

Restoring the Credibility of Bangladesh Public Service Commission: Major Challenges and Policy Recommendations

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Abstract

This paper primarily focuses on exploring the root causes of the irregularities in BCS Examinations and loss of credibility of the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (herein after BPSC). In particular, it endeavours to underline the structural, institutional and operational loopholes of the BPSC, and finally it comes up with a set of specific and effective policy recommendations. Since 1972, the credibility of the Commission has been subject of much debates and controversies. Information obtained from both primary and secondary sources form the basis of this paper, which have been supplemented by a series of discussion with key informants and review of relevant documents.

The findings reveal that only 1.85% respondents have expressed their full trust over the role of the Commission. The major irregularities identified are the leakage of BCS question paper, taking bribe for ensuring BCS job, changing or replacing exam scripts, changing marks, inclusion of the failed candidates in the merit list with bribe, calling candidates to BPSC immediately after the viva voce, and partisan recruitment of BCS cadre as per list sent from the high command of the ruling party, etc. However, the recommendations of this paper may be invaluable for the policy makers and stakeholders for undertaking suitable and effective countermeasures, and thereby to restore the credibility of the Commission.

1. Introduction

The Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC) is one of the vital constitutional bodies in Bangladesh. It has a very substantial role in promoting excellence in future public administration and good governance by selecting the most competent persons for the public services of the republic. The degree, to which the country will have professional, equitable, credible and efficient public administration greatly, depends on the integrity, effectiveness and credibility of the Commission. It has got constitutional and legal mandate to recruit 1st and 2nd class officers for the civil service of the republic through competitive examinations (GOB 1977, 1979, 1980, 1981).

The core idea of a public service is based on the philosophy of recruitment of civil servants on the basis of merit. The initiative of merit-based recruitment of civil servants in place of political patronage was first introduced in the Ancient Imperial China during the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), and was abolished by the Ch'ing dowager empress of the Qing Dynasty in 1905. The Chinese system was known to Europe in the mid-18th century, and it is believed to have influenced the creation of civil services in Europe (The Columbia *Electronic Encyclopaedia*, 2003). The first ever PSC of Indian sub-continent was established in British India on 1 October 1926 at central level and the Bengal PSC at provincial level on 1 April 1937 under the Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935 respectively (Ahmed, 1990:28). The BPSC was established on 9 May 1972 under the President's Order No. 34 by merging the entire set-up of East Pakistan PSC and the Regional Office of Central BPSC (BPSC Annual Report, 2005:1). The BPSC, like its predecessors in British India (i.e., Federal Public Service Commission) and United

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Pakistan (i.e., Central Public Service Commission and East Pakistan Public Service Commission), is a constitutional body. The structure, status, scope and functions are firmly based on the articles 137-141 of the Constitution of Bangladesh. However, during 1972- March 2007, BPSC has selected a total number of 41,413 persons through 27 BCS examinations (i.e., 39,431 persons) or equivalent type of exams (1982) in 28 cadres.

The selection of 1st class gazetted officers held in 1972 (e.g., Special Superior Service Examination for the Freedom Fighters, 1972 and for non-freedom fighters, 1973) conducted by the BPSC are still criticised for recommending partisan candidates. The partisan recruitment of BCS examinees, leakage of BCS question papers over the years and taking bribe by few Members, officials and staff of the Commission are among the most frequently raised allegations against the Commission, which have contributed to a massive erosion of trust and credibility of this constitutional body (Khan, 2002; Observer, July 26, 2005; *New Age*, 19 November 2005; *News Today*, 20 November, 2005; *Daily Star*, 2 September 2003). The Commission is also seen, to a great extent, the gateway of the ruling party activists/supporters to the civil service of Bangladesh (*Daily Star*, 31 January 2006; *Financial Express*, January 2006).

Existing literature (Sikder, 2006; Zafarullah and Khan, 2005; Ali, 2004 & 2002; Khan, 1998, Ahmed, 1990 & 1986; Siddiqui, 1996) and official reports (PARC, 2000; World Bank, 1996; MLCOS, 1982; ASRC, 1973; CARC, 1972) on the Commission has not covered root the causes, nature and extent of irregularities in BPSC.

