

Implementation of Clustering of Ministries: Problems and Prospects

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Researchers
January 2009

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACR	: Annual Confidential Report
AO	: Administrative Officer
ASRC	: Administrative and Services Reorganization Committee
BPATC	: Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre
ERD	: Economic Relations Division
FGD	: Focus Group Discussion
GoB	: Government of Bangladesh
IMED	: Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division
M/o	: Ministry of
PO	: Personal Officers
PARC	: Public Administration Reform Commission
P & SC	: Pay and Services Commission
PSC	: Bangladesh Public Service Commission
SSP	: Senior Service Pool
SSSP	: Specialized Senior Staffing Pool
SMP	: Senior Management Pool
WTO	: World Trade Organization

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Abstract

The present administrative system is a legacy of the British colonial rule. It is perceived that by specialization and professionalism citizen's expectation of better service delivery and government's expectations of governance improvement may be achieved with the existing system of administration. Australia incorporated Senior Executive Service (SES) for governance improvement and better service delivery. In Bangladesh, Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC) was formed in 1997. In 2000 it recommended, among many other reform measures, clustering of ministries. They recommended three clusters like general, economic and socio-physical infrastructure clusters.

This study tried to probe into as to how this clustering of ministries may be implemented. The research team conducted questionnaire survey of opinion. They surveyed the opinion of 202 junior officers of the rank of Assistant Secretary and Senior Assistant Secretary in one deal. In another deal opinion was collected from 92 senior officers of the rank of Deputy Secretary and above. All the officers were chosen randomly. Moreover, two focus group discussions were held. The opinions were compiled parameter-wise to come to some decisions.

From the analysis of the data it is found that 75% of the senior officers are in favour of the three clusters proposed in the questionnaire. But they are almost equally divided on the issue whether clustering should be implemented with or without formation of Senior Management Pool (SMP) and on the issue whether SMP should consist of officers of the rank of Deputy Secretary and above or Joint Secretary and above. From opinions of 202 junior officers it seems a group of them are optimistic about the outcome of the clustering of ministries and another group is pessimistic about the outcome. During focus group discussion the opinions collected seem to be negative. As the participants of the FGD could not show convincing reasons for negative attitude towards clustering of ministries, the researchers are inclined to take the view of the questionnaire opinion survey as the respondents took much time to pass well-thought opinions on the issue.

Researchers made seven careful recommendations. They are in favour of three clusters namely general, economic and socio-physical infrastructure, with formation of SMP as recommended by PARC with a minor change. SMP members are to be recruited through fair and neutral recruitment process. They support piloting implementation of one of the clusters to observe the outcome. They further support that good planning is necessary for recruitment, training, promotion, placement and inter-cluster transfer of officers.

Chapter I

Introduction

The administrative system of Bangladesh is inherited from the British colonial rule and still prevailing with very few modifications. But in days of specialization, leadership based on expertise is urgently needed to bring dynamism in administration. It is assumed that for encouraging specialization and professionalism in administration, clustering of ministries will be helpful. But implementation of clustering of ministries may not be very easy and problem free. It is better to examine the magnitude of problems we might have to encounter in the light of the preparation on the ground for implementation of clustering of ministries.

Leadership is an important issue in public administration. For good leadership some governments appoint a very small group of civil servants near the vertex of the executive pyramid. Their job content has more of professional management than that of technical and the perspective is government-wide rather than limited to a particular sector or agency. This group of civil servants is expected to provide leadership by their vision, innovation, performance and integrity. In Australia the Public Service Reform Act 1984 incorporates the main theme of creation of the Senior Executive Service. Moreover, Senior Management Council was established in 1997 to focus on whole of governance issues across the public sector. It was composed of executives from the ten-portfolio grouping of agencies covering all government business with the Chief Executive, Department of the Premier and Cabinet as chair¹.

For generating necessary skills in the civil service of Bangladesh, PARC recommended classification of existing ministries into three clusters; general, economic and socio-physical infrastructure². Officers from the level of Deputy Secretaries would be placed in any one of the three clusters. The posts of Deputy Secretaries would be filled-up by officers from all cadres through competitive examination conducted by the BPSC. Officers belonging to one cluster will be posted to different ministries/divisions within that particular cluster. To develop a pool of leaders in public sector, a Senior Management Pool (SMP) is proposed to be formed and officers to the clusters will be provided from the pool.

Improving the public organizations' performance is the overall goal of a government. The SMP's role is to provide leadership and management support to that effort. The SMP can be a useful bridge between the politicians making policy and the field level executives implementing it.

¹ The Public Service Reform Act 1984 of Australia

² Report of the Public Administration Reform Commission, (PARC), 2000, *Volume I*, p.33&47.

Experience of a government organization's functioning and their managerial skills enable the SMP officers to shape and guide implementation strategies in public sector.

Classification of ministries/divisions into clusters and formation of SMP are positive steps in bringing professionalism in civil service. It may make career clear and visible to the executives and will encourage merit-based promotion in administration. SMP can be utilized as a lever that can move the whole public service towards better productivity and efficiency. The government has recently paid attention to career planning. In September 2003, a Career Planning and Training Wing was created in the Ministry of Establishment. The plan is to focus on career-based deployment starting from the level of Deputy Secretary considering individual skill, experience and expertise. The Career Planning and Training Wing is expected to take care of career planning, training through clustering of ministries and formation of SMP.

So far, seventeen major Civil Service Reform Commissions and Committees and Pay Commissions were appointed by the government of Bangladesh. Of which the Pay and Services Commission (P & SC) appointed in 1976 recommended for constitution of a new apex cadre with talented, efficient and experienced officers drawn from all cadres³. This recommendation was implemented in modified form through the constitution of Senior Service Pool (SSP) in 1979, which was for some reasons abolished in 1989. Again Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC, 1997) recommended for (in June 2000) creation of functional clusters of ministries and constitution of Senior Management Pool (SMP). The World Bank Consulting Mission also recommended for grouping of ministries into clusters and formation of a Senior Civil Service Pool⁴.

