A PRAGMATIC MODEL FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract: Good governance remains at bay in Bangladesh. Bad governance, even mal-governance, is often surfacing with heavy tolls on people’s expectations. There lie multiple causes beneath such discouraging state. In this article, managerial failure and poor pay are identified as the two major causes of bad governance. It is argued that management failure can largely be overcome with the adoption of managerialism. In the backdrop of adverse international climate for foreign aid and difficult environment for rapid growth in domestic resource mobilization, it is suggested that to ensure reasonable pay to the public servants, partial formalization of informal income can be a feasible alternative. On the basis of these ideas, a model for good governance is ventured in this article that can be implemented either in top-down or in bottom-up approach. Composed of a base called strategic plan and two pillars: (i) the practice of managerialism and (ii) partial formalization of informal income; the model does not require usual project involving huge money to implement rather requires some managers with vision, innovation and commitment. It can be tried first in few offices and, if found effective, can be replicated in other offices to bring much-sought-after good governance in Bangladesh. Key terms used frequently throughout the text of this article are ‘good governance’, ‘strategic plan’, ‘managerialism’, and ‘informal income’.

Introduction

During the past several decades, the traditional public administration has been discredited and a new form of public management has been adopted ushering the emergence of a new paradigm in the management of public sector (Huges, 2003: 1). The change represents a shift from administration to management, from bureaucracy to markets; a change in relationships between market and government, government and bureaucracy, government and citizenry and bureaucracy and citizenry (ibid.: 256). Accompanied with these the changes in the nature of management challenge with which compared to the government, the private sector especially, in the developed countries has adapted itself quicker and better (Faulkner, 1988??: 383). Although the wave has touched the private sector in Bangladesh, the government remains unmoved causing the non-existence of good governance. Bad governance and even mal-governance has become pervasive wrecking havoc on people’s expectations, causing them suffer in a variety of ways and numerous areas ranging from the receipt of civic amenities to the preservation and protection of lives and property. Good governance, considered an imperative for ensuring human rights, equitable economic development, and making the planet earth a good abode for the generations to come (Muhith, 2001: 16) remains elusive. There are enough talks and activities for improving governance but so far there is no marked success. For the fifth consecutive year, Bangladesh has topped the list of most corrupt countries in the world. Corruption has become endemic and synonymous to bureaucracy. In many countries, bureaucracy has recently undergone drastic changes. It has been made service-oriented and people-friendly. But in our country, the tasks remain far ahead.

Many developing countries adopt western development models prompting opinions for and against. Authors including Crozier (1964), Crozier and Friedberg (1980), Jones (1989), Bourgion (1984), Riggs (1964, 1973) and Heady (1984) are in the opinion that the western models of development and management are inappropriate for developing countries because of differences in local realities and culture (Vengroff et al., 1991: 96). Opposed to these ideas, scholars including Child (1981), Hofstede (1980, 1984), Montgomery (1986), Seddon (1985), Hickson (1974), Klauss (1982-83), Brinkerhoff and Klauss (1985) and Leonard (1977) hold that the development and management models function regardless of cultural environment (ibid.). In this backdrop, an effort is made in this article to present a model for good governance in Bangladesh with an amalgamation of ideas developed and practiced in other countries and ideas developed locally. Bad governance is the basic
cause of all evils prevailing in society. Bad governance is caused by managerial failure and poor pay which can be addressed by the practice of managerialism and partial formalization of informal income respectively. Sequentially, there emerges good governance eliminating all evils from society (Rouf, 2006c). The proposed model for good governance has a base called a strategic plan and two pillars: (i) the practice of managerialism; and (ii) partial formalization of informal income. A discussion on strategic plan is presented in the following section.