2. Methodology

The empirical information was collected through an opinion survey and key informant interviews. A semi-structured questionnaire was used in the opinion survey. Persons who already faced at least one BCS Viva Voce were the population for this survey. Due to lack of availability of official records of BCS examinees, it was not possible to prepare a sampling frame. Under this situation, a total of 434 BCS examinees were selected through non-probability sampling technique like snowball method⁷¹. During selection of sample it was endeavoured to address all possible variations of the population. Secondary sources of information include constitutional and legal documents, gazette notifications, books, journals and reports. The empirical and secondary information were used to complement each other.

3. Empirical Findings

3.1. Irregularities in BCS Examination

The BCS examination is the gateway for entry into the civil service of the republic. It is also one of the most competitive job exams in Bangladesh. The study has found that only 3% BCS examinees come out as successful at the end of the examination. The findings of the survey reveals that about 60% respondents has opined BCS job as the most attractive and prestigious first class job, followed by 54% as a job with high social status and security, 42% as secured job and 20% optioned as job with possibility of financial solvency. Further, 30% respondents viewed the civil servants have scope to serve the people and country directly.

The existing irregularities in the whole process of BCS examination have endangered the image of this constitutional body. The activities of the BPSC have been a matter of question since the beginning of its operations in 1972. The findings of the survey also demonstrate a very poor level of trust over BPSC. Accordingly, only 1.85% respondents expressed their full trust over the role of BPSC.

The irregularities and corruption identified in the BCS examinees and key informants together with the opinion on these issues are given below:

⁷¹ Snowball sampling is a special non-probability method used when the desired sample characteristic is rare. Snowball sampling relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects. This sampling technique is often used in hidden populations, which are difficult for researchers to access.

The Bangladesh Public Service Commission: An Overview

- Constitutional Mandate: Article 137-141 of the Constitution of Bangladesh
- Legal Mandates: President Order No. 34 (on May 9, 1972), PSC Ordinance No. LVII of 1977, BCS Recruitment Rules of 1981, PSC Officers & Employees Recruitment Rules, 1990
- Provision of Chairman : 1 No. of Members: 6-14
- Total No. Chairman till date (1972-23 June 2007): 11
- Total No. of Members (1972 - 23 June 2007): 81
- Human Resource in the PSC Secretariat : 344 (first class 62; 2nd class 52; 3rd class 134; 4th class 96)
- BCS equivalent exams held during 1972-1981 : 7 (Cadre Service)
- Recommended through BCS equivalent exams : 1,982
- BCS exams held during 1982-2006 : 27 (Cadre Service)
- Recommended for appointment through BCS examination : 39,431
- Recommended for appointment through interview only: 18,011 (1972 – 2005)
- Recommended for appointment through promotion : 22,911 (1972 – 2005)
- Recommended for through transfer and ad hoc position : 24, 230 (1973-2000)
- Average time spent for each BCS Examination : 21.8 months
- Female appointments : 6,164 (20.73% in 19 BCS Exams, out of total 29, 728)
- Non-Muslim appointments (Hindu, Buddha & Christian): 3197 (10.45% including 5% tribal quota)

3.1.1. Leakage of BCS Question Papers

Allegations against the leakage of BCS question paper have become regular since the 24th BCS examination. Almost all the daily newspapers have covered news on the leakage of BCS question paper in the recent years.⁷² Among the respondents of the survey, 97.67% informed that the incident of leakage of question papers is true. The PSC is yet to take effective measures to track down persons involved in the leakage of question papers of different examinations it conducted.

After a strong student movement, an inquiry committee⁷³ was formed for investigating the leakage of the 24th BCS examination but the report of the inquiry committee has not been made public till today. The preliminary test of the 24th BCS examination was taken twice as the question paper of the earlier preliminary test was leaked out. "The Chairman of the examination committee is solely responsible for all the activities of a BCS examination. The leak out of question paper totally depends on the will of the persons responsible for conducting the particular exam. However, if BPSC Chairman and the Chairman of the examination committee take cautionary measures, the leak out of question paper is beyond the question."- viewed, on condition of anonymity, by few Members, Directors, and former Members of the Commission. The survey revealed that the corrupt employees (35%) and officials (29%), Members and partisan officials in the BPSC (28%), question preserver/distributor/deliverer (24%), student leaders/activists of ruling party (23%), the Chairman and few Members of the exam committee (20%) are mainly involved in the leakage of BCS question papers.

