

The Impact of Overseas Training on the Performance of Bangladesh Civil Service: The Case of AIT Extension Training, Thailand

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Abstract

Public administration has to compete with private sectors in terms of quality service delivery to citizens. In this context, civil service training, especially overseas training, has been considered the most significant requirement to increase the performance of the Bangladesh Civil Service. This article tries to explore the impact of overseas training on the performance of the Bangladesh Civil Service. To achieve this objective, this study interviewed Bangladesh Civil Servants who participated Asian Institute Training (AIT) Extension training programme from 2016 to 2018. A mixed-method was applied to analyse the collected data. It found that Bangladesh Civil Servants, who have received AIT Extension training, were satisfied with the training management of AIT. Participants believed that such overseas training positively contributes to enhancing the performance of the Bangladesh Civil Service. However, this study also disclosed that fewer overseas training opportunities for young civil servants, lack of need-based training, and poor management of overseas training policy are the main obstacles in Bangladesh Civil service management. This article strongly recommends that there must be a detailed overseas training policy management and more collaboration with international training institutes to get better performance from the government officers in Bangladesh.

Key Words

Overseas training, AIT-Extension, Bangladesh civil service, quality service, MoPA

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Introduction

In recent years, quality public service has become a significant issue in many developed and developing countries. However, the poor performance of government institutions, lack of resources, and traditional mindset of bureaucrats have been considered as major barriers in ensuring the quality improvement of Bangladesh civil service (Khan 2016; Jamil 2002, 2019). Now, quality improvement in public administration and civil service is vital. As it enables public administrators to ensure smooth, easily accessible, convenient, and impartial service delivery for citizens (Khan 2016). A study by Khan (2016) shows that due to proper implementation of administrative reform and strong political commitment and goodwill, the civil servants of Southeast Asian countries like Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore can provide quality service to their citizens. In contrast, the experience of Bangladesh is the opposite due to poor implementation of different administrative reform recommendations, lack of political commitment, politicization in administration, and lack of effective training of civil servants in building a sense of true professionalism with the mission of quality service delivery (Khan 2013; 2015; Jamil 2002). World Bank report, *Governance Matters-2012*, made a ranking of government effectiveness of 209 states, in which Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaysian civil service were categorized as 'highly effective bureaucracy' and ranked as 4th, 13th, and 41st respectively (Khan 2015) whereas Bangladesh Civil Service was apparent as an 'inefficient bureaucracy', and ranked 168th of 209 states. However, such empirical studies portrayed that civil service management of Bangladesh is performing with various loopholes that need to consider for ensuring quality service from the civil servants in comparison with the global milieu.

Challenges to public administration are huge, not only because of regional diversity, but also states want to renovate the structure and functions of traditional public administration in the light of globalization, digitization, and new managerial principles (Jamil *et al.* 2019). In this perspective, the Bangladesh government has been trying to modernize the civil service to meet all these challenges. Undoubtedly, to fulfil this mission, there is no alternative to the systematic application of organizational development through administrative reforms and staff development programmes like training and overseas exposure programmes for the civil servants. Besides, an effective training programme has been considered as a robust process, through which both organizations and the routine functions of civil servants could be transformed into more professional, service-oriented as well as people-oriented. To fulfil such an endeavour,

there must be a modern and inclusive human resource management policy focusing on the importance of training with career development. A study by European Union (2015:179) states that “human resource management policy contributes to achieving the organization’s goals and objectives, as well as to realize a more integrated HRM approach, in which training is well connected with the appraisal and promotion system, career development and progression.”

After the liberation, the government of Bangladesh designed a detailed civil service management system. In Bangladesh, both the Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA) and Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) are considered as legal functional bodies that are assigned to plan, design, and implement training for the civil servants. BPATC is considered as the apex training institution in the field of training civil servants of all cadres, which conducts several types of training like foundation training, on-the-job training, advanced training (Ali 2007; Kabir & Baniamin 2012). Besides this, to fulfil the special demands of different development plans and projects, government officials at different levels have to take part in different overseas training and exposure programmes from time to time. Such types of international training and exposure programmes assist government officials to manage and implement various development and welfare projects at the national level. In this regard, the Bangladesh government signed MoU with different international training institutions, staff training colleges, and universities that offer professional training for government officials. In some cases, controversies have been raised regarding the effectiveness and proper application of such overseas training and exposure programmes. Nevertheless, the importance of overseas training cannot be overlooked.

