

DRAFT PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION TRAINING POLICY

Does it Offer a Better Bureaucracy?

By M. Waheeduzzaman Manik in Tennessee

THE draft Public Administration Training Policy" (PATP) has been approved by the National Training Council on December 20, 2000 (*Draft Public Administration Training Policy approved*, DS, December 21, 2000). The draft PATP envisages "an accountable and innovative administration capable of delivering quality and cost-effective services to the people." It is claimed that PATP "has been framed with a view to enhancing the capability of the public administrative system to analyse, develop and implement national policies, plans, and programmes." One of the objectives of the draft PATP is to build up "an effective, innovative, accountable, transparent, honest and committed public service."

Draft PATP vis-à-vis Performance

Numerous assessments and professional studies have identified the glaring deficiencies of public administration training (PAT) institutions and programmes in Bangladesh. Notwithstanding the creation of Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) in 1984, the successive governments have miserably failed to improve the performance of the moribund state of training institutions. It has always been difficult to effectively assess either the appropriateness or the impact of the training programmes catered by various training institutions in terms of measurable improvements in the performance of public personnel and organisations. The draft PATP contains nothing which may lead to a revamped training delivery system. No amount of lofty pronouncements can substitute for a comprehensive NTP which is capable providing guidance to the PAT institutions for designing and implementing job relevant training programmes.

Given the fact that the draft PATP claims to improve the "capability of the public service" through training, the time is also ripe to discuss or explore the critical issues related to bureaucratic efficiency, competence, responsiveness and accountability vis-a-vis the proposed objectives of the draft PATP. The performance of Bangladesh's public bureaucracy or the civil service or public service or public administration (using these terms synonymously or interchangeably) may be evaluated with reference to the following criteria or standards: efficiency, effectiveness, political neutrality, responsiveness, accountability, transparency, honesty, and commitment to public service.

The term '**efficiency**' may be defined as the ratio between input and output. Hence the concept of efficiency is directly related to the productivity of various public (governmental) agencies. Efficiency is concerned with 'the relationship between inputs and outputs, usually expressed in a ratio per unit of an output.' There are more employees in each of the organizations of Bangladesh Government. With the existence of a disproportionate number of class III and IV employees, the public bureaucracy has remained bloated over a long period of time. Whatever way one may define 'efficiency', or 'productivity', the public bureaucracies in Bangladesh are ineffi-

cient or unproductive. In fact, there is a consensus among the scholars and informed individuals that Bangladesh's public bureaucracies are fundamentally inefficient. In the absence of any effective initiative toward a major restructuring via substantial downsizing of the bloated bureaucracies, not a single lofty pronouncement of the draft PATP can create condition for creating an efficient bureaucracy in Bangladesh.

'Effectiveness' is related to the competence of an employee. In other words, it relates to how well the public bureaucracies can accomplish the predetermined goals and objectives.

Effectiveness is "concerned with the extent to which a programme is achieving or failing to achieve its stated objectives." Effectiveness measures are outcome-oriented; they focus on the real changes the programme produce." Given the fact that public bureaucracies are known for incompetence, red-tape and procrastination, the civil servants are ineffective by definition. There is convincing evidence to suggest that many of the government officers got entry to the civil service not on the basis of qualification for the job. Most of them have been retained, tenured and promoted without adequate reference to their performance on the job. Unfortunately, most of these civil servants are not even amenable to training.

In spite of the fact that certain batches of the recruits in the civil service were contaminated due to political pressure, there is no doubt that appropriately designed training programmes can increase the level of effectiveness of the mainstream civil service. Managerial competencies can be transmitted or acquired through the design and implementation of specifically tailored competency-based training programmes. Yet, neither the NTC nor the Ministry of Establishment could devise any comprehensive training policy for linking training to the effectiveness of the civil service system. The draft PATP contains nothing but some self-serving statements about improving the competence through training. The truth of the matter is that most of the PAT institutions in Bangladesh lack appropriately qualified instructors to design and carry out job-relevant training programmes. The draft PAT has not devised ways and means for conducting training programmes.