⁷² The Independent, November 19, 2005; The Financial Express, November 19, 2005; The New Nation, November 27, 2006; The News Today, November 20, 2005; The Daily Inqilab, November 20, 2005; The Ajker Kagoj, November 20, 2005; The Daily Jugantor, November 20, 2005; The Daily Janakantha, November 20, 2005 and December 25, 2006; The Daily Songbad, November 20, 2005; The Daily Bhorer Kagoj, November 20, 2005; The Daily Star, August 11, 2003; The Daily Bangla Bazar, November 20, 2006.

⁷³ The committee was formed with the then PSC Members Prof. Mohammed Mohabbat Khan as Chairman of the inquiry committee, Professor Hasanuzzaman Chowdhury and Professor Md. Mahfuzur Rahman.

3.1.2. Allocation of Seat in Groups with Bribe

As many as 91% respondents opined that they have seen or heard about managing the seating arrangement in groups with the help of the BPSPC 2nd and 3rd class employees. Such arrangement is done in exchange of bribes that varies between Tk500-1,000. Irregularity in allocation of seats for the BCS examinees in groups exists.

3.1.3. Ensuring Success in the Preliminary Test

According to 42% of the respondents, ensuring success in the preliminary test of BCS exam is done by changing the score of the preliminary test or exam script (i.e., OMR Sheet) once again. The candidates who are able to manage with bribe or the candidates on the list of the names sent from the high command of the ruling party can avail this opportunity.

3.1.4. Copying and Solving Questions Outside the Exam Hall

This is done by writing exam scripts with the support of books, guides and notes openly, copying from fellow examinees, collecting answers through mobile phone, giving proxy in place of the examinee, and collecting answers from the washrooms. About 43.5% respondents opined that they have either seen or heard of attending BCS exams by booking the exam hall with bribe or political influence. This is done by booking the rooms of exam centre either with bribe or political influence. A section of BPSC employees, vigilant and persons responsible for booking and arrangement of the exam hall are usually involved with this irregularity. The questions are solved by the persons who wait outside of the exam hall. It was also learnt that a section of the examinees usually hire person(s) to solve the questions.

3.1.5. Replacing Examination Scripts/Documents

From the key informants it is learnt that written scripts and OMR Sheet of the Preliminary Test can be changed with the help of some of the top level personnel, officers and employees of the BPSC. About 49% respondents mentioned about this sort of irregularity which costs Tk 3,000 - Tk 5,000 for each script. This is usually done on the exam day or immediately before the written script is sent to the examiner. Blank papers are also sent to the examinees from BPSC to solve the questions and submit again. Without changing the cover paper of the written scripts, the re-written papers are replaced by papers of the scripts except the cover page(s).

Seat Allocation in Group

“I have faced 24th and 25th BCS Viva voce, but I could not get job. I offered my friends to appear in the 27th BCS exam together with me. They responded positively and we managed a third class employee of PSC to serve our purpose. We gave him 500 taka each. We got our seats together in the 27th BCS preliminary examination. In the written test, we also did the same thing. But now we are planning about the viva and to get a channel to ensure our cadres.”

“Our team of 18 examinees attended at the 27th BCS Preliminary Test by managing our seats together... One of our friends had a relative, working as a 4th class employee at PSC (who helped)... We shared our answers jointly. It took taka 418 for each Member of our group.”

Source: Karim, 2007: 27

3.1.6. Failed Candidates on the Merit List

About 26.7% respondents also talked about this sort of irregularity. Usually, the examinees on the list sent from the high command of the ruling party are the beneficiaries. The amount of money either for getting general/good cadre⁷⁴ (i.e., BCS Administration, Police, Taxation, Customs etc.) or to get a position in the merit list (when he or she was unsuccessful in the exams) cadre varies between Tk.7-12 lac. But the amount depends on the negotiation capacity of the examinees. The partisan candidates have to pay bribe to the student leader(s)/leaders of the ruling party.