The ultimate target of any human resources development intervention like training is to bring qualitative change in professionalism and ensure better service delivery. Different staff training in Bangladesh civil service is also a part of this process. Beside financial support, various international donors like World Bank, ADB, IMF, USAID, and UNDP provide technical assistance to the Bangladesh civil service (Khan 2013). As a part of this technical assistance, these international organizations always showed their priority on staff development through proper training and exposure visits both at home and abroad.

Similarly, the Bangladesh government arranged and sponsored various staff development training abroad. However, there remains a controversy about the implementation of the learning that has been gathered from overseas training. Studies reveal that lack of appropriate overseas training

policy regarding human capital for foreign-trained public managers is a major cause for their non-utilisation (Alam and Haque 2009). It is a pity, since their contributions are needed for customer-oriented public service and for the private sector to grow (Muslim 2011). Due to practice of mal-administrative culture like inherited attitudes of the colonial legacies, elitism, administrative corruption, lack of transparency, uncertainty and ambiguity, and status-quo attitude of the civil servants (Jamil 2002; Khan 2013; 2016), sometimes, it has become impossible to bring changes and apply updated knowledge, skills and leanings of overseas training at the works place (Ali 2004; Aminuzzaman 2013; 2009; Siddiquee 2003). It causes a great loss of public funds and citizens do not get their best services from bureaucrats.

Considering these facts and realities, this study tries to assess the outcome of overseas training of Bangladesh civil service and to what extent these pieces of training are contributing to enhancing the performance of Bangladesh Civil Service that leads to citizen-centric service delivery in Bangladesh. It analyses the effectiveness of such overseas training and exposure programmes for Bangladesh civil servants focusing the case of the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) Extension, Thailand. It attempts to find out the impact, priority issues, and possible ways to improve overseas training for ensuring quality service of Bangladesh Civil Service. It reviews and analyses five different mid-level to higher-level overseas training and exposure programmes offered by the AIT Extension, Thailand. Through the analysis, this article explores the ultimate impact and correlates the outcomes with service delivery of Bangladesh Civil Service. It also analyses the expectations of the Civil Servants and practical constraints that most civil servants are experiencing at their workplace.

Institutional Framework of Human Resource Management of Bangladesh Civil Service

In this era of rapid globalization and the application of ICTs, from both public and private organizations' perspectives, human resource management constitutes the most important component. The success of organizational missions and objectives largely depends on ensuring the right persons in the right positions, a detailed strategic plan for staff development, as well as the commitment and contributions of personnel in ensuring client/citizen's satisfaction (Siddique 2003). In this regard, from both theoretical and practical aspects, sound human resource management, for both public

and private sectors, have acquired a growing significance and is seen as the most crucial variable that regulates the performance of an organization (Patterson *et al.* 1997).

However, the entire framework of human resource management of Bangladesh civil service operates within the framework of the constitutional provision, statutory and non-statutory rules, and regulations (Siddiquee 2003). The constitution of Bangladesh was adopted in 1972 and has been amended several times. Since then, different political governments have amended and adopted new rules and regulations through which the Bangladesh Government has designed a detailed framework for the management of the civil service and its procedural. Central Personnel Agencies (CPA) of the government, The Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA), and Public Service Commission (PSC) have been functioning in Bangladesh (Ali 2004; Siddiquee 2003). The MoPA is charged with the general responsibility for overseeing important aspects of personnel administration whereas the routine control of personnel belonging to various ministries/departments remains the responsibility of concerned ministries.

The MoPA not only lays down the broad policies, principles, and regulations for managing the public service and part of these, but is also assigned to take major decisions in respect of creation of a cadre, its composition, and strength, rules of recruitment, and promotion policy (Ahmed 1986; Siddiquee 2003). The MoPA is responsible for the initial recruitment of all cadre service officials and disciplinary actions and the welfare of senior officials in the Secretariat and outside (Ali 2007; Siddiquee 2003). For staff development, the MoPA is also assigned to formulate training policies for the improvement of the professional skills of the government officers and arrange training both at home and abroad. The PSC, which is known as a constitutional body, is responsible for conducting all tests and examinations for the selection of suitable persons for appointment to the civil service. The structure and function of PSCs are delineated in the article no. 137 and 140 of the constitution of Bangladesh (GoB 2016). The PSC is supposed to advise the government on personnel matters and act as a 'watchdog' and acts more as a 'recruiting agency' of the government, whereas the MoPA is considered as the most significant agency that has jurisdiction over almost all aspects of human resource management of Bangladesh civil service (Ali 2007; Siddiquee 2003).