The concept of clustering of ministries emphasizes the quality aspect of the civil bureaucracy, which will be much more policy-competent, accountable, responsive, and citizen-friendly. A competent civil service, skilled in 'steering' rather than 'rowing' is the lifeblood of good governance. In this context approach of clustering of ministries and formation of SMP may be a driving force for delivery of quality service to the people.

It may even motivate civil servants to play a role to increase efficiency in the public service delivery through establishing a well-coordinated and citizen-focused service delivery system.

Even though useful, clustering of ministries and SMP are not an indispensable tool for achieving good governance. There are many countries in the world which provide better service to their people and ensure good governance without forming such clusters of ministries and SMP. The

³ Report of the National Pay and Service Commission, 1977.

⁴ Report of the World Bank, 1996, *The Government That Works: Reforming the Public Sector*, Dhaka, The University Press Limited (UPL), P.125.

proposed research work has been designed to look into the extent of effectiveness of clustering of ministries and formation of SMP for achieving better service delivery.

In this study the term clustering of ministries and SMP are used to convey the following meanings:

Clustering of Ministries: In the government of Bangladesh there are as many as 49 ministries and divisions. The business of many of the ministries/divisions are apparently similar in nature though they operate in different areas. Some ministries do development work and some ministries do regulatory work. Some ministries operate in personnel management whereas another is busy with law and order. *Clustering of ministries* means bringing together the ministries with linked functions and activities into a particular group or cluster with a view to improving service delivery through developing expertise. It is believed that if a civil servant works under a particular cluster for whole or major part of his/her career, he will be more competent in a particular field which will ultimately bring good result in citizen centric service delivery.

Senior Management Pool (SMP): Senior Management Pool means a group of senior level/top level bureaucrats who will be very near to the vertex of the bureaucratic pyramid in an organization. Their job nature will be more of making policies than implementing them. Of course they will be the best of the lot selected by a neutral body through a fair and equitable process.

Objectives of the Study

As the goal of the government is to provide better services to the people through the public organizations, the pragmatic approach of clustering of ministries and formation SMP may be a tool to attain that goal. This study aims at ascertaining the extent of contribution of clustering of ministries and formation of SMP on delivery of better service to the people. This probe will try to examine the opinions of the officers of different ranks on the outcome of the clustering of ministries. Hence the objectives of the study may be described as:

- a. To have opinion of the government officials of different ranks on the creation of clusters of ministries/divisions;
- b. To appraise the views of the government officials of different ranks on the formation of Senior Management Pool (SMP);
- c. To identify the anticipated outcome of clustering of ministries and formation of SMP
- d. To recommend some measures for introduction of clustering of ministries and formation of SMP.

Rationale of the Study

Since independence of Bangladesh many reform commissions/committees were formed to bring dynamism, efficiency and accountability in the civil service. The recommendations made by those commissions/committees were hardly implemented for unknown reasons. The latest of such reform

initiative was taken through the formation of Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC) in 1997. PARC in its reports recommended for introducing clustering of ministries and formation of SMP. Like many other recommendations, this particular recommendation is yet to be implemented. But now-a-days the main focus of all government efforts is on citizen's satisfaction regarding service delivery. As PARCs recommendation for implementation of clustering of ministries and formation of SMP was made for improving citizen friendly service delivery and developing expertise in the civil servants, hence the research team finds the topic very time fashioned. All these encourage the research team to do a research on this subject to explore the views of the civil servants in this regard and also to explore the constraints and the prospects of introducing clustering of ministries and formation SMP. On the proposed study no references or research works are available in the context of Bangladesh. Therefore, this research work may be a pioneering one to provide a base to policy makers to analyze the issue for taking a right policy decision. Hopefully, the findings of this research work will be helpful to the policy makers in identifying the strengths, weaknesses, prospects and problems of clustering of ministries and formation of SMP.

Methodology of the Study

In the study, content analysis, opinion survey and focus group discussion method were used for collection of data. Available literatures related to this particular subject were studied. Existing data on similar reform in the civil service of other countries were also consulted. For surveying the opinion of the civil servants a total of 294 officers were interviewed with structured questionnaire. Among the interviewed officers, 92 belong to the rank and status from Deputy Secretary to the Additional Secretary and 202 belong to the level of Assistant Secretaries and Senior Assistant Secretary. Two sets of questionnaire were used to collect data from senior and junior level officers. All the respondents were selected randomly. Data were collected during the period of 2007 and 2008. Two FGDs were held to explore the views of the officers of different levels. Among the two FGDs, one was arranged in the field level at Noakhali District with 15 officers belonging to the rank and status from Assistant Secretary to Deputy Secretary participated. The other FGD was arranged at the Bangladesh Secretariat with 20 officers of the rank and status from Assistant Secretary to Additional Secretary launching their views. Data of the study were presented in simple tables and analysed by using non-inferential statistics.

Style followed in referencing in case of books is author year, *title*, publisher, place of publication (town/city). In case of Journal articles : author, year, 'title of article', *title of journal*, volume, issue number, page number (from beginning to end of article), and in case of report: authority, year, *title*, place of publication (town/city) were followed.

Limitations of the Study

Clustering of ministries and formation of SMP are basically the total representation of the government. Any policy decision in this regard will definitely affect all the cadre and non- cadre civil servants. A study on this pertinent issue should involve representation from all cadres and non-cadre officers as well. It is really a very gigantic task and needs sufficient amount of resource and time to do it with adequate satisfaction. But due to resource constraints the research team could not manage to collect data from a good number of officers of all cadres to make the representation of all cadres rational. No non-cadre officers were interviewed. In this study only 294 BCS officers of the rank and status of Assistant Secretary and above were interviewed. Majority of the respondents were from a particular cadre (BCS Administration). As a result this study reflects the opinion of a particular group of cadre officers. If diverse group could be interviewed, more generalized view on the subject could be presented. As it seems to be a pioneering study in this field, it is expected that it will be able to give a preliminary idea to the reader about clustering of ministries.

