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CONTENTS

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|  | Page |
|--|------|
| Editorial                                      | 1    |
| Abstracts of the 7th ICPAD, February 5-8, 2020 | 3    |

## Editorial

This issue of the Bangladesh Journal of Public Administration (BJPA) contains the abstracts presented at the 7th International Conference on Public Administration and Development (ICPAD) held on 5-8 February 2020 at the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC). Keeping in mind the Agenda 2030 and the development challenges posed by the complex global order and climate change, and recognizing the critical role of the civil service in this situation, BPATC organized the 7th ICPAD with the key theme-‘the evolving nature of governance and development and the need for realigning the civil service.’ Academics, researchers, and practitioners from around the world overwhelmingly responded to the call for abstracts submission. All the submitted abstracts were peer-reviewed, and 128 of them were accepted for presentation at the conference in eighteen parallel sessions. On the other hand, the conference has four plenary sessions where some of the most pressing issues of our time are discussed from a broader point of view. Three internationally reputed academics and one senior most policy leader contributed to the plenary sessions as the man speakers. Renowned academics and senior level practitioners acted as panelists in these plenary sessions. This special issue of the BJPA publishes all the abstracts of the plenary sessions and accepted abstracts of the parallel sessions.

The key issues of the plenary sessions include (1) civil service in a changing time: reflections on inclusive growth, and social justice and moral compass in governance; (2) ensuring growth and managing inequality: revisiting the role of public policies; (3) ICT and public sector: implications for governance and development; (4) towards a new imagination for the civil service and its capacity-building approach. Practically, these four plenary sessions constitute the key premises for the conference.

The parallel sessions abstracts are clustered into eight sub-themes. Under the first sub-theme of ‘the evolving dimensions of governance and development and the need for recalibrating the rules of the game,’ thirty abstracts are presented. The authors of these abstracts discuss different challenging dimensions of governance and public service delivery using different country experiences. Some abstracts also focus on the challenging role of the civil service in meeting the need of the

time. The diverse and challenging governance issues presented in these abstracts include citizen participation policymaking, the private sector's involvement in development, corruption, inequality, gender equality, climate change issues, and so on. These issues, more or less, affect all countries, irrespective of their economic and social development. Country experiences include Bangladesh, India, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

Fourteen abstracts are presented under the second sub-theme of 'steering accelerated growth and managing inequality.' Few abstracts delve into the issue of increasing inequality through government activities in the context of Bangladesh. Some other authors have addressed the rural-urban and gender dimensions of inequality. Twelve abstracts under the sub-theme of 'agenda 2030 and the role of the civil service' are focused on issues of attaining sustainable development goals with specific reference to Bangladesh. The sub-theme on 'ICT and innovation in the public service' has eight abstracts. They discuss the impact of ICT on issues such as big data, procurement management, technological innovation, artificial intelligence, and e-governance. The next sub-theme is on 'strategies for improving the quality of public service' where twenty-seven abstracts are presented. These abstracts are on different tools for improving public services, including accountability, innovation, transparency, and citizen's charter among others. Some of them are on the impact of government-specific services and associated satisfaction of their service recipients.

The remaining two sub-sections are 'the need for a new approach to capacity building for the civil service in the SDG regime,' and 'cross-cutting development challenges' that present thirteen and twenty-four abstracts, respectively. The abstracts under the former sub-theme focus on issues of human resource practice and those under the later deal with issues that overlap different sub-fie

# **Abstracts of the 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Public Administration and Development**

## **Opening Plenary**

**Key theme: Civil service in changing times: reflections on inclusive growth, social justice and moral compass in governance**

**Alex Brillantes Jr**

*University of the Philippines*

*Asian Association of Public Administration*

*abbrillantes@gmail.com*

In most general terms, we shall discuss the various trends in public administration and bureaucratic reform in selected countries in Southeast Asia and South Asia, and other countries.

The diversity of public administration and civil service institutions in the region cannot be ignored. These include unique historical and colonial experiences that have influenced the ethos of their civil service systems including laws, systems and procedures to the size of the civil service and differing ratios of personnel in the bureaucracy to the population.