The Base: A Strategic Plan

The proposed scheme can be launched in two ways. First, the basic rules and regulations of the scheme can be formulated by the appropriate higher authorities to be implemented by the managers of the subordinate offices. Examples of management reforms and innovations that were politically driven at the highest level include the UK, Malaysia, Singapore, Malta and New Zealand (Kaul, 1997: 25). In Canada, the government launched the most comprehensive review of federal policies and programs in 1994 under the banner Program Review (Smith, 1997: 33). To launch such a comprehensive reform programs, political decision and steps will be needed. Secondly, the scheme can be launched by the managers of an office on their own initiatives. The later process would involve risks and difficulties without having approved from the appropriate higher authorities. However, exercising the ideas, when good governance is achieved, the risks and difficulties can be overcome. In the process of implementation, the tricky matters can be settled by the managers with group discussion without jeopardizing the basic premises and principles of the scheme. In an office, a strategic plan can be formulated based on the following premises:

First, pay to the public servants will have to be made several times higher. Since mentioned earlier, poor pay to the public servants is a major cause of bad governance; so, ensuring reasonable pay to them good governance can hopefully be achieved. In the strategic plan, there must be component to ensure reasonable pay to the public servants. Only with reasonable pay, the public servants can be motivated to work better. In pillar II of this scheme, the way to provide reasonable pay has been laid down.

Second, motivation of employees is an important component of this plan. Employees cannot be effectively motivated, if they are underpaid. Again, if they are well paid but not motivated, the desired services cannot be obtained from them. So, ensuring reasonable pay, the next step has to be employee motivation applying basic tools and techniques of motivation. In pillar I of this scheme, few ways of employee motivation have been chalked out.

Third, for sustainable and welfare-oriented reform measures employee participation and consensus building are of utmost importance (Dodoo, 1997: 115). The earlier reform measures were top-down in nature; so, those could not have been sustained without enthusiastic participation of the employees. Even the developing countries like Ghana today are consciously involving general public and the business community through the introduction of user surveys and beneficiary assessments (ibid.). So, managers are to keep their eyes on making the program more participatory to obtain better sustainability.

Fourth, all existing rules and regulations are to be properly observed. If the scheme is implemented with the initiative of the managers of an office but not directed from the above, this becomes more relevant to keep vigilant eye. If any existing rule is violated, there may arise resistance and non-cooperation from some quarters frustrating the scheme. If considered contradictory, those rules are to be gradually revised for implementation of the plan. If revision is an impediment being time-consuming, measures can be adopted with consensus.

Fifth, if the scheme is not prescribed from the above but launched by the managers on their own initiative, there could be difficulty in implementation if any stake-holder is aggrieved. If the aggrieved goes to the honorable court to obtain injunction,
the scheme may be thwarted; so, all the stake-holders need to be convinced that they will be benefited with the implementation of the scheme so that they all cooperate. The media can play major role highlighting the positive aspects of the scheme. However, at the initial stage, things are to be done with secrecy and silence because at this stage, there will be more resistance, sometimes without analyzing the contents. When some extent of success is seen, many quarters even the previously opposing ones will shift their support to the scheme.

Sixth, practical and practicable ideas are to be sought from the stake-holders and should be given importance and serious thought. In Malaysia, personal achievements are recognized and rewarded. Public Services Innovation Award has been launched there to recognize individuals for practical ideas and for implementing them to improve the quality of public service (Kaul, 1997: 20).

Seventh, in a cordial and friendly working environment, objectives of the office have to be achieved ensuring best services to the clients maximizing efficiency. We have inherited colonial bureaucracy shaped by colonial rules and principles formulated with the intention of ruling the country and plundering its resources. Today’s bureaucracy functions to do welfare to the people. So, today’s bureaucracy needs to shed off the colonial mind-set and adopt new, friendly, flexible rules and principles to govern with the objective of doing maximum welfare to the people.

Eight, in all offices, the basic features and principles of the strategic plan will be the same but there will be some additional features in each office based on the specificity of functions of the office. In each office, a general order is to be issued studying every minor detail of the office works involving fees against services, distribution of receipts, employee motivation, accountability etc. The plan will have to be formulated keeping in mind the objectives of the office to be achieved and strategies to be adopted for achieving the objectives. All concerned are to be convinced that they will be benefited once the plan is implemented. The employees will get much better pay; the clients will receive much better services in exchange of lesser payment. After a certain period of such groundwork, implementation of the plan can be launched.