⁷⁴ The term 'Good Cadre' is often used mainly for the BCS cadres such as administration, police, foreign service, taxation, and customs and excise. These cadres are considered by common people as the most prestigious and powerful cadres in the civil service.

3.1.7. Corruption in Viva Voce

The partisan influence affects the whole viva voce. Roll number of the listed candidates is delivered to the Chairman/Member of the viva boards. The externals of the boards are also given instruction by the Chairman of the viva boards to avoid uncomfortable situation for the listed candidates. The listed candidates are usually asked easy questions while other candidates are asked critical questions. The findings demonstrate that about 31% of the respondents received non-cooperation and rude behaviour from the board members. It is also learnt that since the 24th BCS exam, non-Muslim candidates faced uncomfortable questions as well as rude behaviour from the board members.⁷⁵

3.1.8. Extra-ordinary Marks

Almost 79% respondents informed about the extraordinary marks given to the partisan and candidates under package contract. In such cases, 80-90% marks are given to the target examinees.

3.1.9. Calling Candidates to Commission after Viva Voce

According to 27% respondents the targeted candidates are called in the BPSC over mobile phone to meet with a certain Member at BPSC at a given time. The candidates are also asked to wait and meet with the Member at a specific time on the day of BCS viva. Upon the meeting the candidate is asked to pay a certain amount of money in order to confirm the job. The drivers, personnel assistants/officers/agents help the concerned Member(s) in this regard.

Attitude towards Hindu BCS examinees

An external (a professor of Dhaka University) of BCS viva board, reputed for his close connection with a leading Islamist party in Bangladesh and for his strong moral courage, decided to boycott the BCS viva board. He noted that one of the female meritorious students of his department who got first class in both graduate and post-graduate levels and had excellent performance in the viva voce. When she left the viva board, the Chairman of that board said, "This candidate belongs to 'H Group' (i.e., Hindu). She will be settled in India whenever she gets an opportunity. The country will be looser if we recommend her for a BCS job. So, we cannot give her higher marks."

This external was surprised and began to bargain to give her at least eighty percent in the viva voce as her performance was the best amongst all the candidates that day. But the Chairman of that board refused to do so. He tried his best to offer proper justice to that candidate but failed, as another Member of the board was in favour of the Chairman. Finally, he came out of the viva board and decided to keep himself away from any involvement with PSC in the future.

Source: Karim, 2007: 27

3.1.10. Changing Marks

About 65% respondents opined that the incident of changing (increasing or decreasing) of marks in the BCS examination occurs. According to the key informant, the pro-ruling party leaders/activists and the examinees under contract usually get this opportunity. The marks of the candidates are increased to such an extent that the contracted examinees get the BCS job. The changing of marks is usually done immediately after the completion of the initial draft of the merit list.

3.1.11. Leakage of BCS Results

This sort of irregularity is seen as a very petty corruption. According to 66.8% respondents a BCS examinee can easily get BCS result (e.g., preliminary, written or final) in exchange of bribe before it is published. Few members, officers and a section of employees of the computer and controller section are involved in this sort of irregularity.

3.1.12. Contract for Whole BCS Exam

As many as 57.8% respondents opined about the existence of this sort of irregularity in which a few Members of the BPSC and its officials at various levels have been involved over the years. Such package costs from Tk 2-5 lac for professional cadre and Tk. 5-12 lac for general cadre/good cadre. But the actual amount depends on the type of cadre, reference and negotiation

⁷⁵ A Member who resigned from BPSC in June 2005 was known for his preference for Muslim candidates and negligence of non-Muslim candidates. It is widely known that this Member used to ask the Muslim candidates questions from the Holy Quran and *Hadith*. Those who failed to give satisfactory answers had to face misbehaviour from this Member.

capacity or partisan linkage of the candidates. It is also learnt that a segment of personnel from all level at the BPSC, and leaders and activists of the ruling party high command and the party in general are integral part of such packages.

