

Efficacy and Concerns of Technical Project in Bangladesh: An Assessment of the Managing at the Top 2 (MATT2) Project

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Abstract

Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) and developing countries receive various supports for their development and technical projects from developed nations and development partners. Bangladesh is no exception. Managing at the Top 2 (MATT2) is a technical development project that was designed in collaboration with the governments of the UK and Bangladesh and carried out in Bangladesh with funding of the UK. The primary aim of the project was to provide practical training for approximately 2000 top-level officials of the Bangladesh Civil Service to enhance their efficiency in developing and implementing innovative projects to deliver public services. In this paper, the purpose, process and results of the project are analyzed using a qualitative approach to understand the benefits and barriers of the project. It was found that MATT2 produced remarkable success, with 305 performance improvement projects (PIPs) were developed and implemented by the participating bureaucrats. Government employees were benefitted from practical knowledge on project preparation, skill development and the citizens were benefitted from the outputs. Although the project claims 100% success in terms of implementation, projects were influenced by some bottlenecks that include unsuitability of PIPs, lower reform value, monetary motivation and selection of project area out of the participants'

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jurisdiction. The authors suggest considering the intended and unintended consequences of the MATT2 to undertaking similar projects in the future.

Keywords: *Bangladesh; Civil servants; Development; Experiential learning; PIPs; Skill development*

Introduction

Bangladesh receives support for technical and development projects from development partners such as United Nations Organizations as well as individual organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department for International Development in the UK, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and so forth. Currently development partners are more likely to invest in technical projects rather than development projects in Bangladesh to develop human resources capacities through training and education (Hasler, 2006; Karim, 2020).

Managing at the Top 2 (MATT2) is a such technical project designed jointly by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and Department for International Development (DFID), which is now known as FCDO in the UK at a cost of approximately 23 million USD. The broad purpose of this project was to increase efficiency among selected government officials to enable them to deliver better services, disseminate knowledge and learning among fellow officials and create a critical mass of reform-minded civil servants who would be instrumental in enacting administrative reform from inside the Bangladesh Civil Service (Garavan, 2009; Karim, 2019; Majeed, 2011; Ullah et al., 2018). The MATT2 project is found as a project with the similar fate of such other policy initiatives taken by the government. As such, from the design to implementation, MATT2 is influenced by the theoretical assumptions. In Bangladesh any project or programme is affected by the political agenda, bureaucratic procedure, and more importantly top-down approach. Similarly, implementation of policy initiatives is usually done by the different actors such as street level bureaucrats, political entity, business community, local people and civil society organisations. Researches evidence that implementation is influenced by myriad factors where the input of a project contributes a lot.

Policy implementation is the political process dealing with the decision-making process that includes bargaining, exchanging and compromising among the interest groups (Burgess, 2012; Karim, 2022). Literature depicts those four key assumptions such as diversion of resources, dilemma of administration, deflection of goals and dissipation of energies serve as the grouped independent variables to influence the implementation of public policies (Bardach 1978; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). Resources are diverted through spending more taxpayers' money, which the implementers think as easy money to get and spend. This free flow of money encourages involved people spending for non-prioritized functions and eventually it compels people involved to indulge in manipulation. The deflection of goals results in implementation botch leading to policy flop as of pillion on that is the adding up more goals in the implementation process, up for grabs that policy mandate may have been the result of strong pressure on government to do something without thinking the real need. Different issues of administration expose as dilemmas in the environment contributing to the implementing policies. Tokenism is considered as the most important one that appears to benefit a programme element publicly while privately conceding only a small contribution. It also serves as the procrastinating any contribution as the inferior quality. Massive resistance from the implementer hinders the implementation by withholding critical programme elements, which is done through evading the responsibilities specified in the policy mandate. It is the product of self-conscious coordination or on numerous uncoordinated and independent derelictions that can often cause the control system to collapse entirely. The management game of holding authority and power at the central and manipulating some issues like budget authorities, government auditors and accountants, fiscal committees in the legislature leading to implementation delay thus makes policy failure (Bardach 1978; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). The dissipation of energies produces the outcome as the underperformance encountering to mandated goals. The tendency of thinking the issue as not our problem among the bureaus leads to failure, as they are the key performers of augmenting budget and utilising it. They do not want to expand the work thinking that it will increase their workload or create the difficulty to implement projects or bring controversy. This evasion of accepting challenge and keeping the extended work for others contributes to poor performance of the policy (Karim, 2021; Karim, 2022). However, if anybody works effectively and outperforms his teammates, he is treated as odd man and others try to get him out of the project. As a result, policy lacks motivated and innovative personnel to carry forward the project.