Finally, it does not require a project involving money to initiate the practice rather it needs some managers with vision, innovation and commitment (Faulkner, 1988??: 385). While formulating the plan, the basic features of bad governance of the office are to be identified and while implementing the plan those features are to be eliminated. Since the minor details of office activities vary from one another, it would rather require task-based, instant managerial techniques rather than pre-formulated rules and regulations.

In brief, the strategic plan will be something like feasibility study conducted in an office to implement the practice of managerialism and partial formalization of informal income. There will be no corruption, bribery, nepotism, favoritism and bureaucratic dispensation of activities when the two components of the model: the practice of managerialism and partial formalization of informal income are practiced and comprehensively implemented. A culture of justice, fairplay, righteousness, honesty, friendliness and cordiality will be developed in an office milieu. Corruption and its accompanying paraphernalia will be done away with. The following section deals with the first pillar of the model – the practice of managerialism.

**Pillar I: Practice of Managerialism**

Between 1940 and 1960 there occurred a paradigm shift in public administration – the classical approach had been replaced by management approach and policy approach (Lane, 2003: 19). The management approach, known as ‘managerialism’ or ‘new public management’ since then had been playing significant role to improve governance in many countries. As mentioned earlier, managerial failure is responsible for overwhelming portion of present disorder in governance; so, with vigorous application of
Managerialism, a managerial revolution could have been transpired contributing to the importation of much-sought-after good governance in Bangladesh (Rouf, 2006a).

Managerialism

In pursuance with the paradigm shift in public administration, private sector management practices had been adopted in public sector in developed countries in the 1980s. Some developing countries started emulating the practices of developed countries. Managerialism was developed based on new ideas opposed to the ones prevalent in Weberian bureaucracy. One of its belief stands that definitively there is easier way to the solution of any problem. Problem can be solved through management; therefore, good governance is an art of management. Often yesterday’s solutions are today’s problems; so, the basis of decision-making has to be shifted from words on pages to people on the spot. Managerialism aims at achieving objectives managing risks. It can be better understood shedding lights upon its opposite concept of Weberian bureaucracy characterized by hierarchical, specialized and rule-based administration; life-long profession; separation of administration from politics; public interest etc. There developed some informal bases in the way of functioning of Weberian bureaucracy. Those are: civil servants are symbols of power and authority, they are superior class in society, they are controller of resources and opportunities etc. Thus, civil servants became controller of people other than being service-provider – became competitor to the people other than being their friends. They remained less concerned about solution of problems but more concerned about rules, their power and authority (ibid.). Managerialism is a shift from such perception.

With limited resources, objectives can be achieved applying managerial strategy but with enough resources, objectives may remain unachieved if there is mistake in strategy. A story of managerial success goes like this. In a building there was one lift causing rush of lift-goers. So, there arose demand for setting up another lift. But due to architectural limitations of the building, another lift could not have been set up. A manager was called to solve the problem. He put a complaint box inside the lift. After few days, studying the complaints it was found that most of the complaints had been lodged by female lift-goers. The manager got the clue. With his advice big size mirrors had been fixed in all floors on both front walls of the lift. The problem got solved. The lift-goers, especially the female ones, appearing before mirrors would have become engaged in looking at and making up their appearances. There was no rush of lift-goers. Such easy and less expensive is managerial solution (ibid.). Administrative solution to the problem was constructing another building or relocating few offices of the building anywhere else – both involved huge money and time. So, faced with difficulties, managerialism emphasizes upon inventing strategy applying managerial acumen and creativity to find out problem and its solution. When problem is identified, half the job is done. With wrong identification of problem, all the next steps go awry, new problems are created, resources wasted. Identification of problem and devising solution is the job of managers under managerial culture (ibid.).