Table 1: Irregularities and Corruption in BCS Exam at a Glance: Respondents' View/Opinion

Type of Irregularities and Corruption	Response	Total Percentage	Total Respondents	
	Yes	No		
▪ Interference of government in BPSC	97.25	2.75	100.00	433*
▪ Leakage of BCS question papers	98.2	1.8	100.00	433*
▪ Seat allocation in groups with bribe	91.2	8.8	100.00	434
▪ Delivering BCS question paper to the examinees	59.0	41.0	100.00	434
▪ Copying answers in BCS Exam	43.5	56.5%	100.00	434
▪ Solving exam question papers illegally	35.0	65.0	100.00	434
▪ Giving exam by booking exam hall room	43.5	56.5	100.00	434
▪ Submitting exam script without appearing at the exam hall	21.0	79.0	100.00	434
▪ Ensuring passing in the preliminary test	42.2	57.8	100.00	434
▪ Replacing exam scripts	49.3	50.7	100.00	434
▪ Changing marks	64.5	35.5	100.00	434
▪ Failed candidates in the merit list	24.5	75.5	100.00	434*
▪ Giving list to the viva board members	90.1	9.9	100.00	434
▪ Extraordinary marks in viva voce	78.5	21.5	100.00	433*
▪ Calling the candidate to the Commission after viva voce	37.6	62.4	100.00	434
▪ Contract for good cadre/whole BCS examination	57.4	42.6	100.00	434
▪ BCS job based on political connection with ruling party	90.1	9.9	100.00	434
▪ Leakage of BCS results	66.8	33.2	100.00	434
▪ Whether written scripts are properly evaluated or not	35.7	64.3	100.00	414*

▪ Re-evaluation of the test and exams conducted by BPSC	83.9	16.1	100.0 0	411*
▪ Trust in BPSC's arranged examinations and tests	51.58	48.42	100.0 0	434

* Missing response

* A total of 434 respondents participated in this opinion survey

[Source: Karim, 2007:28]

3.1.13. Partisan Recruitment of BCS Examinees

The recruitment of pro-ruling party supporters, student wing leaders and relatives of the ruling party leaders is nothing new in Bangladesh. This practice has become a matter of open secret from the 20th BCS and onwards.⁷⁶ The Chairman and Members of the Commission can not ignore or overlook the request of the high command of the ruling party, as all of them have been appointed in the Commission purely on political patronage and loyalty. Accordingly, 90% respondents informed that they are aware about such instances where a list of candidates is sent to the Members of the viva board.

3.2. Diagnosed Factors Behind the Loss of Credibility of the Commission

A. Structural Loopholes/ Limitations

1. The PSC is not a truly independent and effective body. The ruling party has controlled the administrative, financial matters and its constitutional mandated functions since 1972.
2. The Constitution has not yet made any transparent procedure or legal mandate for appointments of Chairman and Members in the Public Service Commission. In fact, the whole process of selection of Chairman and Members has shown an absolute lack of transparency.
3. Under the Article 138(1) of the Constitution of Bangladesh, the appointments for the BPSC absolutely depend on the will of the Chief Executive of the country. As both the Chief Executive and Head of the Government in Bangladesh are from the ruling party, the Chairman and Members of the Commission usually also come from the same political affiliation.
4. The qualification and eligibility criteria are not sufficient for selection of competent persons as Chairmen and Members of the Commission. As a result, barring some exceptions Chairmen and Members have been appointed on partisan political consideration since 1972, making the Commission an outfit serving partisan political interests, and a recruitment agency of candidates aligned to the ruling party(ies).
5. There is no specific and effective accountability measure or legal provision for the Chairman, Members, and officials and staff of the BPSC.
6. Under the existing Warrant of Precedence (GOB, 1986i), the Chairman of BPSC is equivalent to the Secretaries of the Government (i.e., number "16"), and on the other hand, the rank of the Members of BPSC (i.e., number "20") is lower than that of the Additional Secretaries of the government (i.e., number "19") of Bangladesh. The undermined positions of BPSC Chairman and Members in the Warrant of Precedence have created opportunity for interference by the bureaucracy upon the BPSC in discharging its functions as mandated by the Constitution.

⁷⁶ Usually, the Office Secretary of the student wing of the ruling party of the Universities collect or receive photocopies of the admit cards/roll number of the candidates. He then makes a preliminary list and gives it to the President of University unit. The President then sends the list to the President and General Secretary of the central unit of the student's wing of the ruling party. The top two leaders of this central unit again verify the names in the list. After verifying, the list is sent to the high command or the ruling party office for recommendation. The ruling party high command receives similar kinds of lists from other protagonist professional bodies and party leaders. The list is then finalised and sent either to the PSC Chairman directly or to a Member of the Commission (Source: *The Daily Star*, 30 September, 2005).