Training Institutions and Training Policy for Bangladesh Civil Service

Training Institutions

Training is seen as the most appropriate mechanism that can improve performance by enhancing the knowledge, skills, and capabilities of public servants to accomplish their tasks with efficiency. As such, training has received a high priority in subsequent plans of the government and an elaborate institutional arrangement has already been made to this effect. The most significant move towards this direction was the establishment of the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) in 1984, by amalgamating the four existing training institutes like BASC, NIPA, COTA, and STI (Ali 2004; Kabir & Baniamin 2012). In addition to BPATC, currently, there are a good number of training institutes offering specialized training to civil servants of different categories and levels. Based on departmental training needs, most of the cadres of BCS have training institutes that offer a wide variety of courses (Siddiquee 2003). However, the establishment of BPATC with modern facilities, logistics, and staff support is seen as a major event in the field of public service training. As an apex training institute of the country, BPATC runs both post entry and in-service training for civil servants of all categories and levels (Ali 2004; Siddiquee 2003).

Besides its core programmes, BPATC offers various courses of shorter duration for a variety of trainees and its four regional centres offer skill training for lower-level employees under various ministries and departments. At present, there are different types of training imparted to Bangladesh civil servants. The major categories are a) Foundation training covering four months; b) On-the-job training during the period of probation covering about a year; c) On-the-job training for BCS (administration) cadre known as settlement training covering three and a half months or less; d) Advanced training for officers of and above the rank of joint secretaries; and e) Foreign training (Ali 2004:235). Moreover, to conduct different professional or specialized training, it is estimated that there are all most 150 training institutions in the country belonging to different ministries and public statutory bodies (Ali 2004).

Public Administration Training Policy (PATP)

The Government of Bangladesh approved the Public Administration Training Policy (PATP) on May 6, 2003, which aims at strengthening and reorienting training activities for enhancing the administrative and managerial capacity of the government officials (Aminuzzaman 2013).

For the human resource development of public servants, the PATP recognizes training as one of the major instruments. Aimed at building the professionalism of public servants at different levels, the PATP gives a clear policy direction that BPATC and other public sector training institutions would invent need-based, result-oriented, and market-based training programmes.

However, giving these issues priority, there are some significant objectives of this policy to fulfil the ultimate objective of civil service training as follows:

- To meet the challenge of the 21st century, civil service training must be operated based on diverse need-based, result-oriented, and market-responsive, which aims at building the professionalism of the government employees at a different level;
- To equip the public servants at all levels with the requisite knowledge, skills, and techniques to enable and make productive use of their potentials, and to ensure balanced and sustainable economic development;
- To make training at various levels attractive, enjoyable, and rewarding, there must be a congenial environment through which both trainees and trainers will be attracted; and
- To ensure institutional capacity through efficiency and training performance, there must be an appropriate environment in the public offices (GoB 2003).

Apart from these objectives, Public Administration Training Policy 2003 sets different overseas training criteria and required eligibility and provisions for civil servants. In this regard, the policy states to enhance the efficiency, eligibility, and to supplement the skill deficiency of government officers, overseas training should be regularly organized (GoB 2003). To fulfil this aim of overseas training, the policy suggests a standing committee in each ministry or division for the selection of candidates for overseas training. To achieve both home and abroad training objectives, the policy also defines some important strategies that cover strengthening of the existing training institutions by developing infrastructural facilities, capacities of the faculties, collaboration with private sector training institutions, decentralisation of training activities, and so on (GoB 2003).

However, in reality, there remains a gap between de facto and de jure of civil service training in Bangladesh. Though the institutional framework and the policy are properly designed, due to the colonial mindset of the bureaucrats and the practice of various mal-administrative cultures, the

ultimate impact and the application of training is negligible at the workplace (Khan & Siddiquee 1998; Khan 2016). Moreover, proper utilisation of training sometimes becomes more confined due to having a lack of support from the superior level and the absence of proper career planning (Ali2004). The selection for overseas training sometimes depends based on interrelationships with the superior at the office. A study by Ali (2004:139) shows that “foreign training opportunities are available to those who could manage it and domestic training opportunities are for those who could not avoid the training.” Ensuring the best outcome of overseas training, Alam and Khair (2014) argue that it should be based on the administrative needs and the trained officials should be placed in relevant departments so that their acquired knowledge could be productive. They also showed that 39 per cent of respondents who acquired knowledge from overseas training had either underutilized or not utilized at all and 22 per cent of respondents said that they had dissatisfied with the present overseas training (Alam and Khair 2014). Therefore, long-term strategic vision and well-articulated training policy need to be adopted in support of the maximum utilisation of overseas training learnings.