MATT2 has been a highly successful technical project in Bangladesh that has built the capacity of civil servants and enhanced the capacity of government institutions to adopt civil service reforms. However, the project has often been criticized due to its huge cost compared to its outcomes and the amount of effort or resources it consumed. These criticisms are based on the assumptions of implementation theory (Alam et al., 2014; Fernando, 2006; Karim, 2019). In this paper, the efficacy and concerns of MATT2 are assessed to understand what the civil servants of Bangladesh have gained from the project and what unintended and unwelcome consequences arose. Policymakers can utilize the findings and recommendations in this paper as they consider adopting similar projects in the future.

MATT2: Process, People, PIPs and Their Interaction

MATT2 was initiated with the financial assistance of the DFID. It aimed to train 2000 Bangladesh Civil Service officials ranging from Joint Secretary to Senior Assistant Secretary positions from 2006 to 2013 (Alam et al., 2014; Bowornwathana, 2000; Bowornwathana, 2010; Karim, 2008, 2019; Ullah et al., 2018). The participants of the project were the civil servants who developed workplace related Performance Improvement Projects (PIPs) during the four-month workshop and formally presented outcomes of the PIPs to a MATT2 monitoring panel for assessment against the performance-based key criteria. In order to bring changes in policy design and implementation process, PIPs were designed to be specific, measurable, attainable/achievable, realistic/rational in six weeks and implemented in four months. The duration is thought to be reasonable to bring substantial changes in the behaviour of implementers and beneficiaries.

There were forty batches of the participants in MATT2. Each batch was assigned to focus on problem-solving issues that could lead to reforms of the civil service. Participants were trained to understand and respond to clients. In the first three weeks of each section, teams of 6-8 members were constituted to develop the PIP focusing on an area with high reform value. Although it is not clear that teams were formed following the fundamental criteria of team formation, they were mandatorily given the task of designing and implementation project. Participants were at liberty to choose the area of undertaking PIPs that was influenced by comfortable area, not necessarily having the higher reform value. After identifying the area, they used to develop the project following a bottom-up approach based on the planning and

implementation cycle (Googin et al., 1990; Lipsky, 1971; Stewart et al., 1998; see Fig.1).

This bottom-up approach is different from the traditional top-down approach in the policymaking process in Bangladesh. However, implementation of PIPs followed the top-down approach for smooth and easy implementation so that team members could exercise power from the top. The street-level bureaucrats were obligated to follow the instructions of hierarchically positioned senior officials included in the team. The involvement of various stakeholders in the design phase enhanced the process.

All PIPs were designed and implemented in light of the four pillars of MATT2: (i) the individual participant, (ii) personnel around the participant who were supposed to work for PIPs, (iii) the participant’s organization and (iv) the clients who would be served or benefitted from the improved performance.

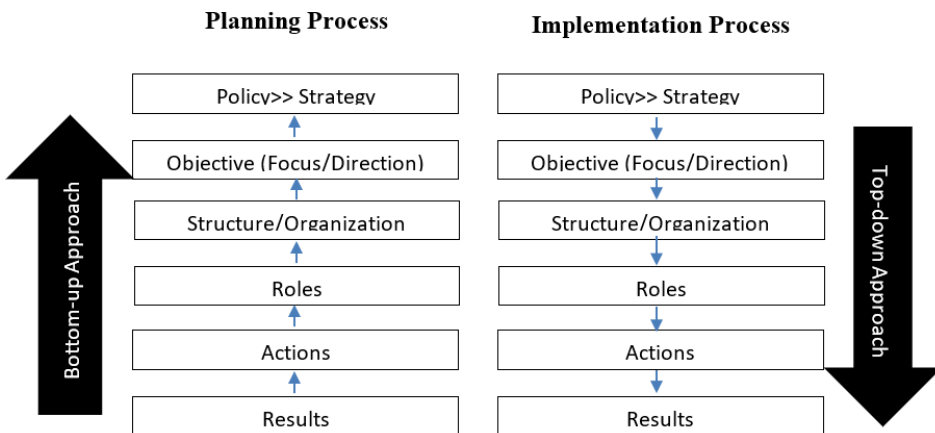


Figure 1: Planning and Implementation Process (Karim, 2008)