7. The Commission has not yet determined its operating principles (i.e., vision, mission and core values). This deficiency has been considered as opportunities by the successive governments to sway from the core values of the public service of the republic.
8. The Parliamentary Standing Committee of the Ministry of Establishment (PSCME) has no specific scope, power and functions regarding the BPSC. Due to this gap, the PSCME cannot take any effective measure to combat irregularities in the Commission.
9. There is no provision for discussion on the annual report and budget of the BPSC in the National Parliament Session.
10. The corrupt Member(s) have never been brought under Supreme Judicial Council for their alleged involvement in irregularities. Under the existing legal provision, the Chairman and Members of BPSC can be removed from office like a judge of the Supreme Judicial Council⁷⁷. The reality is that it very difficult to remove or terminate a corrupt Chairman or Member.

B. Institutional and Operational Problems

11. The Commission has no capacity development programme for its staff. The Commission lacks manpower and technical skill while most of the huge task of recruitment related activities are still done manually.
12. The Commission suffers from inadequate human resources. The shortage of manpower is seen as one of the fundamental problems for carrying its mandated functions.
13. The BPSC gravely lacks modern technical support. Still the Commission has no comprehensive website of its own. There is also a serious lack of proper documentation. Thousands of applications of the examinees along with the documents in various exams conducted by the BPSC are kept in open space inside the BPSC building due to lack adequate office space and necessary materials. These documents are very often damaged by rain and insects, or get lost due to improper filing and unsafe preservation.
14. The library of the BPSC has not been modernised and the BPSC seems to have no plan to turn it into a modern library.
15. The Commission has to depend on the government of Bangladesh Press (or BG Press) to print question papers. There are risks of leakage of question paper in printing these outside BG Press.
16. Appointments, postings, rewards and punishments in the PSC usually take place on the basis of political consideration and with bribe. Pro-ruling party staff is usually transferred to the confidential and controller Section of the Commission immediately after taking over by a new government.
17. The internal recruitments, disciplinary and administrative issues of the BPSC are also influenced by the government.
18. The non-transferable nature of the job in the BPSC has in fact, created scope to form syndicates at different levels in the BPSC Secretariat. These syndicates are involved in earning unauthorised income by involving themselves in leakage of questions, contracting with the job seekers, helping ruling party supporters for getting job, etc for the last one decade.
19. Thousands of applications of the examinees along with the documents in various exams conducted by the BPSC are kept in open space inside the BPSC building due to lack adequate office space and necessary materials. These documents are very often damaged by rain and insects, or get lost due to improper filing and unsafe preservation.
20. The library of the BPSC is inaccessible to the common people.

⁷⁷ Under Article 139(2) of *The Constitution of Bangladesh* mandates that, "The chairman and other members of such a Commission shall be removed from office except in like manner and on he like grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court." Article 139(3) states that, "A chairman or other members of a Public Service Commission may resign his office by writing under his own hand addressed to the President."

C. Transparency and Credibility in the Examinations is Ignored

21. The examination system is archaic and outdated lacking the scope of proper assessment of competency of the candidates.
22. The examinations and tests conducted by the Commission since the beginning of its operations in Bangladesh has lacked in transparency, accountability and credibility.
23. The existing generalised exam system followed by BPSC is not good enough to assess the merit and competency of the job seekers in an efficient, non-partisan, equitable and credible way.
24. Because of lack of transparent assessment criteria for examinations there is scope of irregularities and corruption in the recruitment process. There have been blatant examples of partisan recruitments in important cadres like administration and police.
25. Irregularities happen in the recruitment of non-cadre posts more than that of the cadre posts. But irregularities in the BCS exams only come to the print Media.
26. No transparent guideline or manual has been followed for conducting the viva voce. As a result irregularities and corruption occur in viva voce of all exams conducted by the Commission.
27. Under the existing provisions no examinee can challenge any decision related to BCS or any other exam conducted by the Commission. The existing restriction on re-evaluation or re-examination of BCS result declared by the BPSC has created a great deal of opportunities for irregularities.
28. The access to information for the service-recipients of the BPSC is almost absent. The existing Official Secrets Act (Evidence Act, 1872, Official Secrets Act, 1923; GOB, 1979, 1975) have not only restricted the freedom of information to the service recipients of the Commission but also served as a safeguard for protecting the persons involved in irregularities and corruption.