Chapter II

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Immediately after the independence, the government of Bangladesh formed a committee for administrative reorganization. The committee was named as the 'Administrative and Services Reorganization Committee 1973 (ASRC)'. This committee emphasized the need for professionalism in civil service. It deplored the fact that lack of professionalism had been a major defect of civil service and then built up the case for developing professionalism. ASRC saw knowledge as an indispensable element for achieving professionalism in civil service. In fact knowledge can be generated through research and observation of relevant administrative procedures and management techniques for a long period of time. It draws attention to the need of matching each job with the qualifications, experiences and competence required by a person to perform it. In special cases measures may be required to be taken to develop new skills and expertise in managers. So, ASRC also recommended that to achieve the above objectives, a radical change would be needed in the practices that should be followed in staffing higher administrative positions⁵.

The World Bank (1996) following more or less the same line as ASRC (GOB), called for organizing ministries/divisions into clusters having linked functions. They used the term as "Specialized Functional Groups". This suggestion was made to avoid skill mismatch and address the issue of inter-cadre rivalry. Along with the clustering of ministries, it called for establishment of 'Specialized Senior Staffing Pool (SSSP)' to manage functional clusters. The clusters suggested are:

- Macro-economic
- Social sector
- Infrastructure
- Agriculture and Natural Resources
- General Administration

The entry into SSSP was proposed to be open for all cadres. The point of entry recommended was the level of Deputy Secretary. The selection for entry would depend on track record and competitive examination. After selection for entry into SSSP, a civil servant would stay within that specialized functional group for the rest of his career⁶.

⁵ Report of the Administrative and Services Reorganization Committee 1973

⁶ Report of the World Bank, 1996, the Government That Works: Reforming the Public Sector, Dhaka, The University Press Limited (UPL), P.125.

In consequence of that the Government of Bangladesh formed the Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC) in December 1997. It consisted of a chairman, three full-time members and eleven part-time members drawn from within the government and outside. PARC was required to complete its task within two years but the tenure was later extended upto November 30, 2000.

PARC (2000) reviewed the issue of career planning depending upon the recommendations made by various studies and recommended three clusters of Ministries/Divisions. The recommended clusters are⁷:

General Cluster: President's Secretariat; Prime Minister's Office; Cabinet Division; Election Commission Secretariat; Parliament Secretariat; M/o Establishment; M/o Defence; M/o Food and Disaster Management; Local Government Division; Rural Development and Co-operatives Division; M/o Home Affairs; M/o Land; M/o Information; M/o Cultural Affairs; M/o Religious Affairs; M/o Labor and Employment; M/o Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs.

Economic Cluster: Finance Division; Economic Relations Division; Internal Resources Division; Planning Division; Statistics Division; Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division, M/o Commerce; M/o Agriculture; M/o Fisheries and Livestock; M/o Environment and Forest; M/o Industries; M/o Jute and Textiles.

Socio-Physical Infrastructure Cluster: M/o Housing and Public Works; M/o Communications; M/o Science and Technology; Power Division; Energy and Mineral Resources Division; M/o Shipping; M/o Social Welfare; M/o Women and Children Affairs; M/o Youth and Sports; M/o Posts and Telecommunications; M/o Water Resources; M/o Education; Primary and Mass Education Division; M/o Health and Family Welfare and M/o Civil Aviation and Tourism.

PARC (GOB, 2000) excludes two ministries from this list. These are Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Such exclusions rest on the ground that these ministries provide specialized services. But researchers argue that many other ministries provide specialized services. Hence PARC's argument is not tenable.

PARC (GOB, 2000) affirms that clustering concept is a positive step towards ensuring professionalism at policy making and policy management levels. To achieve this end, it recommends constitution of what it calls Senior Management Pool (SMP)⁸.

In 1996 the World Bank recommended that entry into SMP will be open to all cadres and the point of entry will be the level of Deputy Secretary based on a competitive examination to be conducted by

⁷ Report of the Public Administration reform Commission (PARC), 2000, Volume 1, page 33-34

⁸ Report of the Public Administration Reform Commission, (PARC), 2000, Volume 1.

the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC). After entry into a cluster, each entrant will acquire expertise in that area and will stay within the cluster.

Ministry of Establishment has reviewed the prospect of career planning based on clustering of Ministries/Divisions. Available information indicates that Ministry of Establishment proposed formation of six clusters. These are as follows⁹:

Public Management Cluster: President's Secretariat; Prime Minister's Office; Cabinet Division; M/o Establishment; M/o Home Affairs; M/o Defence; M/o Foreign Affairs; Parliament Secretariat; Public Service Commission Secretariat; Election Commission Secretariat; M/o Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

Development Management Cluster: Local Government Division; Rural Development and Co-operatives Division; M/o Information; M/o Cultural Affairs; M/o Religious Affairs; M/o Youth and Sports; M/o Civil Aviation and Tourism; M/o Liberation War Affairs; M/o Social Welfare; M/o Women and Children Affairs; M/o Food and Disaster Management; M/o Health and Family Welfare; M/o Industries; M/o Jute and Textiles and M/o Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs.

Socio-Physical Infrastructure Cluster: M/o Housing and Public Works; M/o Communications; M/o Science and Technology; M/o Shipping; M/o Posts and Telecommunications and Power Division.

Economic Cluster: M/o Commerce; Finance Division; Economic Relations Division; Internal Resources Division; Planning Division and Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division

Natural Resources Management Cluster: M/o Agriculture; M/o Fisheries and Livestock; M/o Water Resources; M/o Environment and Forest; Energy and Mineral Resources Division and M/o Land.

Human Resource Development Cluster: M/o Education; M/o Primary and Mass Education; M/o Labor and Employment and M/o Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment.

⁹ Based on unpublished documents and the discussion with the concerned officials of the Ministry of Establishment of GOB.