The four pillars of MATT2 epitomizes the capacity development and are significantly influenced by experiential learning approach. Participants gained practical knowledge and skills that they utilized in their day-to-day official work. Experiential learning is a process by which participants learn techniques that help them utilize their vast experience with reflective observation, leading to abstract conceptualization and experimentation (Alam et al., 2014; Editor, 2013; Gosen and Washbush, 2004; Kayes, 2005; Kolb and Kolb, 2008; Piercy, 2013). Experiential learning theory involves all the bases of the learning cycle such as experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting in such a way that that

knowledge is retained. This technique process assists the participants' personal growth as well as their knowledge acquisition including discovering their strengths and weaknesses through psychological tests and writing individual learning diaries to develop participants' action plan for how to overcome their weaknesses. Since individuals' learning experience is influenced by their beliefs, surrounding environment, power-infused authority and political context, their experience may be biased and may not always fit to the theory.

Civil servants are recruited by the Government of Bangladesh to provide better services to public through policy initiatives financed by public money. All projects' initiatives must be guided by the public interest. This means that government employees should understand citizens' needs and act accordingly. The MATT2 process encourages public servants to be pro-client and citizen-centric though bottom-up planning with significant involvement of clients (Karim, 2008, 2019; Majeed, 2011). The motivation of policy implementers is either financial or non-financial. Moreover, every team was assigned to visit disadvantaged citizens so that they could internalize the real-world situation and design pragmatic initiatives. These exercises helped participants understand their clients' problems by heart and motivated them to develop effective projects. The criteria of selection, initiation and implementation of PIPs helped bringing positive changes in the administrative process and outputs that ultimately benefitted people. However, there is no mechanism of evaluating to what extent clients were benefitted in terms of input-output ratio. Moreover, there is no system of impartial evaluation by a third party. The benefits were all reported by people who themselves benefitted from saying that their projects were successful.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected from multiple stakeholders, including five civil servants out of 1631, six trainers from 28, and two officials from implementing agencies. The term "civil servant" refers to those who participated in the training programme and implemented PIPs and SPIPs. Trainers being actively involved in the process, facilitated the participants to develop the PIPs. The Ministry of Public Administration and the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) were the implementing agencies to materialize the MATT2 project. A national consultant was also interviewed.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select interviewees from those who were associated with the MATT2 project. A list of participants, trainers and PIP team members kept at BPATC helped to identify and select interviewees. The selected participants were interviewed to identify aspects of the successfulness and barriers of the project. The interviews were conducted after the project was completed in 2013 so that the impact could be identified.

A thematic analysis was carried out on the basis of primary and secondary data (Creswell, 2013; Creswell and Poth, 2018). Since the study focuses on the MATT2 project, project documents including project pro-forma, project completion reports and summary reports prepared by the project office served as sources of secondary data. Project implementation-related research articles, implementation theory, learning theory and writings on MATT2 were also consulted. The criteria for successfulness and issues of failure matched with the secondary and primary data. The experiences of the authors as facilitators of the MATT2 project over the course of seven years provided additional data to analyze and interpret multiple dimensions to enrich the thematic analysis.

Results and Discussion

The gains as well as the unintended and unwelcomed consequences of the MATT2 project are presented in this section. According to the interviews and comments of consultants (both national and international), the participants and facilitators from the BPATC and Ministry of Public Administration gained numerous benefits, and citizens in general were benefited directly and indirectly from the implementation of the PIPs. The effects of the MATT2 project through implementation of PIPs were both financial and non-financial (Garavan, 2007). MATT2 is regarded as the most successful project not only in Bangladesh but also in the world because of its nearly 100% success rate of project preparation and implementation (Karim, 2008; Karim, 2019). As many as 1631 civil servants (including 225 women) were trained on preparing and implementing 305 PIPs since MATT2 was first initiated in 2008 (See Fig. 2). Additionally, a total of 361 civil servants (including 60 women, 16.62% of total participants) developed skills related to policy issues through the development of 71 SPIPs since 2013. SPIPs are the project initiatives with greater reform value undertaken by the top 10% of best implementers of PIPs. In the process of project participation, civil service members acquired theoretical and practical knowledge of project preparation and skills in implementation (Gibson, 2004).