3.3. Impact of Irregularities and Corruption in PSC

1. Politicization of public service of the republic.
2. Merit and skill have been sidelined by partisan political consideration as the basis of appointment to public service.
3. Public servants those who got through applying illegal process start their service life with corruption and have the logic and motivation to get involved in the same throughout.
4. Deterioration in the standard and quality of human resources in public service resulting in mediocrity or even lower level of efficiency.
5. Public Service is likely to remain, for many years to come, hostage to implications of low-standard and partisan officials appointed in a non-transparent and having imperatives and incentives to engage in corruption.

3.4. Policy Recommendations

A. Structural Reforms

Re-Constitution of the Commission

1. The BPSC should be reconstituted composing of a Chairperson, Members with impeccable professional excellence, political neutrality and undisputed integrity, efficiency and credibility.

2. A Special Committee should be formed, with special emphasis on its independence and effectiveness, to accomplish the above and recommend measures for reforming the Commission.
3. The ACC may be called upon to investigate into irregularities and corruption in the Commission.
4. Investigations should include all recruitments conducted by the Commission since 1972.
5. The corrupt officials should be identified and should be brought under judgement.
6. The Commission should also ensure appointment of efficient and credible Secretary for its Secretariat.

Independence and Accountability of PSC

7. The PSC must be granted full independence befitting the challenges facing it. It must have full authority in terms of administrative and financial control.
8. The Commission must have internal self-regulatory and transparency mechanism in place, while it must be externally reportable to the Parliament through the Standing Committee on Public Service.
9. Statement of income, expenditure and assets of the Chairman of the Commission, all its Members and staff, and their immediate family members must be declared for public information and regularly updated through website.

The Qualification and Eligibility Criteria for Chairman and Members

10. Must be persons of proven high integrity, strong moral courage, personality and commitment.
11. Must have knowledge and experiences of public administration.
12. Must be prepared to disassociate from any other position of financial benefit.
13. Must be non-partisan and non-communal with proven track record of objectivity and impartiality in judgement.

Transparent Selection Process of Chairman/Members

14. Legal mandate mentioning the selection criteria and appointment procedure of the Chairman and Members of the Commission should be made transparent.
15. A Search Committee may be formed for appointment of persons in all Constitutional bodies of the Republic without controversy. The committee may be comprised of 5 -7 members such as the Prime Minister, Chief Justice, Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament, Chairman of the Anti-corruption Commission, an eminent retired Civil Servant of impeccable record and credibility, a non-partisan and professionally acclaimed educationist/civil society/media person with similar credibility.

Rank and Status of Chairman/Members:

16. The status and rank of the Chairmen of the BPSC should be made equivalent to a Minister, and Members should be equivalent to the Judges of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.
17. The Secretary of the BPSC should be equivalent to the Secretary of the government.

Accountability of the Commission

18. Specific, effective and transparent accountability measures and line management should be ensured for the BPSC Chairman and Members, and its officials and staff.

Ombudsman for PSC and Public Administration

19. An independent and effective Ombudsman is felt necessary for the Commission and the civil service in general for settling disputes, dissatisfaction and allegations raised against BPSC and the civil service of the Republic.

Integrity Statement

20. Initiative should be taken to introduce Integrity Statement/Code of Ethics for the BPSC. The empirical experience from South Africa and other developed nations may be considered in this regard.

Citizen's Committee

21. A Committee of Concerned Citizens composed of persons with proven integrity, efficiency and commitment may be constituted to keep watch on the activities and performance of the BPSC and to suggest measures to make the BPSC efficient and honest.

Anti-corruption Hotline

22. A hotline (phone number or mail box) may be introduced in the office of the ACC of Bangladesh to receive all sorts of complaints related to irregularities and corruption of the BPSC. The Special Reform Committee on the BPSC and ACC may jointly explore the specific structure, and working procedure of this hotline.

