

# RESTRUCTURING THE BANGLADESH SECRETARIAT : A TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT APPROACH

*M. A. Karim, et. al\**

## INTRODUCTION

The Rules of Business, 1996 defines "Secretariat" as "the offices of the Divisions or the Ministries which referred to collectively". In other words, it is conglomerate of all Ministries/Divisions. It is the highest seat of government administration where policies are conceived, designed, initiated and apportioned to field agencies for implementation. The primary function of the Secretariat is to establish among different hierarchical units of the government a formal network of authority, control, command and communication with a view to achieving an integrative approach to governance (UNDP 1999: 25). The decisions of the Government, both administrative and development, come about as a result of elaborate deliberations within the Secretariat (USAID 1989: 11). The Secretariat is ultimately accountable to the Parliament through the Ministers. The political Head of a Ministry is a Minister or a State Minister while the Secretary is the administrative head and chief accounting officer responsible for managing the affairs of the Ministry.

A Ministry could be made up of one or more Divisions. The Ministries can at least informally be classified as four types :

---

\* **M. A. Karim, et. al**, *Based on a Syndicate Paper. The group constituted M. A. Karim, Captain K.M. Iqbal, Psc., A.Z.M. Rafique Bhuiyan, Anil Chandra Singha, Md. Abdur Rashid Khan and Mainuddin Ahmed Chowdhury of the 26th Senior Staff Course (March 08 to May 21, 1998).*

1) Economic (Ministries of Finance, Planning, Commerce); 2) Development (Ministries of Education, Health, Road Transport); 3) Service-oriented or Welfare (Ministries of Relief, Social Welfare, Labour and Manpower etc.) and 4) Regulatory (Ministries of Establishment, Law and Justice etc.). While ministerial functions cross organisational boundaries, or consultation is required to enrich the decisions, the highest co-ordinating body is the Cabinet and its committees. Inter-Ministerial Co-ordination also occurs at the bureaucratic level (World Bank, 1996).

The functions of the secretariat and its structure are now widely criticised. It is very often said that the structure of the secretariat is very large. It is estimated that about 4.5% of our GDP is spent as wage bill of the civil servants. The functions of the government are also reportedly highly centralised in the secretariat. Decision making in the secretariat is also delayed due to bureaucratic red-tapism and **multi-tier chain of authority. Citizenry are becoming increasingly** critical about the quality of public services. There is also pressure from the reform minded politicians, the media as well as the donors for right sizing the government, to bring about improvement in the quality of public services and to ensure a stable macro-economic and market friendly environment for sustainable growth. The Government of Bangladesh may, therefore, have no option but to provide better services to the people so that they get value for money.

**As** such it is necessary to assess the structure and functioning of the Secretariat in order to deliver quality services to the citizens as per their aspirations in the context of total quality management (TQM), a relatively new concept of management, developed by the Western World but appropriately applied in many developing countries. Total Quality Management broadly aims at quality products services, cost reduction and total customers satisfaction. It focuses on use of problem solving tools to improve performance quality and productivity. It demands commitment and discipline and is a