The concept of '**political neutrality**' ensures that public bureaucrats will deliberately employ their 'neutral competence' (the belief that a neutral public bureaucracy following the mandates of legislative body will meet the requirements of democracy) in discharging their assigned duties and responsibilities. In other words, public administrators need to be non-partisan in performing or delivering public service. Although political neutrality is the capstone of any merit-based civil service system, most of Bangladesh's civil servants can no longer claim to be non-partisan. Neither the present Government nor the previous governments can claim to have sincerely pursued or nurtured a deliberate policy of political neutrality. All of the regimes have conveniently employed the civil service for the purposes of pursuing, promoting and furthering partisan goals and objectives. There is no

doubt that the hard core segment of the civil service has remained to be closed system. Yet, there are glaring instances of total sell out of certain civil servants to the political patronage in the form of lucrative postings, quick promotions, and extension of services beyond retirement age.

In such a politically loaded environment, there exists no possibility of ensuring political neutrality of a heavily politicised bureaucracy through designing and implementing any training programme.

'Responsiveness' refers to how quickly the bureaucracy responds to the needs of the people. Responsiveness ensures that the public servants should make a deliberate determination that they remain constantly vigilant and attentive toward meeting the "demands of the citizenry" in a timely fashion. While this concept connotes that the public service should be responsive to the needs, priorities, and preferences of the public, responsiveness also

bureaucracies in Bangladesh have remained immune from meaningful public scrutiny.

'Accountability' refers to the fact that bureaucrats must be held answerable to, or responsible for, their action or inaction. It is fair to suggest that Bangladesh's public bureaucrats are everything but accountable and responsible for most of their actions provided they have the blessings or endorsements of the political leadership in power. Given the continuation of perpetual political turmoil and uncertainties in Bangladesh, the ineffective political institutions, especially the Jatiya Sangsad, have thus far failed to develop meaningful control over the public bureaucracies. The introduction of legislative oversight of the bureaucracies through the use of Parliamentary Committee system is yet to be fully developed and recognised as an effective instrument for making the politicised civil service more accountable and responsible.

'Transparency' refers to the fact that decision-making pro-

service in which the public managers (administrators) are expressly committed to the **public interest**. In other words, an ethically anchored public service should be free from all forms of corruption, nepotism, favoritism, and embezzlement.

A number of credible studies and investigative reports clearly attest to the fact that corruption and illegal practices have penetrated all levels of the civil service system in Bangladesh. Although there is a serious paucity of honest officers in the civil service, there is no dearth of dishonest officers who are not committed to the 'public service.' These officers may be found totally incompetent in accomplishing common purpose or public goals. Yet, they seem to have developed expertise in soliciting, accepting and managing bribery and other forms of largesse. Many of those corrupt officers even think that acceptance of larceny is their entitlement.

Training in ethics can be initiated toward instilling an

"alternative" to training. The way the recruitment rules and procedures of the PSC have recently been violated by the political leadership, especially the alleged manipulation of the results of the 20th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination ("20th BCS Examination: PSC Influenced by Ruling Party" DS, November 20, 2000) has a serious negative impact on the very integrity and merit principle of the civil service.

Draft PATP vis-à-vis the State of PAT Institutions and Programs

It is important to find out whether or not the objectives of the draft PATP have any relevance toward improving the actual performance of the PAT institutions. One of the objectives of the draft PATP is "to ensure proper training facilities for the officials of all segments of the administration as well as public representatives." To accomplish this, PATP proposes that "the existing training insti-