Furthermore, in each ministry, there is a committee that allocates scholarships for overseas training and visits to the civil servants. Although the impact of these exposure visits and foreign training is hardly assessed in actual terms, overseas training programmes seem to help officials gain insight, learn lessons, network and formulate particular policies more effectively (Jamil *et al.* 2019).

Importance of Overseas Civil Service Training in Bangladesh

Due to the pressure of globalization and the application of ICT in the public sector, a rapid transformation has been noticed both in the nature and practice of service delivery in Bangladesh Public Administration (Khan 2013; Bhuyian 2011). Certainly, such transformation at the organizational level brings changes both in the structure and employees’ culture, beliefs, and practices. As a result, there is a growing consensus among governments to portray public administration to be more customer-oriented, cost-effective, and user-friendly when delivering public services to the citizens (Bhuyian 2011) by discarding the contextless nature of traditional public administration (Haque 1996). To perform such changes, considering the local or indigenous norms, civil servants have to be more dynamic and people-oriented. But, in reality, due to conflict between inherited colonial administrative culture and the formal or expected behaviour based on Western bureaucratic norms, government officials sometimes failed

to realize the expectations of the citizens in developing countries like Bangladesh (Haque 1996). In another study by European Union (2015), the traditional relationships between government officials and citizens were more bureaucratic and hierarchical, while the new relationships have become more pluralistic and user-centric to achieve an understanding of their perceptions, expectations, and commitment through active participation between bureaucrats and citizens. As a discipline, the study and practices of Public Administration have been transforming through a paradigm shift over the years. Therefore, to keep pace with such changes, the administration of the developing nations takes several attempts to reject the traditional model of administration and advocate more dynamic, professional-oriented, and business-like management principles through which sustainable social and economic development would be ensured (Sarker 2004; Bhuyian 2011).

Despite its poor implementation and incapacitated management, several studies found that overseas training has helped considerably on the performance of civil servants of public administration in Bangladesh. It has resulted in substantial impacts such as the improvement in knowledge, skills, and learning performance, acceleration in administrative reform initiatives, reformation in the local training curriculum, people-oriented mindset, cost-effective services and good turnover (Alam and Haque 2009).

However, the implications of such new values will focus more on changes in structure, processes, and functions of traditional Public Administration values (Common 1998). In the Bangladesh context, the nature and practices of Public Administration are also experiencing such a transformation. The Government of Bangladesh is committed to digitizing all public services in every ministry or department by maximizing the service quality and minimizing the time and cost of the citizens (Planning Commission 2015; Siddiquee 2016; UNDP 2017). There has also been significant progress including the introduction of the citizen's charter since 2008 in every government office for ensuring quality services (Kundo 2018). So, improving the quality of overall governmental functions has been considered a big challenge and there remains a tension between tradition and modernity in developing countries like Bangladesh.

Public Administration faces several challenges to ensure quality services in both the least developed and developing countries like Bangladesh. Therefore, they need to develop and enhance the network of bilateral and multilateral cooperation for the development of their public servants. Certainly, such cooperation and knowledge sharing opportunities like overseas training, higher studies, and exposure visit

programmes enable the bureaucrats of least developed and developing countries to achieve updated technical knowledge, know-how and facilitate institutional capacity building (Alam and Khair 2014). However, Bangladesh has received the highest number of foreign-funded training programmes in South Asia (ADB 2006). Governments in Bangladesh and development partners have placed a high priority on the human resource development of government officials in the form of providing various overseas training, higher studies, and exposure visit programmes both at home and abroad. Besides the domestic training programmes, foreign training has also become almost an institutionalized feature in Bangladesh. For the training of Bangladesh public servants, donor organizations and development partners such as Australia, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom have provided constant technical support (Alam and Khair 2014). As a result, in the last few decades, the number of foreign-trained and educated public officials has increased in Bangladesh.

Keeping the importance of overseas training in priority, after the creation of BPATC, the Bangladesh government has arranged several international training and exposure programmes for the government officials through bilateral cooperation. As a part of this process, the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) Extension, an international training partner organization of MoPA and BPATC, offers different training or exposure programmes based on three categories like instant need-based training, training as a part of BPATC's foreign training, and participation in the international training bid to organize training session. AIT Extension believes that public sector reform efforts in developing countries need to embrace the changes of Public Administration and draw on a range of public management models by putting the needs and interests of citizens at the centre.