Chapter III

Data Analysis

Part-A: General Information and Views of Senior Level Officers

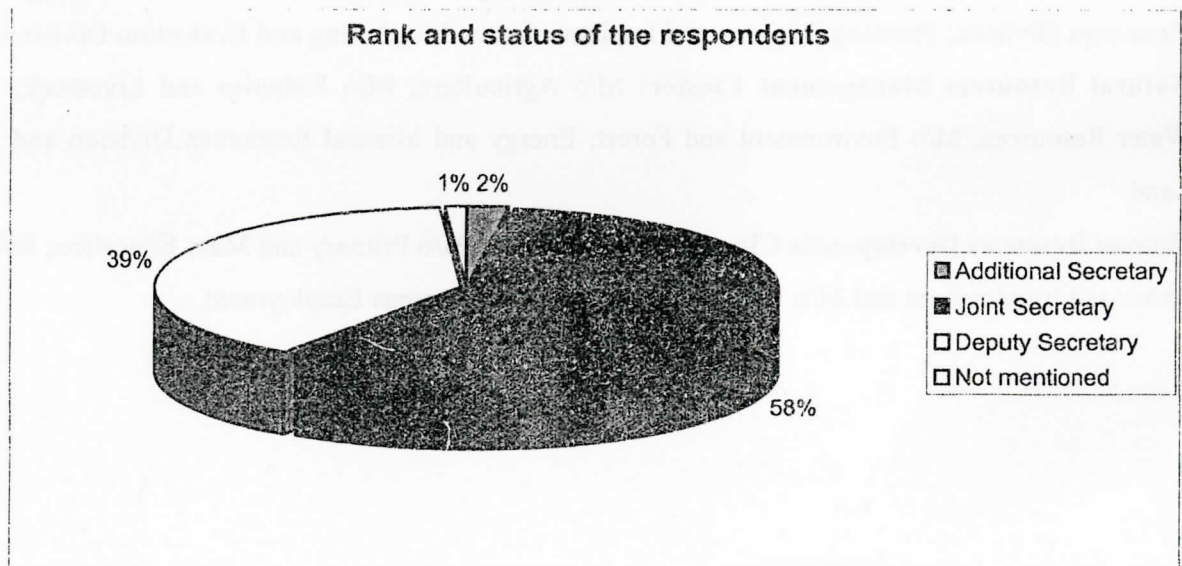
Rank and Status of the Respondents

In one deal 92 officers of the status of Deputy Secretary were interviewed for this study. All the respondents were members of the Bangladesh Civil Service. Among them majority belonged to the rank and status of Joint Secretary, followed by Deputy Secretary. Only 2 respondents belonged to the rank and status of Additional Secretary and one did not mention his/her status (Table-1). So, the opinion was passed by people of different rank and status and perhaps it was free from any bias.

Table-1: Rank and Status of the Respondents

Rank and Status	Frequency	Percentage
Additional Secretary	2	2.2
Joint Secretary	53	57.6
Deputy Secretary	36	39.1
Not mentioned	1	1.1
Total	92	100.0

Figure-1: Rank and Status of the Respondents



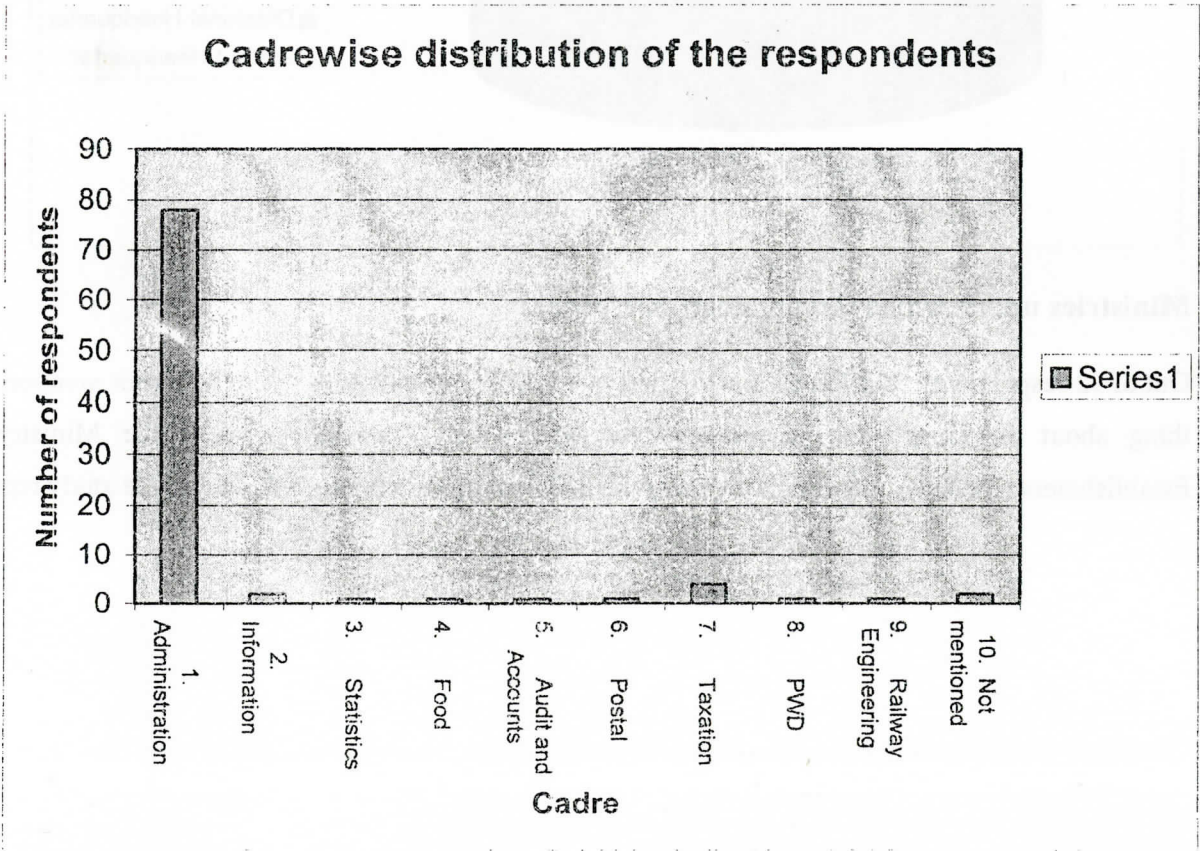
Cadre-wise Distribution of the Respondents

Respondents also mentioned their cadre belongingness (Table2). Out of 92 respondents, 90 mentioned their cadre name while two did not do it. Study reveals that most of the respondents were from BCS Administration Cadre and rests were from eight different cadres of the Bangladesh Civil Service.