It is fair to suggest that there had been no dearth of PAT institutions, nor had there been a paucity of training programmes in Bangladesh even before the creation of BPATC. Yet, there are those informed individuals who have clearly pointed out that in spite of its establishment and institutional proliferation, the approaches to the design and implementation of the core PAT programmes have essentially remained archaic and often irrelevant to the changing needs and priorities of a growing civil service. The decline of governmental capability to provide meaningful and relevant training to those who need it most has been one of the major disappointments of the '80s and '90s. It is, therefore, presumptuous at best, on the part of the NTC, to claim that the makeshift draft PATP will somehow be capable of providing an operational framework.

relates to the concept of equity and justice as fairness. There is hardly any evidence to suggest that bureaucracies in Bangladesh are adequately responsive to meet the actual needs and aspirations of their clientele. The draft PATP is of no relevance or assistance to make the civil service system more responsive.

Although there are some laws and procedures in Bangladesh to deal with administrative abuses including fraud and corruption, the political leadership has not successfully developed a process of putting a lid on the rudderless bureaucracy through the judicious use of "objective responsibility".

On the other hand, the corruption-ridden public bureaucracies have also miserably failed to develop means of internal control through voluntary adherence to 'subjective responsibility' (assurance of administrative compliance or responsiveness through adoption and implementation of various "internal controls" such as professional code of ethics, ethical leadership, ethical climate within the organisation, open communication and participatory type of management and decisionmaking process within the organisation, transparency, and citizen participation). There is no doubt that the absence of both the external and internal controls, most of the public

cess in public sector organisations can be seen through distinctly by the public. Transparency is equivalent to the concept of 'sunshine law' in the USA that ensures that "public business" must be conducted in public view. In the closed-door decisionmaking process in Bangladesh, the citizens and the civil society are kept out by design. The absence of transparency in the public organizations breeds corruption. This also leads to lack of accountability and responsibility for the very decision which is being taken by the bureaucrats behind closed door.

In the absence of a transparent mode of decision making process, the public bureaucracy in Bangladesh has often been left to its own many rules, procedures, devices, and preferences in determining controls over government service delivery process. It is difficult to comprehend how the draft PATP is going to provide a way out to get rid of the heritage and culture of bureaucratic secrecy.

It seems that the draft PATP seeks toward building up an '**honest**' and a '**committed public service**.' While an honest public service means an **ethical and equitable** administration of public policies and programmes, a committed public service' connotes a public

ethical or moral tone in Bangladesh's public bureaucracies. There are instances of using intervention techniques for integrating ethics into the operations of public agencies in some countries. The principal training institutions in Bangladesh may test design some training programmes in the management and compliance of ethics in public organisations. Yet, the extent of corruption is so pervasive and deep rooted in Bangladesh, no ethical training can get rid of a culture of incompetence, arrogance, secrecy, nepotism, favoritism, collusion, and embezzlement from the civil service system. It will be difficult for the draft PATP or, for that matter, any training institute to transform a run-away and collusive bureaucracy into "an honest and committed public service".

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina emphasized the importance of public administration training by telling the NTC in its sixth meeting on December 20, 2000 that "there is no alternative to training for government officials to run the administration effectively." Well, such nice words might sound intuitively pleasing. But, the reality in Bangladesh belies such rhetoric, and it is an open secret that sycophancy, political connections or affiliations to the ruling party are often treated as an

tutions would be further strengthened by developing appropriate infrastructure facilities, capacity of the faculties and research activities so that the government (training) institutions become competent enough to impart quality training." Doubtless, such stipulations from the NTC in the form of policy statements can generate genuine enthusiasm toward revamping the existing training institutions.

Yet, it is quite worthwhile to underscore that the government had pursued training programmes throughout '70s, '80s and '90s in the total absence of any reality-based National Training Policy (NTP) even though draft versions of NTP were adopted in 1984 and 1986. It needs to be pointed out that the draft versions of NTP of 1984 or 1986 could not be treated as a comprehensive national training policy for pursuing job-relevant training objectives. Those so-called drafts of NTP had failed to provide any operational standard or guidance to the PAT institutions for the purpose of designing and implementing useful training programmes. The track record of the NTC in the task of formulating and implementing a workable NTP is less than impressive. Since the issuance of a draft NTP in 1984, the NTC took almost

seventeen long years to come up with yet another 'draft' of national training policy.