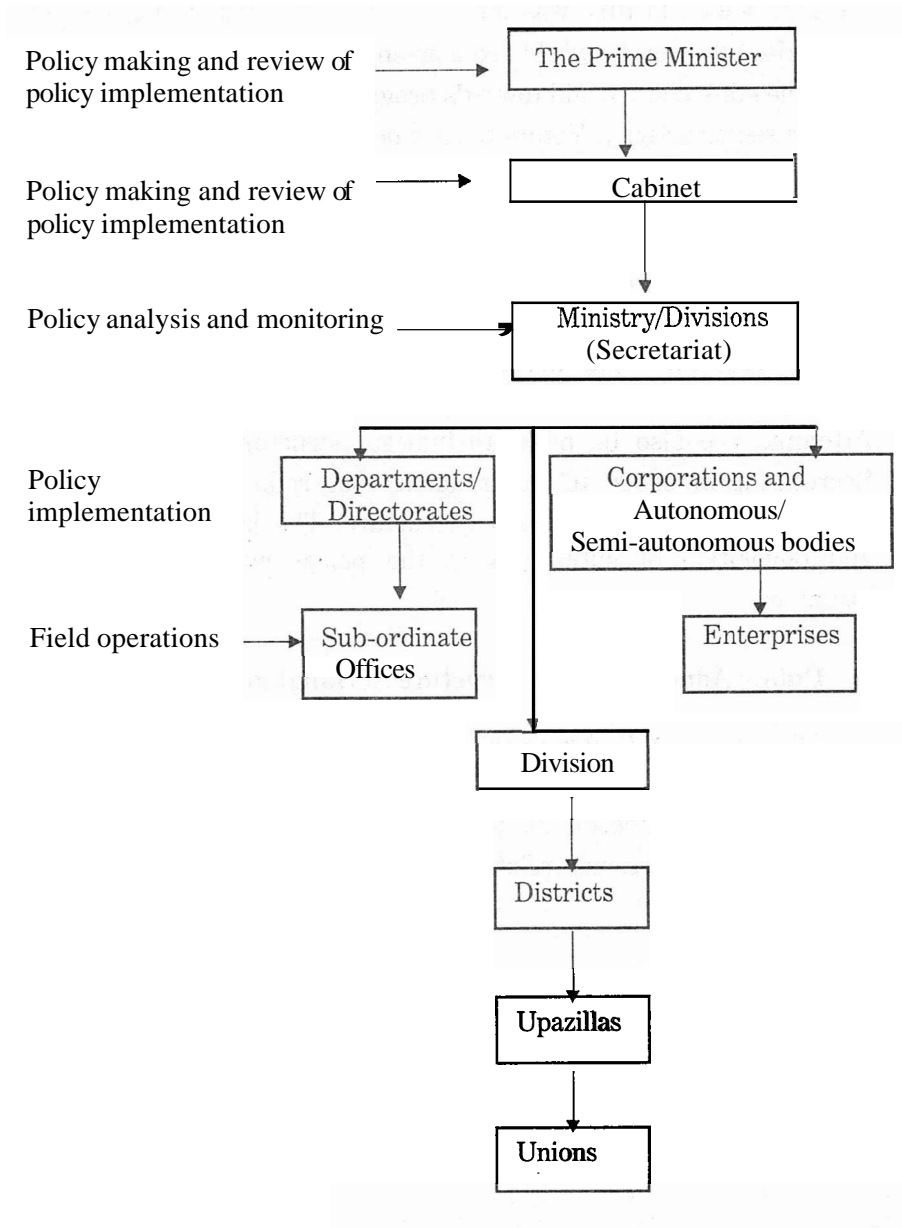
participatory approach of management which involves everyone in the organisation. The basic structure of the present Secretariat in Bangladesh has been derived from the administrative framework of Pakistan which in turn was inherited from the British colonial rule. Countries all over the world are now engaged in a priority shift away from the state control and towards programmes directly supportive of private sector activity. Voters too are demanding greater efficiency in the delivery of public services in the parliamentary form of Government.

The objectives of this paper are to examine the present structure of the Secretariat and the rules and procedures being followed for the delivery of services and thereby to find out the main constraints in the delivery of quick, efficient and quality services to the tax payers. Attempts are also be made to indicate structural changes in the Secretariat in order to bring about cost reduction and effective utilization of the administrative structure. The issues of delegation and devolution of authorities to the peripheries are also to be examined.