In spite of claiming successfulness, the study conducted by Alam et al. (2014) evidenced the contradictory findings that 58 out of 82 PIPs were fully implemented, 20 were partially implemented and only 2 were not implemented.

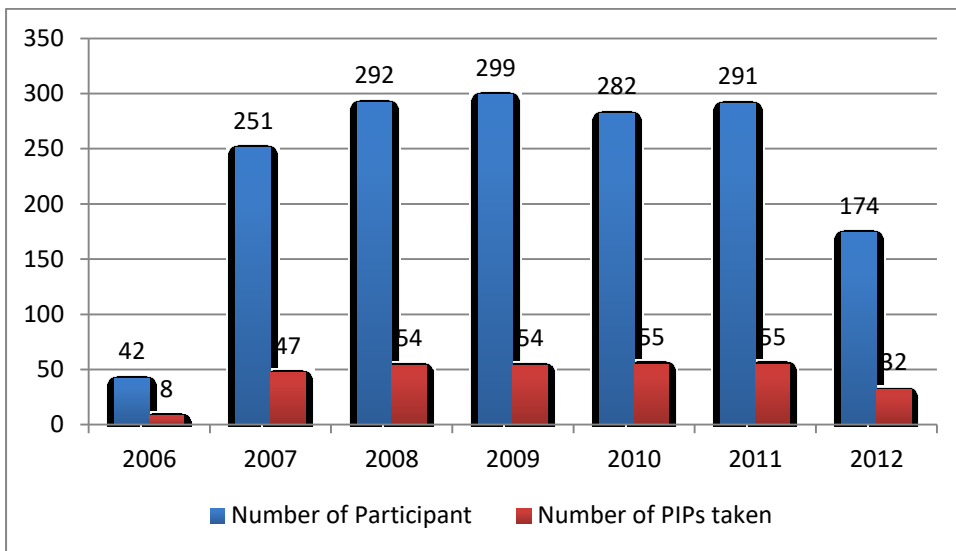


Figure 2: Number of participants and PIPs undertaken during 2006 and 2012 (Alam, et al., 2014)

To understand the efficacy and concerns of the MATT2 project, two PIPs (one successful and one unsuccessful) and are presented below as case studies. The participants of these PIPs contributed a lot to understanding the efficacy and concerns of the MATT2 project. Additionally, the explanation of two successful and unsuccessful projects was presented as case (Case 1 and Case 2) to depict the comparative picture.

The main purpose of each initiative was to develop capacity and bring benefit to the state and society as a whole. Each team member had the opportunity to think about bringing positive change to their workplace by undertaking an individual action plan meant to improve their workplace environment and individual capacity. However, these individual actions were not limited to the workplace, and participants could contribute individually or professionally to serve society and the poorer members of their particular community.

Based on the data, the efficacy (positive outcomes) of the MATT2 project were categorized as (i) input-output ratio, (ii) developed participatory training method for civil servants of Bangladesh, (iii) develop project management skills (iv)

competency-based team formation, (v) bottom-up approach-based project preparation, (vi) financial benefits for the participants/facilitators, (vii) facilitation of advanced training for women civil servants, and (viii) uplifting disadvantaged groups. The unintended and unwelcome consequences (negative outcomes) can be categorized as (i) confrontation among different levels and groups, (ii) conflict between participant and non-participant civil servants, (iii) negative effects on the host training institute, and (iv) unexpected results of the project. Both positive and negative impacts of the projects are discussed below:

Efficacy of the Project

The efficiency and effectiveness of the MATT2 project are characterized by individual and organisational capacity based on skills and knowledge, cultural orientation of business and a modern workplace development approach. This part is presented with the following thematic analysis as well as presentation of case 1.

(i) Input-output ratio of the Project

The MATT2 had mandatory provision of forming a 6-8 member team of civil servants and undertaking PIP and implement within four months. So each batch developed required number of PIPs, for example, total 305 PIPs were taken by 1631 participants in six years from 2006 to 2012. This 305 projects are about some changes in offering government services. The input and output ratio between the number of participants and PIPs is quite satisfactory.