In this context, to transfer technical knowledge and capacity build-up of government officials, AIT Extension promotes exposure visits to a network of government agencies in the regions and capacity development expertise and learning professionals' programmes since its inception (AIT Extension n.d.). Through the Public Sector Capacity Building Programme of AIT Extension, it has been selected as an implementing partner to run the regional training session for the Bangladesh Civil Service at different levels. The AIT Extension offers various series of training courses focusing on public administration reform, good governance and citizen-centric service delivery, and advanced public sector management for effective policy implementation for Bangladesh civil service (AIT Extension n.d.).

Such programmes have been designed as on-site studies in which learning courses are mapped with the requirements that MoPA gives. Such a training or exposure programme will allow the participants to think and identify critical areas that can be applied to reform programmes of Bangladesh civil service (AIT Extension 2016).

The AIT Extension Overseas Training Programmes

It has been recognized that human capital development is not confined to internal interventions, but rather the importance of external affairs like overseas training, exposure visit, and higher studies has got equal acceptance. One of the main objectives of such human capital development is to acquire new knowledge, skill and bring a positive change in attitude. But such staff development endeavours are not confined to acquiring competencies. Rather, a congenial environment of concerned institutions is also considered a prerequisite. However, this study attempts to focus on overseas training effectiveness, especially the AIT Extensions’ training programme, and its impact on the knowledge, skill, and attitude of the government officials.

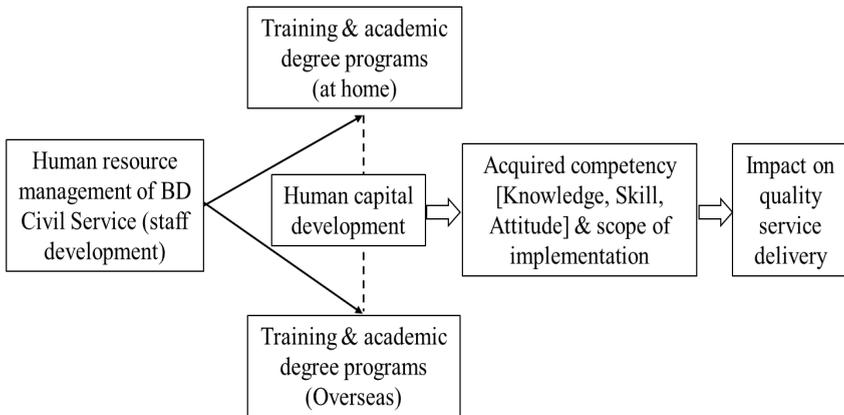


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The objective of this study is to critically analyses the AIT Extension’s training and its impact on the performance of Bangladesh civil service. Specifically, this study tried to investigate the effectiveness of overseas training conducted by AIT Extension, the impact of the training on the trainees, major barriers in training management, priority issues in overseas training, and how to make training courses more effective for enhancing the competency level of Bangladesh civil servants.

This study used both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through key informant interviews, training observation, and extensive exposure visits with the respondents. For key informants' interviews, a structured checklist was used and the number of key informants was 83. There was 25 assistant commissioner who has been working for around five years in different ministries of the Bangladesh government and 58 additional secretaries who have been working for more than 20 years in different ministries. Among the 83 respondents, 12 (14.46 per cent) were female and 71 (85.54 per cent) were male. Five full training courses were observed to understand the training in-depth. Major sources of secondary data were collected from related sources like journal articles, books, and reports.

The Performance of AIT Extension Training Programmes

Human resources of any organization (public or private sector) need proper training to achieve organizational goals and objectives. Undoubtedly, professional training enables the personnel to be more competent to perform their duties and responsibilities. However, the ultimate objectives of any successful training endeavour depend on the proper application of training methods and materials through which an effective and inclusive learning process could be ensured. Figure 2 indicates the overall performance of the AIT Extension training programmes within the stipulated time. It was found that maximum participants were highly satisfied with AIT's training. Participants shared their opinion based on the Likert five points scale indicating Excellent to Poor. The participants considered AIT's training a very good programme (54.22 per cent), excellent (18.07 per cent) and good (19.28 per cent).