## **I. Public Administration Structure in Bangladesh**

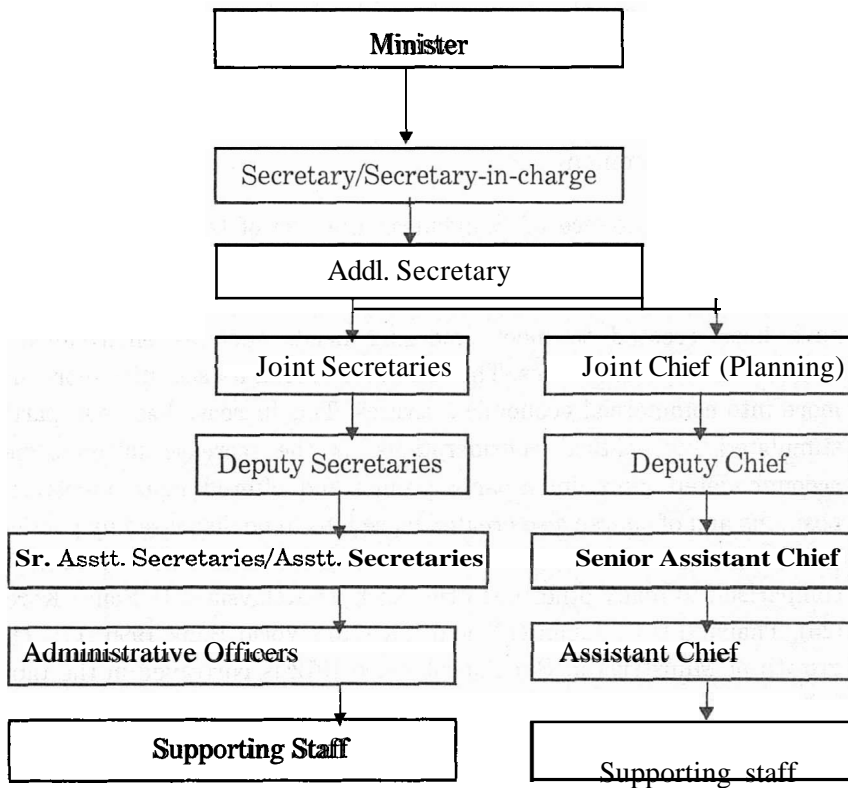
The role and functions of the Secretariat vis-a-vis the departments, directorates, sub-ordinate offices and public statutory bodies are delineated for the purpose of efficient working of the total system. This functional relationship is portrayed in the following diagram :

Diagram-1 : Public Administration in Bangladesh



The Secretariat in Bangladesh consists of **35** Ministries and 49 Divisions. The Conventional Organogram of a Ministry is shown in the following diagram.

**Diagram-2 : Organogram of a Ministry**



**Role and Functions of the Secretariat**

Under Article 44 (6) of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the President has framed the Rules of Business, 1996 for the allocation and transaction of the business of the Government. Rule 4 (IX) of the said Rules, defines the role of the Secretariat as :

- i) Policy formulation;
- ii) Planning ;
- iii) Evaluation or execution of plans;
- iv) Legislative Measures;
- v) Assisting the Minister in discharging his responsibilities to the Parliament;
- vi) Personnel Management at the top level;
- vii) Such other matter/matters as may be determined by the Prime Minister from time to time.

### Growth in Government

Since independence of Bangladesh the size of the government has virtually doubled with the increase in number of ministries/divisions, departments and officials. New ministries, divisions and departments have been created to meet emerging needs such as environmental concerns and women issues. The state also spread its activities more and more into commercial economic activities. This increase has been partly stimulated by political considerations as the increase in ministries accommodated more intra-party groups and offered more ministerial positions and of course also created more jobs to be dispensed by political leaders. The number of ministries in Bangladesh is relatively large in comparison to many other countries such as Malaysia (24), South Korea (25), Thailand (14), Japan (14) and UK (16) (World Bank 1996 :17). The growth of Ministries in Bangladesh since 1972 is portrayed in the table below :

Table-1 : Growth of Ministries

Year	No. of Ministries	No. of Divisions	No. of Auton. Bodies	No. of Deptt. and Directorates
1972	21	N/A	N/A	N/A
1975	20	N/A	N/A	N/A
1980	32	N/A	N/A	109/a
1982	18	44	109	181
1985	26	N/A	N/A	N/A
1994	35	49	139	221

Source: World Bank. 1996.

From the study by the World Bank about Reforming the Public Sector in Bangladesh published in July, 1996, it appears that there has been a doubling in the overall numbers of civil servants. Employment in the public sector increased from 4,54,450 in 1971 to 9,46,749 in 1992, i.e. at an annual compound rate of 3.6%; compared to the population growth rate of over 2.5% (World Bank, 1996 : 18).