(ii) Participatory Training Method for the Civil Servants of Bangladesh

MATT2 followed a participatory approach of learning, namely workshops where the participants having experience were the key persons to make comments to edit and modify their own PIPs or PIPs of other participants. The workshop format entailed several stages of presentation and further development that prevented boredom and created enthusiasm for doing more. The study revealed from the interviews with the facilitators that MATT2 had demonstrated that the participatory training method was very useful for learning and concentrate in training for the civil servants of Bangladesh. Finding out the effectiveness of participatory method of MATT2, BPATC has adopted this training approach to deliver other training curricula. Before MATT2 most of the trainings were based on traditional way of classroom lecture, which is less

effective for learning. Therefore, it can be interpreted that MATT2 enthused the trainers to take participatory training methods for the civil servants of Bangladesh. A facilitator mentioned:

No other training programmes like MATT2 can make participants more engaging in all activities. It is designed in such a way, they are bound to involve in all steps. Additionally, an eight member facilitation team assists them all time and stays around them to help their progress.

One of the interviews explained:

The MATT2 encourages and forces to take part in all actions, it allows to speak and contributes as they are given valued. The process asks to change team leader, presenter and team role so that their participation based on the skills or helps developing skills.

Case-1: Successful PIP

Title:

One Stop Service Centre for Urgent Endorsement of Passports in the Regional Passport Office (RPO), Dhaka

Description

This PIP is considered to be the most successful output of MATT2. It was initiated by the batch in 2007. The reform focused on minimizing the required time to get a passport and providing better service to citizens. Despite all government efforts, passport clients faced numerous difficulties and barriers such as the influence of Dalals (Brokers), lack of relevant information, deliberate delay, etc. This PIP aimed at eliminating these bottlenecks by rendering service with preferential treatment to women, the poor and the disadvantaged through a one stop service centre at the Regional Passport Office (RPO) in Dhaka. The specific purpose was to ensure expeditious disposition of urgent passport endorsement applications in an effective, transparent and time-bound way. The PIP achieved remarkable results. Replication of the PIP at the midpoint of its project life to other operational areas and to some other districts indicates that the project is replicable, achievable and time bound. It has also proved to be sustainable. In the process, the Dalals (Brokers) are in the process of being eliminated.

One survey revealed that the time required for disposition per case came down from 6.83 days in March 2007 to less than one day by September 2007. Currently, the PIP is fully implemented and is still been running. It is not only replicable in the passport service area but in other service areas as well. It is being, rolled it out in other regional passport offices.

Success factors

Highly motivated team members, demand from customers, especially the migrant workers, involvement of military in administration, use of information technology and demand for globalization are as the key success factors of this PIP. The PIP directly contributed to increasing foreign exchange and strengthening the livelihood of family members of migrant workers.

(iii) Project Management Skills

The development of project management skills necessary for mid- and top-level civil servants was an inbuilt mechanism of MATT2. It is important as they often act as the head of the development project in Bangladesh. However, according to the interviews, the participants did not actually have sufficient knowledge about project management when they initially took their positions. MATT2 project was an opportunity for them to learn project preparation, project planning, identifying stakeholders, recognizing risks, and mitigating techniques, testing feasibility, and implementing their projects successfully (Alam et al., 2014). One participant remarked:

This training is designed as result-oriented project that we have learned about how a project can be effectively designed and implemented within a specific time. We have learned practically through involvement of both trainers and training [contents and methods]. It also enhances our analytical skills.

Another interviewee emphasized that this type of training programme was a good fit with what they actually did in their jobs:

I think this type of training programme should be run as this demonstrates practically. At this level, we need to emphasize much on practically done training that blends our learning and experiences and produces better results.

Participants felt comfortable because the process helped them develop analytical skills as well. MATT2 also taught the participant how to present a project proposal effectively to persuasively the stakeholders and decision makers.. Trainers remarked that the process is designed in such a way the participants mandatorily were required to learn the project managements and presentation skills.

(iv) Competency-based Team Formation

MATT2 taught the participants on how to form competency-based team to implement a project. Under the MATT2 project, the PIP teams were formed based on individuals' interest on issues rather than hierarchical positions, which helped create teams with similar expertise on specific areas. Everybody on the team was required to take part and contribute to preparing the PIPs. This process utilized the potentials of individuals. Sharing responsibility among the participants was another advantage of the training approach since the PIPs process involved team building and individual's participation according to their level of competency. Participants were active both in team formation and explication of PIPs. This active involvement was partially due to their knowledge that if their PIP was successful or evaluated highly they would rewarded with a trip to the UK (Alam et al., 2014). Getting chance of visiting UK and adopting another PIP of higher reform value were evidence of their superiors' recognition of their hard work and better performance. One participant remarked:

At the very beginning, we planed and formed a team with our like-minded group so that we can smoothly and comfortably handle the project. However, the process of team formation did not keep that in-tact. Primarily, we were thinking the implementation, but the team latter formed based on area of interest, skills that helped utilize potentials. This process explored internal strength.