Table-2: Cadre-wise Distribution of the Respondents

Name of the Cadre	Frequency	Percentage
1. Administration	78	84.8
2. Information	2	2.2
3. Statistics	1	1.1
4. Food	1	1.1
5. Audit and Accounts	1	1.1
6. Postal	1	1.1
7. Taxation	4	4.3
8. PWD	1	1.1
9. Railway Engineering	1	1.1
10. Not mentioned	2	2.2
Total	92	100.0

Figure-2: Cadrewise Distribution of the Respondents



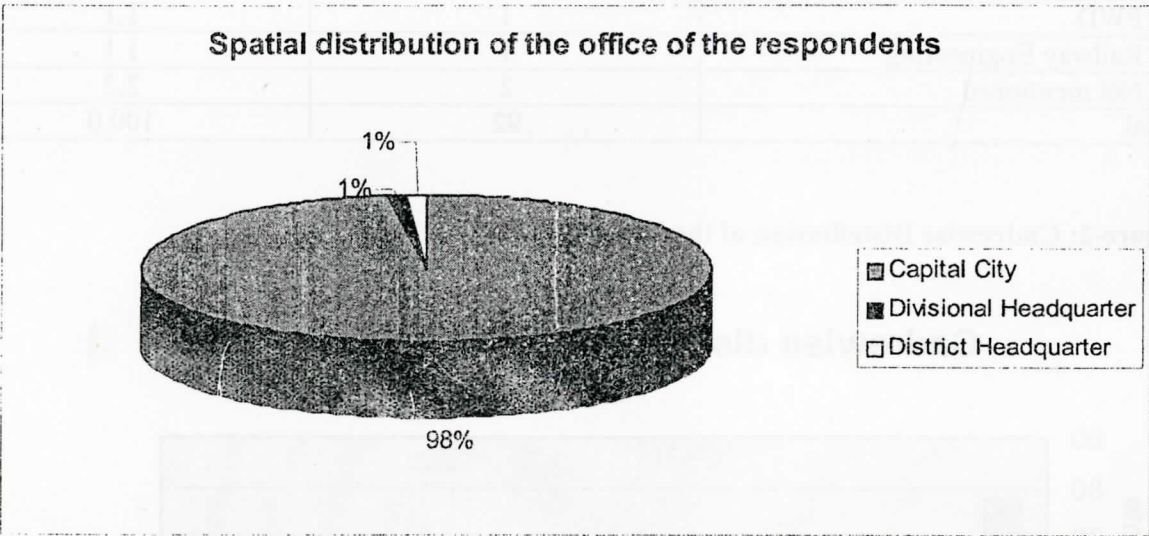
Location of the Work Places of the Respondents

In respect of the location of the work places of the respondents it may be mentioned that almost all are working at different offices in the capital city of Bangladesh.

Table-3: Spatial Distribution of the Offices of the Respondents

Location of the Offices	Frequency	Percentage
Capital City	90	97.8
Divisional Headquarter	1	1.1
District Headquarter	1	1.1
Total	92	100.0

Figure-3: Spatial Distribution of the Offices of the Respondents



Ministries under which Respondents are Working

Out of 92 respondents, 90 officers are working in 25 different ministries while 2 did not mention anything about it. Among the respondents the largest part is working under the Ministry of Establishment (Table4). So perhaps views of the different ministries are reflected in the study report.

Table-4: Ministries Under Which Respondents are Working

Name of the Ministry	Frequency	Percentage
1. Establishment	35	38.0
2. LGRD	3	3.3
3. Agriculture	4	4.3
4. Health and Family Planning	1	1.1
5. Environment and Forest	1	1.1
6. Primary and Mass Education	1	1.1
7. Education	2	2.2
8. President's Secretariat	2	2.2
9. Commerce	4	4.3
10. Textile and Jute	2	2.2
11. Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs	1	1.1
12. Power /Energy and Mineral Resources	2	2.2
13. Land	3	3.3
14. Industries	7	7.6
15. Science and Technology	2	2.2
16. Defence	3	3.3
17. Shipping	3	3.3
18. Civil Aviation and Tourism	1	1.1
19. Housing and Public Works	1	1.1
20. Labor and Employment	1	1.1
21. Expatriates Welfare & Overseas Employment	1	1.1
22. Communications	1	1.1
23. Information	4	4.3
24. Home Affairs	2	2.2
25. Food and Disaster Management	3	3.3
26. Not mentioned	2	2.2
Total	92	100.0

Opinion Regarding Proposed Clusters

Considering the reports of different public administration reform bodies including PARC, this study proposed three different clusters of ministries such as: General Cluster, Economic Cluster and Socio-Physical Infrastructure Cluster. Only difference with PARC recommendation is that the M/o Foreign Affairs and M/o Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs are proposed to be included in general cluster. Because keeping those ministries outside the clusters will encourage disintegration of clusters in future. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked whether they agreed with the inclusion of different ministries under the proposed clusters. Table-5 shows that 75.0 percent of the respondents were in favour of the proposed clusters while 22.0 percent had different views on the issue.

Table-5: Whether the Respondents Agree With the Proposed Clusters

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	69	75.0
Disagree	20	21.7
No response	3	3.3
Total	92	100.0

Eligibility for Recruitment into SMP

The study also proposed for a Senior Management Pool (SMP). During the questionnaire survey respondents were asked on what should be the rank and status of the officers eligible for recruitment into SMP. Table-6 shows that 43 (47%) respondents opined that officers of the rank and status of Deputy Secretary would be eligible for recruitment into SMP. While 41 (45%) considered that Joint Secretary should be the entry level for recruitment into SMP. So the respondents were divided equally regarding the level of entry into SMP keeping a scope for the policy-makers to decide on this issue.