From the bureaucratic culture characterized by a gap between people and administration, emphasis on rules rather than services to the people; there needs a shift towards a managerial culture characterized by friendly relationship between administration and people and placement of topmost priority on people’s welfare. Managerialism believes in the supremacy of markets and competition over bureaucratic hierarchy and establishes new traditions and values and develops an entrepreneurial public service (Kaul, 1997: 15). In a well-flourished managerial culture, addressing ‘sir’ is a matter of courtesy but not importance to power. Clients should be addressed ‘sir’ by the service providers because purchasers of services are important to the sellers of services in a competitive market. The public servants being sellers of some services must behave most politely to woo the buyers of services. They are to develop more and better services to be sold in competitive markets. Managerialism establishes such a culture of market, friendship, hardwork, cooperation and honesty (Rouf, op. cit.).
Explicit standards and measures of performance in quantitative terms need to be developed. There should be specific targets for personnel and economic rewards and sanctions for them. Managerialism develops a government that works better and costs less. Professional managers are in overwhelmingly advantageous position to manage things (Crerar and Kelly, 1986: 152-53). Garnett et al. (1997: 77) rightly says that the new democracies need 'democratic managers' to establish democratic management in the public service. Capable, experienced and creative managers are needed for reforms (Aitken, 1997: 45-46). The managers should have ample authority to adopt new courses of actions for reaching objectives using discretion, expertise, professionalism and common sense. He should be ethical, honest and intelligent to find creative and simplified ways to solve problems. A manager must have the right to manage (Faulkner, 1988??: 388). Enhanced accountability must be matched with enhanced managerial authority (Kaul, 1997: 18). Accountability is enhanced by tighter definition of tasks, measurement of performance, devolution of resource control, strengthening monitoring and clarifying incentives (ibid.: 15). Managers manage in an innovative, profitable and responsible manner. They have to be adequately educated, with strategic vision, teamwork capacity, liberal in financial and interpersonal skills and with self-confidence. Serving the clientele should be the prime concern of the managers (Crerar and Kelly, 1986: 150-51). It requires comprehensive revision of traditional public service personnel management policies, supported by rigorous monitoring and reorientation. The management innovations involve flexible practices, recognizing achievements and developing performance contracts (Kaul, 1997: 19). Keys and Miller (1984: 343) interprets Wheelwright’s comparison of Japanese and American production process pointing that effective practice of management rather than manufacturing efficiency ensures orderly production operations. Therefore, good management is the key to private sector efficiency that can be emulated by public sector. In administrative reforms, the terms: retrenchment, reappraisals, downsizing, rightsizing have found way before long but those have adverse socio-political impacts (Heady, 2001: 24-36). New Public Management is a more tolerable approach to administrative reforms. However, it requires readjustment of western practices with the local realities while implementing the ideas in the developing world (Rahman and Norling, 1991: 122). Contracting out, deregulation, downsizing or rightsizing, flexible appointment and termination that characterize a flourished managerial culture are the ultimate aims to be attained through managerialism.

A number of countries including Australia, New Zealand and UK have successfully experimented flexibility in working conditions (Kaul, op. cit.). One of the important managerial innovations is Citizen’s Charter program in the UK that emphasizes upon each public service to publish its own charter based on a set of key principles, such as: standards, information and openness, choice and consultation, courtesy and helpfulness, putting things right and value for money. About 50 government departments and agencies in the UK have produced their own charters based on these principles. New Zealand, Malaysia, Namibia, Singapore and Mauritius have been trying to follow these ideas (Kaul, 1997:16). In the UK and New Zealand, radical reform measures have been adopted in line with managerialism to reorient the government. In Singapore and Malaysia, adoption of managerial tools has facilitated incremental reforms of the government without radically destabilizing the traditional features (ibid.: 15). Managerialism has rapidly changed public sector management in many countries of the world; there developed friendly, congenial atmosphere between government and people. People’s expectations to the government have been ascertained. Government’s responsibilities to the people have been quantified (Rouf, 2006a). Bureaucracy is for the service of the people such concept has been brought into practice from theory by managerialism. Managerialism is consistent with post-modernism, democracy, human rights, globalization, welfare etc. In the developing countries the management model will have some limitations to apply because of their bureaucracy that is essentially of colonial origin and based upon Weberian principles (Huges, 2003: 218). Managerialism cannot do away with all vices.
impeding proper functioning of bureaucracy but it can significantly improve the state of governance of any country.