It is not yet clear whether new training institutes would be created to cater the training needs of the growing number of civil servants. It will be welcome by the PAT community if additional facilities are being created toward improving the quality of training programmes. However, creation of more training institutes or, for that matter, even the restructuring of the existing training institutes does not necessarily lead to the improvement of the design and implementation of relevant training programmes.

In fact, a variety of training institutions, both before and after the creation of BPATC, have been mainly responsible for "conducting" training programmes. The creation of BPATC in 1984 by amalgamating the Staff Training Institute (STI), the Civil Officers' Training Academy (COTA), the National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA), and the Bangladesh Administrative Staff College (BASC), has led to the centralisation of the civil service training delivery system. Most of the core training programmes of the now-defunct STI, COTA, NIPA, and BASC are now catered by the BPATC. Besides, other training institutes under various Ministries and Divisions are also providing training to the government officers belonging to various service cadres and functional areas. Approximately two dozens training institutes cater training for the class-one officers.

While the Ministry of Establishment and the Ministries or Divisions or Departments concerned are "assumed" to be responsible for "the assessment of training needs," "selection of trainees," and "post-training utilisation," the training institutions are primarily responsible for "the design," implementation, and "evaluation" of training programmes. However, there is no convincing evidence to indicate that the MoE or any other government organisations have thus far pursued training objectives on the basis of any systematically assessed training needs analysis. MoE does not use any consistent and formalised criteria or procedures for the selection of trainees.

Several professional studies and reports have suggested that most of the PAT institutions in Bangladesh which cater training programs "for class I officers of the Government operate well below 50 per cent of their capacity." More than 50 per cent of all of civil servants of Bangladesh Government have not yet completed the Foundation Course even after completing many years in the service. A whopping number of mid-career and senior-level officers have not yet received in-service training.

Conclusion

It is fair to suggest that there had been no dearth of PAT institutions, nor had there been a paucity of training programmes in Bangladesh even before the creation of BPATC. Yet, there are those informed individuals who have clearly pointed out that in

spite of its establishment and institutional proliferation, the approaches to the design and implementation of the core PAT programmes have essentially remained archaic and often irrelevant to the changing needs and priorities of a growing civil service. The decline of governmental capability to provide meaningful and relevant training to those who need it most has been one of the major disappointments of the '80s and '90s. It is, therefore, presumptuous at best, on the part of the NTC, to claim that the makeshift draft PATP will somehow be capable of providing an operational framework.

Given the fact that the training programmes are essentially irrelevant to meet the Training Needs (the discrepancy between the desired level of performance and the current level of performance) of the Government functionaries, the draft PATP's objective of building up "an effective, innovative, accountable, transparent, honest and committed public service" can be characterised as nothing but "paper boldness" or "paper picture."

However, the draft PATP has spelled out some useful objectives for systematising training efforts in Bangladesh. It is reassuring to see that the NTC recognised the pivotal role of imparting quality training toward developing and sustaining a quality civil service in Bangladesh. Yet, there is no shred of evidence to suggest that the government has developed any pragmatic plan for accomplishing the lofty goals and objectives of the draft PATP. No action oriented guidelines exist for improving the design, implementation and evaluation of the job relevant training programs. Nor has there been any effort for initiating any meaningful post-training utilisation plans or any revamped procedure for the systematic assessment of training needs, the selection of trainees, course curricula and lesson plans, trainers, training methods, and careful determination of procedures for evaluating the relevance and usefulness of the training programmes.

Hopefully, various critical issues that are necessary to improve the relevancy, adequacy, and appropriateness of the design, implementation, and evaluation of training programmes will be adequately addressed in the final version of PATP. To accomplish this end, a concerted effort needs to be initiated soon by the NTC to develop a pragmatic, reality-based, and comprehensive NTP geared toward building up strong leadership and managerial competencies in our public service.