**Table-2 : Employment Growth Civil Service**

	1971	1982	1992	1994	Rate of Annula Increase
Total	454,450	779,000	1,072,854	946,749	3.56%

Source : World Bank, 1996.

Of this, the total manpower working in the Secretariat may also be seen from the following table :

**Table-3: Employment Growth in the Secretariat**

Date	Class-I	Class-II	Class-III	Class-IV	Total
1.1.1987	1836	47	3817	2091	7791
1.1.1998	1910	50	3893	2191	4044
1.1.1991	2104	61	4586	2469	9220

Source : World Bank, 1996.

In fiscal terms, the cost of running the government has increased about 40% over the last decade. It was about 3% of the GDP in 1985-86 and about 4.2% in 1994-95. The increase in the cost of running the Government may not matter much, but what matters is the real value the tax payers gets in return and their perception of 'big' Government (World Bank, 1996 : 18). Most private citizens and many public officials and politicians believe that the government is too large in the sense that it is over extended. It is also too large in the narrow sense of employing redundant workers. The debate is now about the right size of the government.

## II. Resume on Restructuring

Our government is now following a policy of free market economy and privatization of public enterprises including taken over abandoned enterprises. By now the government has privatised 503 industrial enterprises. Vigorous efforts are underway to privatise most public enterprises and to switch over government activities to policy making, maintenance of law and order and providing infrastructure and support services for the development of private sector. In view of this, redefining of the role of the Government vis-à-vis right sizing the Secretariat seems to be a crying need of the hour. Moreover, if we look at the functions of different ministries it would appear that in many cases there are instances of overlapping of activities. For instance, Ministry of Industries is primarily responsible for Industrial Policy formulation and industrial development of the country. It would, however, appear that Ministry of Textiles, Ministry of Jute and Board of Investment are also doing similar work.

Previously there were about sixty eight (68) textiles mills under the administrative control of Ministry of Textiles and 72 jute mills were under the Ministry of Jute. Most of the textile and jute mills have now been privatised and Bangladesh Jute Marketing Corporations and Jute Export Corporations are no more in existence. As such there is little justification for having two separate ministries of jute and textiles. Over and above there is overlapping in the functions of Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Industries. It would be appropriate from the point of view of cost effectiveness as well as co-ordination and control if Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Jute and Ministry of Textiles are amalgamated. Similarly, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Youth and Sports can be merged together: Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry of Women and Children Affairs may also be grouped together. Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock and Ministry of Food can be amalgamated together as well. Ministries



of Education and Religious Affairs can also be merged together. Moreover, there is no justification in having Armed Forces Division and Ministry of Defence separately. There may be only one Ministry with Road and Railway, Shipping and Jamuna Bridge Divisions. Local Government Division and Rural Development and Co-operative Division should be tagged together. Finance, Banking and Internal Resources Divisions may be merged together and there may be only one Division for Planning, IMED, and Statistics. Since almost all development ministries have their own planning cells, Planning Commission may also be down sized. This would help reduce revenue expenditure and also bring about efficiency in decision making, co-ordination, control and monitoring of the government activities.

The functioning of the Secretariat is primarily guided by the Secretariat Instructions, 1976 (GOB, 1996) as amended till date. In the Secretariat Instructions, procedures for disposing of files are very clearly spelt out. It is stated in instruction No. 7 (c) of the Secretariat Instructions that a file should not ordinarily move more than two tiers excluding the Secretary for decisions. But in practice this is not strictly adhered to. Even-a-routine file for transfer of a class-II employee moves upto the Secretary for decision. This causes inordinate delays in the disposal of files. This also unnecessarily increases the workload of the Secretary as a result of which chief executive finds little time to devote his energy in the most important policy making aspects of his duty. Quality-of policy decisions, thereby, seriously suffers. The Secretary also finds it difficult to monitor and supervise the overall activities of Ministry/Division.