(v) Bottom-up Approach-based Project Preparation

Although planning process of policy initiative usually follows top-down approach, participants in MATT2 had exposed to learn development of a project based on bottom-up approach by involving multiple relevant stakeholders. In Bangladesh, the centralized decision-making process, top-down process in other words is usually followed that does not engage on the involvement of street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1971). MATT2 emphasized bottom-up approach for planning PIPs in consultation with stakeholders. In this participatory approach participation of stakeholders in project preparation create a belongingness of the stakeholder and thus facilitated a smooth implementation. One of the experienced facilitators mentioned:

MATT2 helped developing the project proposal following the bottom-up that philosophically teaches to value those people who are frontline implementers having all understanding of the ground reality. So, after project proposal is done, they are finalized with the feasibility test and consultation with the stakeholders who are working at the field level.

(vi) Financial Benefits for the Participants and Facilitators

There was a financial benefits for not only the selected MATT2 participants but also the facilitators because of their intellectual involvement. Selected participants and facilitators received at least 2400 USD plus round-trip travel grants to visit Thailand or Singapore (Karim, 2008). Although monetary benefit is considered the lowest level of motivating factors in any training, but according to the respondents it worked very well as every participant and facilitator received a significant amount of honorarium in addition to their salary. It was a strong motivating factor as shown by the fact that the number participants dropped from 45 to 22 when MATT2 reintroduced the programme without foreign exposure visit. Trainers of MATT2 and researchers of MATT2 found that financial benefits acted as one of the important motivating factors for joining the project as participant or facilitator. One facilitator remarked:

Apart from the capacity development of a trainer, the involvement with the training provides financial benefits in addition to salary.

The financial benefit created the significant differences in terms of getting benefits and realizing the philosophy of the project. A facilitator of MATT2 management said:

This is the only training course that never lacks of participants and it always fulfills the target, which is different from the other courses regularly run at BPATC. Probably the financial gain matters and a foreign tour as well.

(vii) Facilitation of Advanced Training for Women Civil Servants

MATT2 facilitated advanced training for the women civil servants. Before MATT2, there was a less scope for the female civil servants to take part in advance training programme and contribute in higher position. MATT2 had the quota of nominating women civil servants by the department for each batch (Karim, 2008). This option of MATT2 allowed many junior women civil servants with the senior civil servants in MATT2 training. Consultants and trainers opined that the project benefitted women because of mandatory inclusion. This indicates mandatory inclusion helps developing the less-advantageous group through positive discrimination. However, this creates obstacles for merit-based development and brings dissatisfaction among the potentials civil servants.

(viii) Uplifting Disadvantaged Groups

According to the respondent MATT2 created a scope of the participated civil servants to think of about the welfare of those who are the ultimate beneficiaries and taxpayers. PIPs were designed to serve the disadvantaged and vulnerable citizens. MATT2 trainers also arranged a visit to the vulnerable and disadvantage population in slum area, people affected by river erosion, prostitutes, tea garden workers, backward tribal community, elderly people and so forth to understand their socio-economic condition as well as incorporate women dimension in PIP that would seek for the short- and long-term solution of the problem. Consideration of poor women and their inclusion in any stage of PIP contributed to the inclusive development.

Concerns of the Project

Since the project was coupled with inherent important lucrative benefits for every participant, it had some setbacks. The respondents opined some concerns about the MATT2 project, which have been presented below. Reasons are also found in the case 2.

(i) Confrontation among Different Levels and Groups

The fair selection of participants for MATT2 was a concern for the participants as well as the facilitators. Bangladesh has 27-cadre service from which nearly all of the participants came from only one cadre service (i.e., BCS Administration) whereas most of the undertaken PIPs were related to the other services. For example, some PIPs pertaining to police and fisheries department were undertaken by the participant of administrative cadres. These PIPs were taken as the participants of the administrative cadre were in important position during implementation of the PIPs but once they left their position; the PIPs did not sustain. This is because people from other cadre services were not interested to implement the PIPs. The implementing agency officials thought the PIPs were initiated by the administrative cadres without the involvement of key stakeholders.