Table - 6: Opinion Regarding the Eligibility for Recruitment into SMP

Rank of eligibility	Frequency	Percentage
Deputy Secretary and above	43	46.7
Joint Secretary and above	41	44.6
DS to Addl. Secretary	3	3.3
No opinion	5	5.5
Total	92	100.0

Process of Recruitment into SMP

Respondents were also asked about the process of recruitment into SMP. Most of the respondents were in favour of competitive examination among cadre officers conducted by the BPSC while only seven respondents viewed that competitive examination should be open for all officials working in different cadres, non-cadre posts and private jobs. In expressing their views 13 respondents were undecided (Table7). So the overwhelming majority is in favour of fair recruitment through open competitive examination conducted by a neutral body.

Table-7: Opinion Regarding Process of Recruitment into SMP

Process	Frequency	Percentage
Competitive examination among eligible cadre officials by BPSC	72	78.3
Competitive examination among eligible cadre, non-cadre, private sector officials by BPSC	7	7.6
Undecided	13	14.1
Total	92	100.0

Anticipated Outcome of the Proposed Clusters and SMP

The study analysed the views of the respondents regarding the anticipated outcome of the proposed clusters and SMP. In this connection most of the respondents mentioned that the proposed clusters and SMP would result in improvement of governance and delivery of service. However, minor portion of them did not support this view. They were skeptic about the improvement of governance and service delivery.

Table-8: Opinion Regarding Outcome of Proposed Clustering and SMP

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Will improve governance and service delivery	74	80.4
Will not improve governance and service delivery	14	15.2
Undecided	4	4.3
Total	92	100.0

Cluster System With/Without SMP

This study also sought the views of the respondents as to whether the proposed cluster system could be introduced without SMP. In their views respondents were almost equally divided into two groups. The sharp difference of opinion indicates that careful steps have to be taken before implementation of the clustering system.

Table-9: Whether the Cluster System Can Be Introduced With/Without SMP

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Clustering with SMP	40	43.5
Clustering without SMP	47	51.1
Undecided	5	5.4
Total	92	100.0

Provision of Inter-Cluster Movement of SMP Officials

Respondents were also asked whether SMP officials would be allowed to move from one cluster to another. Most of the respondents viewed that there should be a provision of inter-cluster movements of SMP officials for sharing skills and experience gathered in a cluster. Because they think that would in turn improve governance and service delivery (Table-10) in public sector.

Table-10: Opinion Regarding a Provision of Inter-cluster Movement of SMP Officials

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	76	82.6
No	14	15.2
Undecided	2	2.2
Total	92	100.0

But mass transfer from one cluster to another may create imbalance in personnel management. Hence before inter-cluster transfer need and suitability have to be carefully examined.

Part-B: General Information and Views of Junior Level Officers

In addition to 92 respondents of the rank of Deputy Secretary and above a total of 202 junior officers of the rank and status of Assistant secretary and Senior Assistant Secretary (Table-11) were interviewed regarding the outcome of proposed cluster system.

Table-11: Rank and Status of the Respondents

Designation	Frequency	Percentage
Assistant Secretary/ Equivalent	145	71.78
Sr. Asst. Secretary/ Equivalent	57	28.22
Total	202	100.00

About the positive outcome of clustering of ministries 67 out of 202 respondents expressed different views (Table-12). Some of them opined that clustering of ministries would reduce inter cadre rivalry and would improve governance and service delivery. Respondents told that clustering of ministries would show dynamism in management with skilled people from different cadres. It would help placing right person in the right place and will enhance professionalism in civil service.

Table-12: Expectation of Positive Outcome

Views	Frequency	Percentage
Reduce inter-cadre rivalry.	13	6.4
Improve service delivery	23	11.4
Increase dynamism in management	14	6.9
Enhance professionalism	17	8.4

60 out of 202 respondents expressed negative views (Table-13). They thought that it would slow down promotion process, as there might be a move to downsize the ministries. They apprehended that cluster system would have no impact on efficiency enhancement. Without research and analysis, direct implementation of clustering might create chaos. There might be problem of level of equivalence among different cadre officers. Open competitive examination system for entering into SMP might create senior-junior conflict. Cluster system and SMP might ignite unusual competition among the cadre officers. It might tell upon group cohesion resulting in creation of hurdles in smooth delivery of public service.

Table-13: Apprehension of Negative Outcome

Views	Frequency	Percentage
Downsizing of Ministry	19	9.4
No efficiency enhancement	13	6.4
Problems in ascertaining equivalent rank among officers of different cadres	11	5.4
Senior-junior conflict	17	8.4

The junior officers were also interviewed about their opinion regarding the cluster in which the ministry where they work now should be included. Respondents passed different opinions, which are presented, in the following matrix (Table- 14).

Table-14: Opinion Regarding Inclusion of Respondent's Ministry into A Cluster.

Name of the Ministries	Name of the Cluster			
	General	Economic	Socio-Physical Infrastructure	No opinion
Establishment	42	21	2	16
Foreign Affairs	1	1	-	4
Child and Women Affairs	-	-	1	-
LGRD	1	-	2	-
Agriculture	6	2	1	1
Health and Family Planning	-	1	1	1
Fisheries and life Stocks	-	-	4	-
Environment and Forest	1	-	-	-
Finance	7	8	2	-
Housing and Public Works	-	1	11	-
Communication	-	-	22	1
Information	16	2	3	1
Postal and Telecommunication	5	-	12	-
Home Affairs	1	-	-	1

Majority of the respondents (50%) working in the Ministry of Establishment would like their ministry to be included in the general cluster. 91% of the respondent working under the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, 96% of the respondent working under Ministry of Communications and 71% of the respondent working under the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication showed their interest to be placed in the Socio-Physical Infrastructure cluster. 73% of the respondent from the Ministry of Information showed that their ministry should be placed under general cluster. The intention of the majority respondents of the Ministries of Housing and Public Works, Communication and Post and Telecommunication are consistent with the opinion of PARC.