Based on our own work as an academic and practitioner of public administration and governance in the Philippines, we discuss the similar and unique features of public administration and vis-à-vis the business administration which influence the nature of the civil service. These include what we have called the “5 Es and an A” of public administration: economy, efficiency and effectiveness, (the classic 3Es) common to general management systems, and the emphasis on equity, ethics and accountability (2Es and an A) in public administration.

Various issues and concerns in the civil service system are also discussed. These include, among other things, corruption and the imperatives of strong accountability mechanisms; excessive and unnecessary rules and procedure (“red tape”) and a perceived bloated bureaucracy and the imperatives to reorganize, rationalize and right size the bureaucracy; excessive centralization and the imperatives to of decentralization.

These lead to a discussion of various areas of reform to bring about a

responsive civil service and strong institutions. The areas of reform that will be discussed include (1) reforms in institutions, structures and procedures and (2) reforms in mindsets, paradigms and behavior. These are to be enabled by leadership – which we characterize as phronetic leadership – of the duty bearers, and active citizen participation and civic engagement among the duty bearers. These would contribute to the attainment of Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS). The SDGs would indeed provide the uniting vision for inclusive growth, social justice interventions and moral compass in governance.

## Plenary Session Two

### **Key theme: Ensuring growth and managing inequality: revisiting the role of public policies**

**M Niaz Asadullah**

*University of Malaya, Malaysia*

*m.niaz@um.edu.my*

Macroeconomic growth has been instrumental in halving global poverty during the MDGs era. In the past, rapid growth helped narrow gaps in national per capita income between rich and poor countries. This contributed to a fall in relative income inequality at a global level. However, within country absolute income inequality is rising in most parts of the world, undermining the growth impact on poverty. Alongside the widening absolute income differences, inequality in the global distribution of wealth is very high. Aided by pro-rich economic policies, plutocracy in government is on the rise<sup>iii</sup>, undermining democracy and social mobility. Current level of inequality is considered to be extremely high. Growing gaps in absolute income has added to the world-wide pattern of rising relative income poverty. This can cause society-wide discontent in countries like Bangladesh where social mobility is low. Most developing country citizens consider success in life to be determined by outside forces beyond their control. This is also true for Bangladesh where most measures of inequality has registered an increase ;the number of ultra-wealthy people is growing fast. The country's success in various MDGs indicators and sustaining a high GDP growth rate contrasts with failure to tackle inequality.

Potential public policy responses include redistributive measures, social expenditure programs and better labor market regulations (e.g. minimum wages). The share of public expenditures in GDP and economic inequality is negatively correlated. But public spending on social services including education is low in most high inequality Asian countries. Poor service quality is another hurdle. Schooling does not translate into learning in South Asia ; quality of rural schools is low across institution type and grade. Inequality of educational opportunity in learning outcomes is wide. Educational attainments for the majority is decided by birth circumstances, often contributing to low intergenerational mobility. Such inequalities are further magnified by market forces. Above features of the education system

partly explain the widening income gaps at a time of rising schooling and falling extreme poverty even in high spending developing countries like Malaysia . Pro-rich tax policy do little to correct for inequality in market incomes. Malaysia's fiscal system have negligible impact on income inequality . All these result in low labor share in the GDP,, further reducing the impact of macroeconomic growth. Most high inequality developing countries also lack critical governance and administrative capacities . Raising the expenditure level alongside improving governance capacity in the social sector is a key policy challenge .