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All health information to keep you up to date

Facts and fiction

Asthma: Some facts

Knowing when your asthma is getting worse:
If your symptoms increase and this may mean more wheezing coughing or shortness of breath. Or you may be coughing and wheezing at night or waking up with these symptoms.
If you find you have trouble sleeping at night.
If you need to use your vronchodilator more, or if it does not seem to be improving your asthma as well it used to.
If you best PEF readings are getting lower, or the difference between the best and worse PEF is getting nearer.

Facts and fallacies:
I can avoid getting asthma by taking better care of my health and avoiding certain foods.

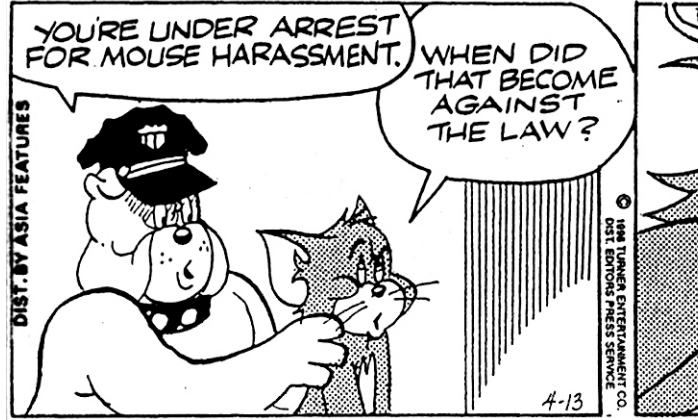
False: Your asthma is not caused by something you did or did not do. You just happen to have lungs that are too sensitive to certain trigger. Although there is no cure for asthma, there is a lot you can do to control this condition and lead a normal life.

Smoking will affect my asthma
True: Cigarette smoke is a common trigger factor for asthma attacks, whether the smoke comes from your own cigarette or other people's cigarette. Smoking damages the air passages of the lungs and worsens your breathing difficulties. Quit smoking.

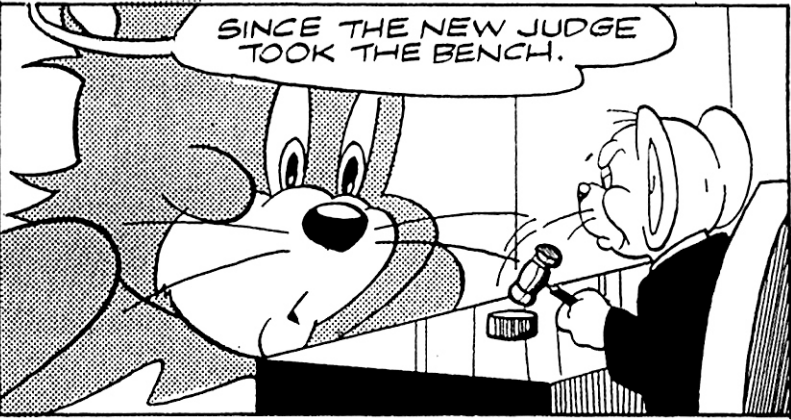
Women with asthma should not get pregnant
False: Having asthma should not prevent one from having a baby. By taking good care of yourself and following your doctor's advice, you should have no problems with asthma during delivery and have a normal, healthy baby.

Next : Commonly asked questions and other tips

TOM & JERRY



By Hanna-Barbera



James Bond



PURSUIT PROVES HOPELESS IN THE CARNIVAL TRAFFIC - BUT BOND GAMBLER'S THAT ONCE WAS USING HIS WEAVER'S HOUSE AS HIS RIO 'RESIDENTIAL'



LUCKY BREAK - HE DID COME BACK! LET'S JUST HOPE THE CAT HASN'T SWALLOWED THE CANARY!