This sort of centralization of power leads to inefficiency and corruption. For ensuring quality management in public administration vis-a-vis Secretariat functioning, it is expedient to limit the functions of the Secretary to the task of policy formulation and overseeing the activities of the Ministry/Divisions. It has been observed that lack of self-confidence and hesitancy on the part of mid level and junior

officers about their own delegated authority and specified duties, often accompanied by jurisdictional and personal infringement by higher level into the affairs of lower level, contribute to the habit of pushing files up the hierarchy even in cases where the concerned officer is empowered to dispose the case. This is a serious problem and acts as a barrier to quality management in the working of the Secretariat.

Unless executive functions are totally devolved upto the level of Joint Secretaries and the Secretary acts as a liaison officer in the policy making process, confidence on the part of the lower and mid level officers cannot develop. And if the Secretary involves himself in every sphere of activities of his Ministry/Division he would be extremely overworked and the quality of work is likely to deteriorate.

The Local Government Institutions like Union Parishads, Paurashavas and Zilla Parishads previously used to function directly under the administrative control of the local District/Sub-divisional Administration. At the moment, their functions are directly supervised and controlled by the Local Government Division without giving these institutions any autonomy in their sphere of activities. As a result the Local Government Division is over worked. Moreover, for want of autonomy these local government bodies are not in a position to discharge their functions efficiently as per expectations of the people. Devolution of authority to the local government bodies will, in many cases relieve the concerned ministry from the burden of overwork and would help efficient discharge of the main function of policy formulation and implementation.

Another cause for inefficiency and delay in the disposal of business in the Secretariat is the indifferent and delaying attitude of the class-II employees working directly under the Assistant Secretary/Senior Assistant Secretary in the Sections. In the Secretariat every file is initiated by the class III employees in the

Sections. Moreover, the delay starts at the Receipt and Despatch Section also manned by class-II1 employees as letters communication received are not sent to the respective sections, while letters issued are also not despatched in time.

On occasions the Section Assistant does not bring the incoming mail to the notice of the Assistant Secretary/Senior Assistant Secretary in due time and at times some important letters are misplaced or kept hidden for corrupt reasons. The class-II1 employees in co-operation with the ministerial staff at times form associations and put pressure upon the officers for meeting their unjust and illegal demands. The abolition of these posts will cut down government revenue expenditure to a large extent. On the contrary, if the files are initiated directly by the Assistant/ Senior Assistant Secretaries, the disposal would be quicker and the quality of work would be better.

Another aspect that needs to be considered is the lower-level ministerial staff employed in the Secretariat. Members of the Lower Subordinate Services (MLSS) employed in the Secretariat practically have little work to do, other than creating nuisance. The most serious problems posed by them is unhealthy trade unions. This results in lawlessness, loss of work ethic, indecorous behaviour, unauthorised absence and generally in discipline in the office (Siddiqui 1996:86). The large number of MLSS not only has a negative effect on efficiency and the size of wage bill, but has also contributed to the problem of salary compression (The ratio of highest salary to the lowest). It is therefore, expedient that government should consider abolishing the posts of class-IV employees. As a measure, ten year moratorium may be placed on fresh recruitment of class-IV employees in the Secretariat and the posts falling vacant due to death or retirement of class IV employees may not be filled up. The government may also make an honest attempt to convert qualified class-IV employees into class-II1 employees whenever such an opportunity arises.

Total Quality Management in the Secretariat also requires placement of right person in the right place entrusting him/her with well defined authority and allowing him/her to remain in the same post for at least more than 3 years in order to extract the best out of him/her. Unfortunately now-a-days this is hardly followed in the Bangladesh Secretariat. An employee gets demoralised in case he is frequently transferred for no fault of his. As a result he is hardly in a position to contribute anything substantially.

The most important factor for quality management in the Secretariat is the personnel employed for delivery of-services. Unless this human resource is developed through proper in-service training both local and foreign, no attempt for restructuring would bring any tangible result. At present it appears that most of the civil officers working in the Secretariat are not properly trained. Moreover, the Government policy on training is not transparent and foreign training facilities are not properly utilized. In most cases, the trained officer is not posted to appropriate positions after training – which results in poor performance by the officer concerned.