## Plenary Session Three

### **Key theme: ICT and public sector: implications for governance and development**

**Akhlaque Haque**

*The University of Alabama at Birmingham, United States*

ahaque@uab.edu

We are living in a data-world where each individual is a “walking data generator” (McAfee and Brynjolfsson, 2012). Data proliferation has revolutionized data driven decision-support techniques to understand and predict decision outcomes. In the industrialized world, data-driven decision support techniques are transforming how public administrators carryout their duties in implementing public policy mandates. These decision-support tools are not only changing how governments interact with citizens, they are also changing the priorities of governmental tasks as administrators battle with fiscal austerity and evolving governmental reforms. Technological advances lower the cost of measuring outcomes and thereby increase the incentive to collect more data. The floodgate of data has opened Big Data tasks – a phenomenon that allows tsunami of data to provide guidance and predictions related to human behavior and governmental operations. Walmart for example, produces 2.5 petabytes of data every hour from its customer purchase that is equivalent to 20 million filing cabinets worth of text. The idea is to develop algorithm rules that can predict in real-time the events that will ensue. This is the velocity by which we can let machine learn from individual behavior and predict what is expected, like predicting on how much food will be needed looking at the line in waiting. Similarly, with respect to public service delivery, how policy priorities will be set can depend on data availability and the frequency of issues related to the services provided by government.

How does Big Data revolution affect government and the government related activities in the developing countries like Bangladesh, and what can we learn from what we already know about data-driven decision-making techniques? The culture of data collection and evaluation for improving programmatic outcome is relatively unknown in Bangladesh. For developing countries, citizen data is more important than business data because development must be citizen-centric and not business-centric to avoid surveillance by business vendors (Haque, 2015).

Despite notable advances in E-government application there is no public data repository that provides support for data-driven decisions to support public administrators making better decisions. For example, mobile phone users in Bangladesh has surpassed 162 million making it one of the top 10 countries with mobile phone users (BRTC, 2020). Important strides by A2i Bangladesh has accomplished applications of mobile phone for generating data that are limited to eHealth, eMedicine, and various eBilling services. To improve administrative procedures evidence from citizens of their effort should be a priority for public administration. Hence, public administrative agencies should develop data culture to put emphasis on evaluation of administrative practices. Placing more focus on human relations, including empathy is essential to gaining the private understanding necessary to make decisions that will positively influence the lives of people who depend public services. Democracy is realized when people partake in decision-making by providing meaningful feedback. Human values that are embedded behind the data in stories and maps are often the afterthought; yet the human values are the bedrock of the democratic values that improve the human condition. If our goal is to better serve our citizens by creating knowledge that improves decision outcomes, we must invest in knowledge building that focuses on understanding human social relations and the network that binds them. We need to humanize the data rather than dehumanize (through coding) to fit the purposes of creating products through artificial intelligence that citizens will eventually consume. In other words, citizens should be part of the solution so that when algorithms are being created their feedback shapes the algorithm to improve service delivery. Data driven decisions that are citizen-centric, not only strengthens democracy but also helps public administrators become better servants by being aware of the administrative burden that citizens carry in order to receive public services.

## Plenary Session Four

### **Key theme: Towards a new imagination for the civil service and its capacity-building approach**

**Aly Shameem**

*Civil Service Commission, Maldives*

alysh@csc.gov.mv

Under the topic “Towards a New Imagination for the Civil Service and Its Capacity Building Approach,” the presentation takes the opportunity to focus and to set a tone for an exploratory discussion on the challenges faced by developing countries internationally in modernising and developing civil service due to globalisation, integration, and liberalisation. To conceive a strategy to overcome the challenges, this presentation calls for realistic and novel thinking towards negotiating a regime by World Trade Organization or International Labour Organization that would offer concessions or preferential treatment for developing countries to offset unfair or disadvantageous situation they are engulfed in the spirit of collaboration and cooperation.

In the second part of the presentation, it elaborates on the dwindling soft skills of civil servants, deploring of indigenous capacity and self-help approach in the drive for digitalisation and office automation with machines and robotics in the era of artificial intelligence, blockchain, and drones, which are leading to cordless, paperless, driverless, cashless and finally people less state of affairs. However, it could be well rebutted that soft-skills, indigenous capacity, and self-help approach were the founding principles of Asian societies and civil services, which flourished Asian civilization. Finally, the speech calls for reviving values, reforming mindset, and retuning to treasured indigenous capacity in motivating civil servants towards performance brilliance, building teamwork and grooming attitude towards service excellence, and building a proactive mentality for self-help approach towards innovation in overcoming challenges.