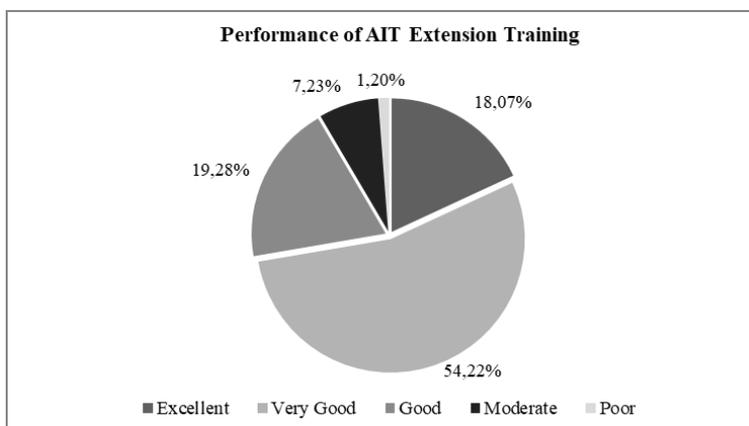


Figure 2. Performance of AIT Extension Training

AIT Extension has achieved a world-class position in offering international training for government officers at different levels. The civil servants of Bangladesh received training with the collaboration of AIT Extension, MoPA, and BPATC. AIT Extension is capable to develop their training infrastructure like world-class international trainers, modern training equipment, exposure visit to relevant national and international organizations (both public and private) and hospitality at reasonable training cost. It should be mentioned here that participants who received training from AIT Extension more than one time considered the programme ‘very good’ and ‘excellent’, and they shared that it is very convenient to receive overseas training that is not far away from home.

The Impact of the AIT Extension Training Programme

This study analyses the impact of AIT Extension training at the participants’ workplace. After receiving training, they were interviewed based on the Likert five-point scale indicating from ‘significantly high positive impact’ to ‘poor impact’. Figure 3 shows that the training of AIT Extension was considered to have a ‘significantly high positive impact’ (38.55 per cent), ‘high positive impact’ (30.12 per cent), and ‘very high positive impact’ (8.43 per cent).

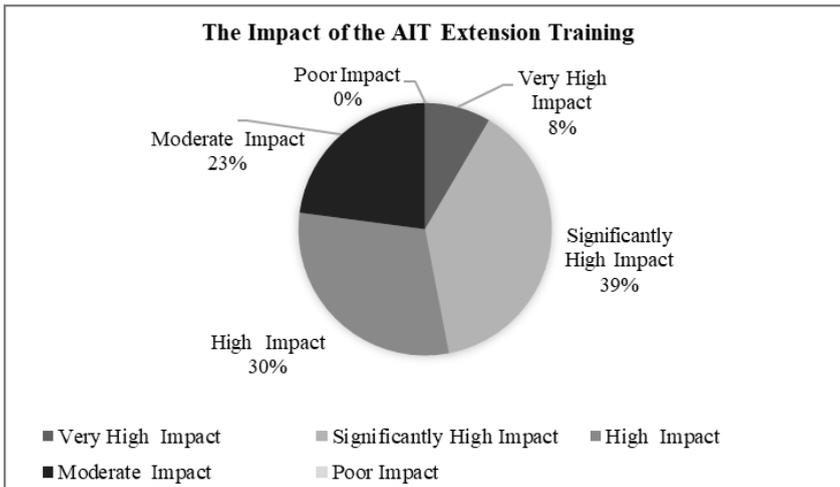


Figure 3. The Impact of the AIT Extension Training

However, the training impact depends on some factors like the trainee’s level of competency, working environment, organizational culture, and institutional support. The gravity of training impact also depends on

participants' performance in the session, and the trainer's capability to reach the trainees. Participants state that though the overseas training motivates them highly, in reality, in most cases they cannot apply their learnings effectively. For this reason, they pointed to the traditional mindset of the superior, resistance to change attitude, and lack of a congenial working environment. Subsequently, though the overseas training seems highly effective, the positive outcomes are not worth mentioning due to having different barriers at the implementation stage.

The Barriers of Effective Overseas Training Management

Since the inception of Bangladesh, Public Administration faces some major challenges in ensuring good governance. Consequently, there remains a controversy in the quality of service delivery of government officials. The main hindrances of good governance in Bangladesh Civil Service are colonial legacy, lack of transparency, strong leadership, and poor institutional capacity. This study found some constraints of good governance and their impact on quality training. Figure 4 depicts the key interferences such as lack of commitment and inefficiency (34.94 per cent), the colonial mindset of government officials (31.33 per cent), political interventions (25.30 per cent) directly or indirectly contributing to lack of effective training planning and management (44.58 per cent), and less training opportunity, and inappropriate training (30.12 per cent) for the right officers of the Bangladesh Civil Service.