The above table also reveals that the respondents have difference of opinion regarding the inclusion of his/her ministry in some cluster. Even some of their opinions are different from the recommendations of PARC. Hence majority decision may be taken as the foundation for including some ministry in a particular cluster.

The ministry which does not have any respondent in the questionnaire survey is included in a particular cluster by judging its distant functional linkage with some other ministries (Table-14). Of course, researchers' judgment was used to come to a decision for inclusion of a particular ministry in a particular cluster.

Part-C: Focus Group Discussion

In this research work two Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were arranged. One was arranged at Noakhali District headquarter with field level officers of rank and status from Assistant Secretary to Deputy Secretary. The other was arranged at Bangladesh Secretariat in the M/o Communications with the officers of the rank and status from Assistant Secretary to Additional Secretary. The findings of the FGD held at Noakhali are-

1. As ministries are functionally interrelated, cluster system may hamper inter ministry coordination.
2. Rivalry between general and technical cadre may be promoted.
3. There is no chance that officers will have the opportunity to work in more than one cluster. So, they will not have a comprehensive idea about the business of the government.
4. Isolation and segregation of work of different ministries will not be easy.
5. There may be a concentration of power in any particular cluster. This concentration of power will create a scope to spread corruption.
6. Functionally 28 cadres belong to 28 separate clusters. So it is very difficult to include officers of some cadres in a particular cluster.
7. Polarization of merits may develop in certain ministries/clusters.
8. Public opinion should be considered before introducing clustering of ministries and SMP.
9. There are no success stories about clustering of ministries around the world.

The findings of the FGD held at Bangladesh Secretariat are-

1. Before introducing clustering of ministries, the seniority, promotion and placement of officers in the cluster should be clearly defined. A transparent and accepted policy should be made after discussion with major stakeholders so that no contradiction or complication arises in future.
2. Usually knowing the prospects and opportunities of a cadre, through competitive examination, officers join a particular cadre depending on his preference. If cluster system is introduced there may arise a disappointment and de-motivation in the officers of a particular cadre who will feel less privileged. It may lead to reduction of productivity.
3. PARC mainly emphasized clustering of ministries and Senior Management Pool for making skilled and competent officials for successful negotiation with foreign states. But in fact this negotiation is done by ERD, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Commerce. World

Trade Organization (WTO) cell of Ministry of Commerce also do some negotiation. So only for the sake of negotiation clustering of ministries will not bring good output for the nation.

4. When clustering will be introduced, some clusters will be more attractive and lucrative in respect of posting and placement. So there may be an unholy competition and lobbying for posting in a particular cluster. As a result there may be a breakdown of the chain of command in the civil service.
5. The Administrative Officers (AO) and Personal Officers (PO) work in a particular ministry throughout their career. That is one of the reasons of corruption in the service delivery in the ministries. It is thought that a vested interest group develops in a ministry which hampers service delivery. So now-a-days there is demand for transfer of AO/POs to another ministry. This is one of the examples of failure of a system like clustering.
6. The existing system of ACR can not evaluate the performance of an officer realistically. Basically in the civil service a very diverse group of people work together for achieving a goal. It is found that many officers having no background in economics do well in the Ministry of Finance. So ACR should not be a parameter of selecting officers for a particular ministry. Rather it should be based on performance evaluation.
7. There is no success story in the world about clustering of ministries. So more research work should be done and pilot project should be implemented before introducing clustering of ministries in Bangladesh.

The above opinions seem to be negative. Though no reason is pointed out for passing this sort of opinion nevertheless the points raised in the FGD demand attention and consideration of the policymakers. These points should be addressed before implementation of clustering of ministries and formation of Senior Management Pool (SMP). During opinion survey through questionnaire some of the junior officers were also found to be a bit scared about the clustering of ministries. It is more or less usual that people will be doubtful about the outcome of some reform measures. Only through careful implementation this doubt could be proved baseless. Hence, government has to be careful at the time of implementation of clustering of ministries.

Chapter IV

Findings

A total of 92 experienced high officials of Bangladesh Civil Service ranging from Deputy Secretary to Additional Secretary were interviewed for this study. Most of them (97%) were Joint Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries. Respondents were previously belonging to nine different cadres but the majority of them (85%) were from BCS Administration Cadre. In respect of the location of the work places of the respondents almost all were working at different offices located in the capital city of Dhaka. They were also representing 25 different ministries of which the largest chunk (38%) is working under the Ministry of Establishment.

Researchers included the three clusters proposed by PARC in the questionnaire with slight modifications. Hence, this study proposed to place 49 different ministries and Divisions under three clusters namely General Cluster; Economic Cluster and Socio-Physical Infrastructure Cluster. The proposed composition of clusters is mentioned below:

General Cluster: President's Secretariat; Prime Minister's Office; Cabinet Division; Election Commission Secretariat; Anticorruption Commission Secretariat; Public Service Commission Secretariat; Parliament Secretariat; M/o Establishment; M/o Defence; Local Government Division; Rural Development and Cooperatives Division; M/o Home Affairs; M/o Land; M/o Information; M/o Food and Disaster Management; M/o Cultural Affairs; M/o Religious Affairs; M/o Labor and Employment; M/o Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs; M/o Foreign Affairs and M/o Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

Economic Cluster: Finance Division; Economic Relations Division; Internal Resources Division; Planning Division; Statistics Division; Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division; M/o Commerce; M/o Agriculture; M/o Fisheries and Livestock; M/o Environment and Forest; M/o Industries; M/o Jute and Textiles.

Socio-Physical Infrastructure Cluster: M/o Housing and Public Works; M/o Communications; M/o Science, Information and Communication Technology; Power Division; Energy and Mineral Resources Division; M/o Shipping; M/o Social Welfare; M/o Women and Children Affairs; M/o Youth and Sports; M/o Posts and Telecommunications; M/o Water Resources; M/o Education; M/o Primary and Mass Education; M/o Health and Family Welfare and M/o Civil Aviation and Tourism.