**Managerial Revolution**

Revolutionary changes can be effected in the governance of Bangladesh with the practice of managerialism. To establish good governance through a managerial revolution in Bangladesh’s bureaucracy, an array of trained managers are needed. There are some managers in the public sector; some can be hired from private sector; imparting proper training some managers can be created (Rouf, 2006a). It does not require a big project involving money to initiate the practice of managerialism, rather it needs managers with vision regarding objectives to be achieved and strategies to be adopted (ibid.).

There will be impediments to the implementation of managerialism. If less payment is a major cause of corruption and bad governance, then with managerial practice when payment will be several times higher, a large number of public servants will shun the practice of corruption. A portion of them who resort to corruption not because of poor pay but with the desire of making huge money to run in elections in future or to do social works will not like the practice of managerialism. It will be needed to deal with them severely for establishing good governance in the country (ibid.). In the process of flourishing managerialism, some manpower will lose their jobs in the public sector. We have a large private sector now. So, they can find them employed in the private sector. If in an office, such practice of managerialism brings good results, government may adopt these ideas to be replicated in other offices and ultimately in the entire bureaucracy. Thus advanced ideas of managerialism such as flexible appointment, target-based appointment, downsizing, rightsizing etc. could be imparted in bureaucracy leading to good governance in Bangladesh. In the next section, the second pillar of the model – partial formalization of informal income is dealt with.

**Pillar II: Partial Formalization of Informal Income**

Various measures have been suggested (Callender and Johnston, 1997: 55) by scholars to improve governance but partial formalization of informal income is not heard too often. Public servants in Bangladesh are paid so poorly that is sometimes not sufficient to meet their subsistence need. So, many of them become compelled to resort to corruption against their will to meet their basic needs. Keeping their basic needs unfulfilled; honesty, integrity, efficiency cannot be expected from them. The countries those have recently succeeded in administrative reforms have ensured good pay to the public servants. In Malaysia, new incentive packages have been launched, such as Malaysian New Remuneration System. In order to attract and retain the talents, senior public servants in Singapore earn salaries that are extremely high by international standards (Kaul, 1997: 20). Our government does not have enough financial strength to provide reasonable pay to the public servants and the public servants cannot run decent life with poor pay. Such state of affairs is the root cause of corruption in our bureaucracy (Rouf, 2006b). Good pay, motivation and difficult environment for corruption can ensure good governance. To provide the public servants a reasonable pay mobilizing resources domestically is near impossibility – resources from donors have become too scarce and costly. We find no other feasible alternative to provide the public servants reasonable pay other than the proposed partial formalization of informal income (ibid.). Do you find any?

**Rationale**

Without reasonable pay to the public servants, any measure to curb corruption is destined to be failure for obvious reasons of necessity. Informal financial transactions are being conducted – it is in everybody’s knowledge – it cannot be stopped but the resultant consequence stands that the overwhelming majority of the clients are being deprived of the services they desire and deserve from the public servants. Only a minority of the clients are getting services with high costs. Under these circumstances, if a portion of the informal income is formalized and consequently if all the clients are given proper services, it stands in the benefit of all stake-holders (ibid.). If informal income is partially formalized, people will require paying less than they would have otherwise paid earlier but they will receive much more services than previously received. The public servants will be glad to
provide more services because they will receive enough income in a fair way than they would have received previously as salary. The receipt may not be equal to the previous total receipt in fair and unfair way, yet they will be glad because the receipt is fair, involving no hassle and nuisance (ibid.).

Informal income by the public servants could not have been stopped. Measures so far to stop the practice of underhand financial transactions have not been effective, if not gone in vain. Therefore, it requires rooting out the cause rather than addressing the symptoms. Without making an end to the harsh reality of poor pay, any measure to curb corruption and bring good governance in Bangladesh is destined to be ineffective, if not total failure, causing more problems than solving them, as evident in the persistence of corruption in spite of undertaking repeated administrative reform measures. If good pay is ensured by legalizing a portion of the underhand financial transactions, public servants will be motivated to work better with better pay and if adoption of unfair means is made difficult, tremendous results can be found in governance (ibid.).