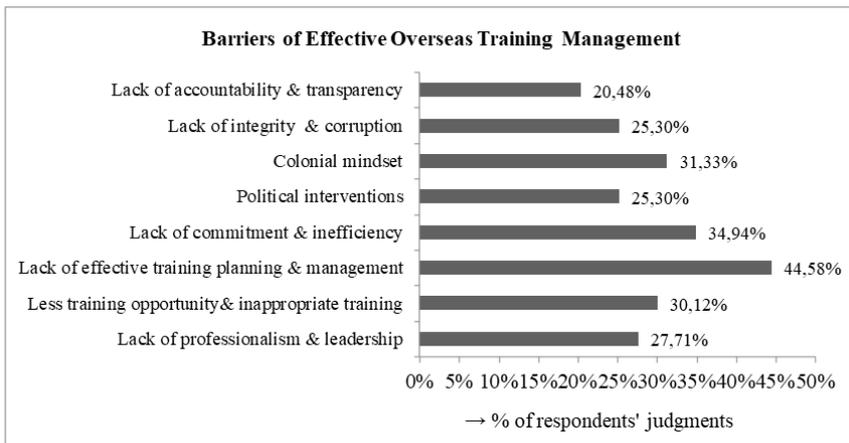


Figure 4. Barriers of Effective Overseas Training Management

Factually, in Bangladesh Civil Service, remain some dominant factors of the British colonial legacy. The training participants at AIT Extension also feel that the government offices and civil servants are not free from such mariculture. Figure 4 shows that a lack of accountability, transparency, integrity, commitment, professionalism and administrative corruption still prevails in the Bangladesh Civil Service. After completing AIT training, participants had to perform within such an environment. Unfortunately, such administrative culture and practices at the workplace create barriers in the way of proper implementation of overseas training values and experiences. In many cases, qualified officers miss the opportunity for overseas training and the participants are selected for overseas training that is not relevant for hi or her needs. Consequently, such types of management and planning hamper ensuring good governance and quality service. Ensuring the right person for the right training and its proper implementation certainly assists in the gradual elimination of existing barriers of good governance.

The Priority Issues of Overseas Training for Bangladesh Civil Service

Strategic training management is indispensable for effective training. The controversy is always persisting in Bangladesh Civil Service whether the right persons are selected for the right training. Sometimes, the debate has arisen when need-based training is not offered to the participants. This study found some priority issues that need to be considered for the overseas training of the Bangladesh Civil Service. Figure 5 shows that emphasis should be given to department-wise need-based training (69.88 per cent). It also indicates that behavioural and motivational training (54.22 per cent) and recent development issues (45.78 per cent) must be considered in the overseas training.

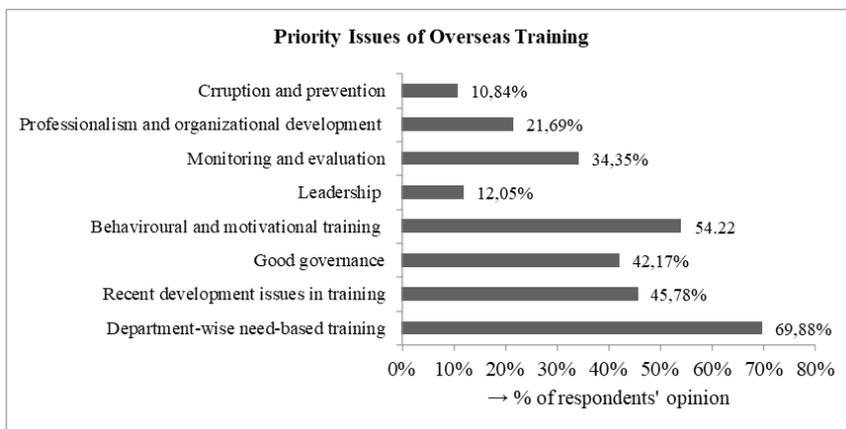


Figure 5. Priority Issues of Overseas Training

Sometimes government officers are sent to overseas training for which she or he does not fit. Overseas training modules should be re-designed based on concerned departmental needs. So, it might be expected, the objectives and outcome of the training will be attainable meaningfully. However, the overseas training programme should not be implemented merely from a generic perception, that will cause excessive spoil of public exchequer.