The study also reveals that 47% respondents considered officers with the rank and status of Deputy Secretary and above to be eligible for SMP. While 45% thought it should be Joint Secretary and above. Regarding the process of recruitment in SMP, most of the respondents (78%) were in favour of competitive examination among cadre officers to be conducted by the BPSC.

This study also took views of 202 junior officers with the rank and status of Assistant Secretary and Senior Assistant Secretary regarding outcome of the clustering of ministries as mentioned in Chapter III. Different types of views were found. Some of them opined that clusters would reduce inter-cadre rivalry, improve governance and service delivery, enhance dynamism in management of the ministries, help placing right person in the right place and enhance professionalism among officers. While, others expressed opposite views. To them, it would slow down promotion process and downsize the ministries. They added that it would have no impact on efficiency enhancement. They also opined that without prior analysis clustering of ministries might cause problem. It is also found from their views that open competitive examination system for entering into SMP might create senior-junior conflict. It needs to be mentioned that though almost 30% of the respondents were having a negative view, 33% respondents were hopeful about the good outcome of the clustering of ministries.

In this research study one Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was arranged at Noakhali District headquarter with field level officers of rank and status from Assistant Secretary to Deputy Secretary. Another FGD was arranged in Bangladesh Secretariat with officers working in different ministries with rank and status from Assistant Secretary to Additional Secretary. Major findings of the FGDs were that ministries were functionally interrelated. So clustering might hamper inter-ministerial coordination. Rivalry between general and technical cadres might increase. The FGD participants further opined that if clustering of ministries were introduced, all clusters would not be equally attractive. Some clusters would be more attractive and lucrative for placement than others. So an unholy competition and lobbying might arise for posting in a particular cluster. As a result, there may be a disorder in the chain of command in the civil service. They also opined that functionally 28 cadres were 28 separate clusters. So it would be very difficult to take decision about the placement of an officer of a particular cadre in a specific cluster.

Considering the anticipated outcome of the proposed clustering of ministries and SMP, out of 92 questionnaires surveyed senior officers, majority (80%) opined that it would enhance the quality of governance and service delivery. About the introduction of proposed clustering system with or without formation of SMP, the study reveals that respondents' views were almost equally divided into two groups. But without formation of SMP, inter-cluster movement might be very difficult. The study further reveals that most of the respondents (83%) were in favour of the provision of inter-cluster movement of SMP officials. However, 202 questionnaires surveyed junior officers showed divided opinion regarding outcome of the clustering of ministries. But, majority respondents were hopeful about the positive outcome.

Participants of FGDs expressed some negative views regarding the outcome of the proposed clustering of ministries, though they did not explain the convincing reason for such views. The research team hopes that many of the negative views may be overcome by implementing the clustering system with adequate care and scrutiny.

Conclusion

Dynamic, motivated, competent and professional bureaucracy is the pillar of an effective government. The ultimate goal of the government is to ensure necessary services to the people and earn their satisfaction. But despite many reform initiatives the level of satisfaction of the citizens regarding services of the government is not up to the mark. Hence with the vision of improvement of governance and service delivery, the Government of Bangladesh has already taken various initiatives. Of these initiatives, formation of Public Administration Reform Commission is the most recent one. This 'Public Administration Reform Commission' in its report recommended creation of functional clusters of ministries and formation of a Senior Management Pool (SMP). But clustering of ministries/divisions and formation of SMP are indeed a very complex, sensitive and gigantic task. In this study we find from the opinion survey of the civil servants that they are in favour of the three clusters proposed by the research team. Considering the anticipated outcome of the proposed clustering of ministries and SMP, the majority of the respondents opined that it would enhance the quality of governance and service delivery. But at the same time they also apprehended that it might create a lot of problems including breakdown of chain of command and ignite rivalry among cadres as well as within a cadre. The research team hopes that many of the negative views may be overcome by implementing the clustering system with adequate care and scrutiny. To overcome the projected constraints and problems of introducing clustering of ministries a detailed phase by phase work plan should be prepared. Keeping this in mind the researchers are induced by the findings of the study to put their opinion in favour of clustering of ministries/divisions. However, creations of SMP and determination of criterion of eligibility for recruitment in it still needs further scrutiny. Recruitment, training, career planning, promotion, placement, inter-cluster transfer etc. are some of the major issues to be taken care of before implementation of clustering of the ministries.

Clustering of ministries can be seen as a set of complex change management initiatives from diverse points of views. It can appear as a new tool for human resource management at the higher level of specialization as well as a strategy for organizational improvement through strengthening of the network among ministries/divisions with linked functions. Moreover, it could be an innovative

attempt for integrated service delivery to the citizens through improved communication, collaboration and cooperation among the ministries of a cluster. Because the concept of clustering of ministries points to the horizontal linkage which will increase professional skill, effective flow of resources and information within a cluster which will eventually lead to an environment of better service delivery.

Recommendations

Taking into account the overall findings of the study, researchers are inclined to propose the following recommendations for consideration of the policy makers:

- 1) Three clusters namely General Cluster, Economic Cluster and Socio-physical Infrastructure Cluster may be formed.
- 2) On an experimental basis, the implementation of anyone clusters from the proposed three could be piloted to see the impact. After evaluation of performance regarding service delivery and governance improvement further steps can be taken.
- 3) Since the Senior Management Pool (SMP) is a sensitive issue, an in-depth opinion survey should be done before formation of the said pool.
- 4) Detailed plan has to be worked out regarding recruitment, training, career planning, promotion, placement and inter-cluster transfer in civil service before implementation of clustering of ministries.
- 5) The recruitment process in SMP must be fair and neutral.
- 6) SMP may be formed with officers of the rank of Deputy Secretary and above.
- 7) For making inter-cluster movement smooth, formation of SMP has to be taken as a foundation stone. Only SMP members will enjoy the facility of inter-cluster movement.

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