Complain Box

23. The Commission should have a Complain Box to receive complaints and suggestions from the service receivers. All complains should be duly addressed and results made public.

Citizen's Charter

24. As per recommendation of the Public Administration Reform Commission (2000), a Citizen's Charter may be introduced for the BPSC. The Commission may undertake initiative in this regard. This sort of initiative will certainly contribute to restoring the credibility of the BPSC.

B. Reforms in the Examination and Recruitment System

Review of the Examination System

25. An Examination and Recruitment Reform Committee should be formed to modernise the examination and recruitment system meeting the challenges of the service for which recruitments are made.
26. The existing generalised exam system should be abolished and cadre-specific examination should be introduced to ensure efficiency and professionalism in service.

Measures for Credible Examination System

27. Measures should be taken to ensure equitable, credible and merit-based recruitment; complete abolition of partisan political or any other influence in the recruitment; specific needs of the various cadres and completion of exams within a very short period of time.
28. Examination system followed by IBA of Dhaka University and internationally reputed exams like GRE, GMET, SAT etc. may be considered in this regard.
29. A set of transparent guidelines must be prepared and publicly available consisting of the examination rules and recruitment process.
30. It should ensure a transparent and effective Guideline/Manual for Viva Voce.
31. The Commission should make a transparent guideline or manual (including distribution of marks in the viva voce) for conducting the viva voce immediately.
32. The examination system should ensure evaluation of all exams and tests by relevant, skilled and credible examiners.

Review of the Quota System

33. The existing quota system for freedom fighters and districts should be reviewed to conform to new realities.
34. At least 75% of places should be on purely merit basis, while the remaining may be distributed for affirmative action on the basis of gender, ethnic and religious identity.

Access to Information

35. The mark sheet of the successful candidates should be given to the examinees on compulsory basis immediately after the result is published. The result sheet of all examinees must be published on the website.
36. Existing restrictions against challenging the result of examinations should be abolished.

C. Institutional Reforms

37. A website for the BPSC should be set up containing all information that the citizens should know in order to restore the Commission's credibility and public trust.
38. Computerized data base and MIS should be established with all information of public interest publicly available through various means including website.
39. A Human Resource Unit should be established at BPSC, with special emphasis on training and capacity building of the staff.
40. Recruitment, postings and incentives – both negative and positive – of the PSC staff should be on the basis of academic qualification, professional skills and experience, political neutrality and integrity.
41. BPSC Staff should be recruited through independent and credible institution like IBA of Dhaka University.
42. The Commission itself may conduct a quick need assessment for identifying the required manpower, training programmes for strengthening the capacity of the staff.
43. Competent persons should be placed in the appropriate positions of the Commission. Necessary legal procedures should be made to ensure non-partisan appointments, postings, rewards and punishments in BPSC.
44. A network of corrupt officials has developed in the BPSC Secretariat. These syndicates are involved in earning unauthorized income by involving in leakage of questions, contracting with the job seekers, helping ruling party supporters for getting job, etc. The network is too strong for any internal disciplinary action. These syndicates corrupt staff should be identified immediately and necessary disciplinary actions be taken.
45. The Commission may take help from the ACC of Bangladesh in this regard.
46. Initiative should be taken to assess the assets and liabilities of the officers and employees of BPSC and their dependents through National Board of Revenue and regularly updated through the concerned body.

4. Concluding Remarks

The Bangladesh Public Service Commission is a vital public service delivery institution. The existing loopholes/limitations of the constitutional and legal mandates and procedures of the operations of the Commission have contributed greatly to open the frontiers of irregularities and corruption in the BCS exams and other activities of the BPSC as well. As a result, since 1972 the Commission has been considerably used as a convenient tool for serving the interest of the ruling parity (ies) and corrupt people as well. The credibility of the Commission has become endangered to a great extent. Today, it is only the will of the government that can make the BPSC really independent, effective, transparent, accountable and credible constitutional body. A Special Reform Committee on the BPSC may be formed to accomplish the above and recommend measures for reforming the Commission with special emphasis on neutrality, independence and effectiveness of the BPSC. The policy recommendations mentioned in this paper may be considered by the concerned policy makers and stakeholders for making BPSC really independent and effective and thereby to restore its credibility.

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