In addition, the selection of participants was criticized because of emphasizing one cadre officials and lack of transparency. About 75% of respondents mentioned that the selection process for MATT2 was not fair and transparent. In addition, because of the quota for women officers, many junior women officers got chance to participate in the training, which was not taken positively by many senior male officers. It seems traditional mental construct of male about female serves as the constraint which inhibits women development and creates difference between two streams.

Furthermore, as the enrolment in MATT2 required some conditions to fulfill such as minimum band score 5 in IELTS, priority to seniority and preference to women created another confusion. So, those who did not have the opportunity to participate because of obtaining low score in ILETS, they did not like MATT2 and its activities. This created conflict among the batches and cadres. This created conflict among the batches and cadres.

Lastly, experienced and competent faculty members from BPATC had the chance to be trainers and eventually got financial and other benefits which were not available for other faculty members. This was also an issue of concern since the conflict between the two steams of facilitators and general faculty members negatively impacted usual training programmes conducted by BPATC.

(ii) Tension Between stage 1 and stage 2 of MATT2 Participants

Participants having better performance in undertaking and implementing PIPs, had the scope of being selected for stage 2 where they got change to visit UK in addition to Singapore or Thailand. Participants of stage 1 always opined that they were deprived in term of monetary gain well as visiting a developed country like UK. Moreover, stage2 participants had the scope of undertaking projects with bigger impacts. Interviewers remarked that this created tension among the participants and induced a culture of influence to be included in the stage 2.

One experienced facilitator who had been involved since the beginning of the MATT2 remarked:

The main problem lies with the faulty design, particularly the evaluation process to select the participants for stage 2. Selection team emphasizes that participants are selected based on the evaluation of PIP, IAP and facilitator's marks, which is only 5% of the total marks. Similarly, other factors on which they are selected can be easily done by a third party. Moreover, the philosophy of MATT2 is to enhance capacity based on the performance objectively evaluated. Hence, the authoritarian role of the consultant team has a great influence.

Case-2: Failed PIP

Title

Introduction of monthly performance assessment to facilitate performance management in BPATC' aimed at establishing a system of measuring performance of employees to facilitate performance management in BPATC

Description

This PIP attempted to equip BPATC for the first time with little success, to regularly assess the employees under them monthly, provide feedback

immediately and thereby comfortably manage their performance. It was designed to achieve some results such as, i) System initially implemented for the Upper Division Assistants (UDAs) from December 2007; ii) The format designed encourages the supervisor to consider the gender and disadvantaged nature of the individual; and iii) The Office Order directs supervisors to consider the monthly assessment rating at year end as a basis of recommendation for honoraria. No impact has so far been recorded.

Reasons of failure

Key factors of failure of the PIP were faulty design, demotivated team members, transfer of team members, conflict between initiators and implementers, low reform value, lack of financial benefit for sustaining the project, lack of institutional drive. Failure of the project created conflict between the successful implementers and those who failed and thus created negative effects on BPATC as this institution was the key-role playing organization. Failure of team members belonging to BPATC posed a question of capacity that divided two groups among the faculty members.

Because of the design fault, there was a possibility of selecting such a person who had little contribution in formulation of PIP, and implementing it as well. Another interviewee rightly mentioned:

We have seen some of the officers who had little contribution because of their capacity, did not even present anything, which was also one of the factors, they were selected for the stage 2 that they did not deserve. This posed a question about entire MATT2.

The faulty selection process failed to select ideal candidates from BPATC

(iii) Negative Effects on Host Training Institute

The main goals and objectives of BPATC are to provide training, particularly career training for civil servants. Due to the MATT project, the BPATC suffered in a myriad of ways. This project employed very competent faculty members as facilitators and engaged them full time so that they were unable to devote sufficient time to the main purpose of the BPATC, such as conducting sessions and organizing training programmes including Foundation Training Course, Advanced Course on Administration and Development and Senior Staff Course. Here energies are dissipated because of project reputation, valuing MATT2 over

other programmes, engaging most important faculty members for performing at the project. Facilitators from BPATC remarked that because of fulltime engagement with the MATT2 during the development stage of the PIPs, employed faculty members had difficulty managing the other various courses of BPATC. A faculty member mentioned:

What I have seen MATT2 requires a team of eight members who are selected from the list prepared by the MATT2 project team based on some criteria such as, good command on English, higher analytical skills or promising faculty members. They are the best trainers of BPATC and contribute to every course.

