HRM and introduction of a position-based system" (Kim and Hong, 2006). Thus, intuitively, Bangladesh should go through the first-stage of reforming HRM before it embarks on second-stage reforms. For instance, implementing performance-related pay would be a mere joke as the country even failed to properly employ the practices of merit-based principle and objective performance management system. Besides, Bangladesh would have to focus on a combination of public administration models in reforming its public sector for efficiency and effectiveness. In fact, the WPSR's recommendations are spread around all the public administration models and for Bangladesh, leapfrogging to the "responsive governance" model without establishing and maintaining the virtues of traditional public administration is not going to work as the contingent factors may work as a resistant force in the transformation process of current form of administration to an effective one.

Table 6: Approaches for different stages of HRM reform

Objective	First-stage reform	Second-stage reform
Career management	Enhance job security and protection from political interference	Create a core civil service; introduce 360-degree accountability to stakeholders
Unity of the civil service	Create a legally defined cadre with common terms and conditions	Central regulation of HRM; decentralized HRM; pay flexibility
Individual incentives	Consistently apply standard merit promotion and reward rules	Greater use of performance criteria in promotion and rewards
Openness	Encourage career development within a closed system and avoid nepotism	Both vertical and lateral entry into core career service

Source: WPSR (2005), p.30.

Taking into consideration the challenges of HRM systems discussed in the previous section, it can be easily ascertained that the above table's first stage reforms are more important than moving to the second stage reforms for Bangladesh. While considering the contingent factors, it is believed that the political governance style as well as the administrative system itself is the major resisting force in reforming PHRM. The broad political culture and socio-economic standing have also been very significant factors in determining the reform measures. For instance, the country has been under the military rule for quite many years and for obvious reasons, the nature of expected reforms during that time is different than other times. In terms of WPSR 2005, it can thus be concluded that given the current institutional framework of PHRM in Bangladesh, there is no chance of revamping the whole system on holistic sense but attempts should be taken to undertake first-stage reform efforts but it would still be a divergent model of its own. Bangladesh should focus more on the core points of synthetic framework (impartial merit based civil service, establishing core guardian agency, effective performance management system and so on) outlined in WPSR and once reformed, should move to the next level. If we observe the information gathered from a survey done by the World Bank which tries to verify the popular perceptions about the civil servant, we can see why Bangladesh should focus more the first-stage reforms rather than the other one.

Table 7: Popular perceptions and survey evidence

Commonly held view	Survey result
Politicians and senior officials show favoritism in awarding employment opportunities and contracts	Partially supported
There are very few rewards for excellent performance	Partially supported
Bad performance is seldom formally punished	Strongly supported
Control is not delegated sufficiently	Strongly supported
Public officials make more than their official salaries	Strongly supported
Budget management is weak	Supported

Source: World Bank (2001), p. 14.

Conclusions

From the foregoing discussions, it can be concluded that PHRM in Bangladesh can be streamlined further for effective public administration for enhanced development and efficient service delivery. However, for that to happen, focus should be devoted on the issues of *decentralizing* the personnel management system, *reforming* and *strengthening* the central HRM agencies (i.e., MoE and PSC) through securing ethics and professional integrity and increasing the pay scale of the civil servants. Emphasis should be placed on career management issues so that eligible candidates can be recruited, retained and rewarded and they are motivated and find it attractive and eventually perform well in delivering services. Commenting on the changes required in PHRM, a recent UNDP report states that "HRM (in Bangladesh) should change (a) from generalist traditions to specialized generalists, with strengthening of expertise and openness; (b) from seniority-based promotion, to promotion based on performance evaluation and competence, using fair and transparent competition; (c) from inadequate appraisal and merit concepts, to the strengthening of individual performance management through more articulated review systems; and (d) from frequent and often unpredictable rotation of posts to new practice, strengthening of specialization through the career development programs" (UNDP, 2007). Taken into consideration the fact that Bangladesh has been branded as one of most corrupt countries of the world, special emphasis should be given to ensure the integrity of the public servants and the obsolete disciplinary rules and regulations should be modernized in the perspective of changing scenario of 21st century. Throughout the PHRM systems, focus should be more on integrity rather than on compliance. If the integrity approach is taken, it is highly likely that the PHRM system in Bangladesh will change in positive direction. Political and administrative will on the part of the politicians and civil servants are required for effective reform. Finally, Bangladesh should have modern contemporary civil service act encompassing all the rules and regulations that were not updated in many years. If an agency is given the responsibility to approach all these reforms rather than doing everything in a piecemeal manner, then definitely time will embrace the changes expected and required for better performance, efficient and effective public administration fulfilling people's expectations.

Notes

1. Osborne, Stephen P. (2006), "Editorial: The New Public Governance?", *Public Management Review*, Volume 8, No. 3, pp. 377-387.
2. In Bangladesh's history, the Government of Bangladesh formed eighteen committees and/or commissions to recommend reforms of the public administration system. Other than the six pay commissions, almost of them discussed public administration reforms including PHRM. The development partners or international organizations (bilateral and multilateral) also prepared seven reports dealing with public administration reforms.
3. The cadre distinguishes the particular occupational group to which a civil servant may belong, either at the time of recruitment or subsequently through lateral mobility (World Bank, op.cit., p.96).
4. For details, see www.banglapedia.org
5. However, many can raise the question and challenge the head of the government's leadership in the face of constant failure in reforming the public service.
6. Ibid, see www.banglapedia.org

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