There are several categories of public servants. Some of them want to work hard and if they get reasonable pay in return they do not like to resort to unfair means, thus they want to have trouble-free life. There are some public servants who want to make money desperately to spend in social activities or to run in elections to build political career (ibid.). The working environment needs to be reshaped in the manner where such eccentric intentions do not find any way to thrive. Politics is for the politicians and social activities are for the philanthropists. A civil servant trying to become a politician or a philanthropist is doing immense harm to society. In his workplace abusing his official authority he is doing favor to someone who does not deserve a favor and disfavor to someone who deserves a favor or at least justice. Thus, the actions of the aspirant are causing multiple ramifications shaking the social fabrics. With ill-gotten money when he is running in elections, the environment of election is being vitiated (ibid.). Thus, ill begets more ill in society.

If payment is good a large number of public servants who resort to corruption out of sheer need will give up corruption and opt for trouble-free life. The small portion of the civil servants desirous of doing corruption for financing political career or social works will find it difficult to do corruption in new working environment and therefore, they will either give up their ambition or give up the service – both stand positive for bringing good governance in the country.

In Sri Lanka, such mechanism has been in practice. The mechanism was launched in the customs department and later on it was extended to other service-oriented offices. In Jamaica, Indonesia and Malaysia, such practice remains partially in vogue. Good governance is the key to ensure a happy and prosperous society. Time is ripe for breaking through the traditional ideas; devise and implement modern ideas for bringing good governance.

**Procedure**

The option partial formalization of informal income needs to be given serious thought to bring good governance in Bangladesh finding no other feasible alternative for significantly raising the pay to the public servants. While making the strategic plan, it will require finding out the points where there are informal transactions in an office. It will require different strategies in different offices to implement the scheme because the sources and flow of informal income varies from one office to another. Therefore, to lead it to success, it would rather require task-based, instant managerial techniques rather than pre-formulated rules and regulations. The managers will require finding out the points in the office where there are informal transactions. Those informal transactions are made in exchange of service. For each type of service, a certain amount of facilitation fee amounting much less that the informal amount has to be imposed and the money collected has to be used for increased pay to the public servants. Mentionably, the offices those are not service-oriented cannot be planned in this way. In the initial period, the service-oriented offices can be thus planned and in later phases other offices can be planned with modifications in the rules and
principles to generate money for them. A general order based on each office can be issued to collect and distribute the informal income. If this idea makes headway in anyone holding the reins of an office, works can be started by him. Changes need to be initiated from somewhere to rebuild the society, as we want.

**Conclusion**

In the post-modern world, time demands an overhaul in the traditional way of thought and adoption of new ideas in all areas of activities including governance that is the force directing and shaping all human actions. Government functions everywhere – order in the area of governance permeates through all areas of society, polity and economy (Rouf, 2006a). In this age of rapid globalization, no society can ignore the enormous changes taking place around it and worldwide. An adjustment and cooperation with these changes rather than sticking to the old paradigm can bring welfare ensuring good governance (Hubbard, 1997: 109). Bureaucracy, private sector and civil society are the major catalysts for making changes in all spheres. In our country, private sector has done remarkable progress in the areas of business and economy but it is to function under the auspices of bureaucracy. It cannot be given a free hand for obvious reasons of the possibility of vertical integration of economic activities and investment decisions only with profit motive without adequate regard to socially important sectors. Civil society has not yet been adequately developed to take the lead. We find no alternative to the effective role of bureaucracy for making a fair society in Bangladesh (Rouf, op. cit.). Being new ideas, the practice of managerialism and partial formalization of informal income could have been extremely prospective to bring good governance. Time is ripe not to make a choice from the old and the new but to adopt the later. The earlier the better.

**References**