MATT2 did not only engage best faculty members but also maintained long working hour starting from 8:30am to 6:30pm which means faculty members became tired enough and hardly got time to contribute to other activities of the centre. A facilitator told:

The MATT2 is designed in such a way the whole day keeps someone busy and the time you return home you become so tired of doing anything let alone professional development. Interestingly, MATT2 management deducts honorarium for being absence in the MATT2 workshop and conducting class in core courses of BPATC. Deduction of honorarium negatively affects BPATC and trainees are deprived of teaching from the best faculty members.

(iv) Unsustainability of PIPs

Alam *et al.* (2014) found that most of the PIPs were unsustainable: only 23 PIPs out of 68 and only 16 individual action plans out of 63 continued. Informants mentioned that the key reasons for this unsustainability were low reform value of the proposed projects, lack of inbuilt mechanisms for sustainability and the lack of jurisdiction of team members over the area intended to be benefited. Projects were left with civil servants who were not involved in the creation of the PIP, which failed to create ownership. The lack of ownership meant that the intended implementers tended to ignore the PIP because it was “someone else’s issue” rather than their own.

Conclusion and Implications

This paper presents an analysis of the efficacy of MATT2 project and the unintended consequences of undertaking this initiative. MATT2 is deemed as a successful project in terms of developing human resources of the public sector in Bangladesh. No other single project has successfully trained more than 1600 civil servants who are the key persons in policy making and implementation. Nevertheless, only about 81.55% of the targeted 2000 civil servants set in the project document were reached (Alam, *et al.*, 2014; Fernando, 2006). Through PIPs, civil servants got practical knowledge on how to design result-based projects; built skills in teamwork, leadership, analytical approaches, language efficiency, bottom-up project design and systematic analysis; learned techniques to find key stakeholders; and obtained financial benefits. They were exposed to other ways of doing things in different countries. However, not all areas of learning were appreciably enhanced because of the training.

The PIPs acted as reform initiatives for positive changes in the public service delivery. Every PIP was developed in consideration of stakeholders' benefits, the people of the country. Some of the noteworthy PIPs include materializing quick passport service, improving the performance of civil servants, establishing day care centre, creating woman-friendly working environment, establishing one-stop service, finding alternative development processes and mainstreaming women and vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, the sustainability of the PIPs posed a big question mark. Both primary and secondary data evidence that PIPs were designed in 6 weeks and implemented in 4 months and this structure could hardly build the sustainability mechanism. Moreover, the PIPs were evaluated based on output, not outcome or impact. There was a significant gap between outcome and resource utilization. Approximately 23 million USD was spent for MATT2 project but only few PIPs sustained and replicated (Alam, *et al.*, 2014). This supports easy money concept of policy failure (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). Furthermore, the politics of emphasizing particular group created new dimension of discrimination among various groups. In addition, key assumptions of implementation theory including diversion of resources, dilemma of administration, deflection of goals and dissipation of energies significantly influence the implementation of the MATT2 project (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984; Karim, 2022).

In terms of project sustainability of the PIPs, almost all were unsuccessful in the long run, mainly because the financial benefit served as the lowest level of motivating factor (Alam et al., 2014; Karim, 2019). Since the officials from the BCS (Administration) cadre are not posted for a long period of time in the particular office where the PIPs were usually undertaken, the projects were discontinued as soon as the team members were transferred. Even more plaguing issue was the exclusion of key stakeholders who were responsible for the sustainable project.

This design fault raises question about the effectiveness of the project. Since these key personnel were not included and did not enjoy the direct benefits of participating in MATT2, they were reluctant to carry over the changes. This exclusion not only affected the implementation of PIPs but may have led to massive resistance from various actors toward undertaking similar projects in the future.

Development and technical projects are undertaken to enhance development of a country where the first one contributes to infrastructural development and second one emphasizes software development. In other words, technical projects are designed to develop capacity of human resources so that they can significantly contribute to skill formation and initiate better projects. The views of participants support this statement. MATT2 was such a project to cover big cohorts of the civil service who would be serving the government for a long time and contribute directly and indirectly. However, the ultimate results of MATT2 are questionable because of poor project effectiveness, efficiency, efficacy and sustainability (Alam et al., 2014; Karim, 2019).

Therefore, governments should consider the negative aspects and consequences of engaging in similar training when considering similar technical projects in the future. Efficient utilization of resources is important when the country is aspiring to become a developed nation by 2041.

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The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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