Making Effective Overseas Training for Bangladesh Civil Service

In response to how to make overseas training more effective and meaningful, the key informants gave several suggestions and ideas. Though the participants were very much pleased with the hospitality of AIT Extension training, some issues need to be considered in the case of overseas training. Figure 6 shows that the highest number of the participants (66.27 per cent) thought that overseas training should focus more on the case study and real-life examples avoiding excessive theoretical discussion. They also suggested sufficient scope of exposure visits (62.65 per cent) to the different offices of international organizations with day-long experience of sharing sessions and seminars. Moreover, sufficient training duration and schedule (59.04 per cent) need to be considered for ensuring effective learning outcomes of the overseas training.

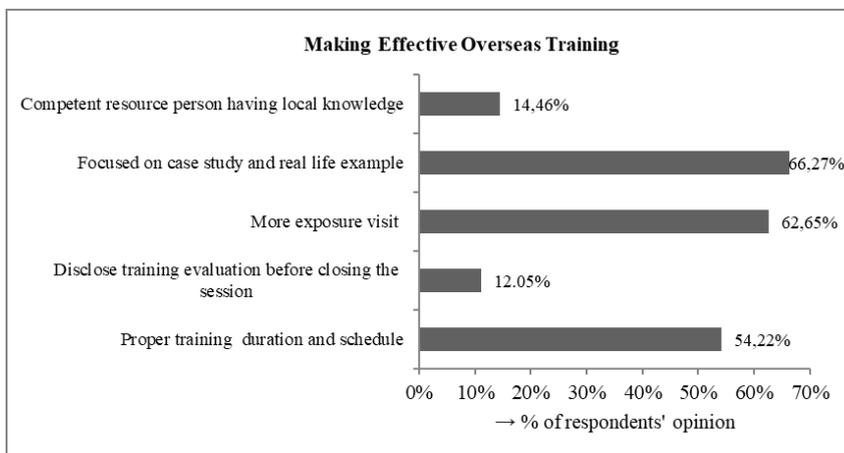


Figure 6. Making Effective Overseas Training

This study indicates that for ensuring effective learning, there must be a sufficient duration of overseas training. Participants suggested at least two weeks of training duration will be helpful to concentrate on the training contents, which will be quite difficult for the one-week training session. Moreover, based on the conventional trainees’ assessment (pre and post), performance results should be disclosed and need to be considered in career development. It is also found that resource persons who have in-depth local knowledge and administrative culture will ensure a congenial environment for the trainees to share and discuss local problems in the training session.

Conclusion

This study has shown that considering the reality of political and administrative culture in Bangladesh, ensuring an effective and result-oriented public personnel training of civil servants is not a smooth task. Though the government has a training policy at the national level, there must be some specific articles or clauses through which the government can ensure robust and need-based training for suitable personnel, especially in overseas training or exposure programmes. However, such an effective and detailed policy framework for overseas training has been considered indispensable. Having a lack of such a policy framework, sometimes it has been noticed that different ministries and departments arrange overseas training or exposure programmes, and it has become the talk of the country due to the programmes’ questionable purposes and allocation of irrational

expenditure. Generally, every year the government has to expend a huge amount of public money for such international training or exposure programmes for government employees. Regrettably, it has been found that due to poor training management like lack of need-based training, proper selection of trainees, suitable training schedule with sufficient duration, overseas training or exposure programmes failed to bring a positive and satisfactory outcome of overseas training. The fundamental purpose of training is to acquire know-how, new skills, and competence for the greater interest of quality service. But due to traditional administrative culture and practices, trained staff cannot apply the acquired knowledge at their workplace in most cases. Consequently, the trained personnel feel isolated from the rest of the members and get psychologically demotivated at the workplace.

This study also highlighted such findings from the participants' point of view. To maximize the best outcome and better service-driven administrative mechanism, this study recommends some suggestions to make overseas training or exposure programmes more mission-driven and result-oriented for the recipients. The recommendations would be (i) offering overseas training on contemporary issues and need-based such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-related training, strategic management, and leadership quality build-up and there must be a provision of serving to a certain period after receiving an international training; (ii) selecting promising personnel for ensuring more participation of junior and mid-level officials who are likely to render a greater length of service and the selection process should be free from all kinds of departmental biases and favouritism; (iii) sufficient training duration in ensuring the best outcome; (iv) disclosing training evaluation report and linking training with career progression, and (v) ensuring the congenial working environment and the concerned authority needs to assist respective officers in every aspect of eliminating all possible barrier at the workplace.

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