It is widely believed that the officers, specially at junior levels, do not have a good grasp of the existing rules and regulations. This results in delay in decision making and serve as a constraint to speedy disposal of business. A major factor contributing to the decline in knowledge and insufficient familiarity with rules and regulations among the officers is due to lack of adequate training at the post-entry and in-service stages. The officers belonging to non-secretariat cadres display even lesser familiarity with rules and regulations. For lack of sufficient knowledge, the officers are unable to make or suggest appropriate decisions in appropriate manner.

Another feature of the present Secretariat structure is that job allocation amongst the Joint Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries are inadequate and sometimes disproportionate. The post of Additional

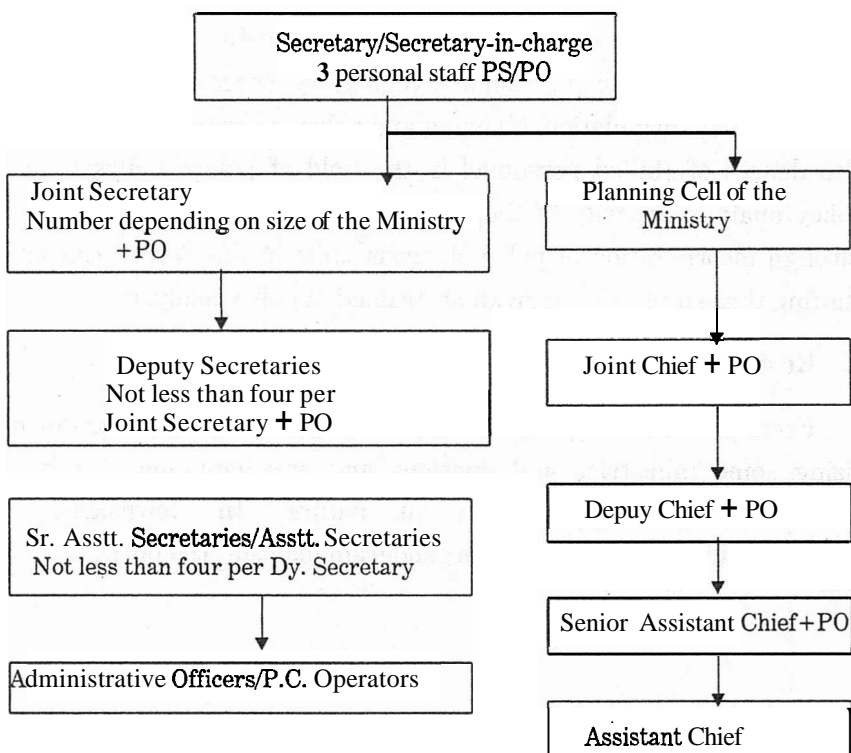
Secretaries in most of the Ministries seem to be superfluous and the job allocations to each tier need to be rationalised.

It has also been observed that ministries in the Secretariat are often busy with administration and regulatory issues and spend little time on policy formulation, planning and policy co-ordination. There is also dearth of skilled personnel in the field of policy analysis. The policy analysis capacity of the government requires to be improved through incorporation of policy analysis units in the Secretariat and staffing these units with individuals trained in policy analysis.

### **Restructuring of Set-up**

From previous analysis, it transpires that there is scope for downsizing some ministries and divisions and amalgamation of others whose functions are similar in nature. In downsizing a Ministry/Division the following organogram may suit the purpose :

Diagram No 3: Proposed Organogram of a Ministry in the Secretariat



Recruitment to the post of class-I11 and class IV employees may be stopped and instead one computer operator for every three vacant posts of office Asstt./Steno-typist may be recruited. This will help to bring in modern computer technology in office management and lead to efficiency. Existing administrative officers, stenographers and the steno-typist may also be given computer training for their proper utilisation in the organisation.

The following Ministries may be merged together :

Existing	Proposed
a) Wo. Industries, Wo. Commerce, M/o. Jute and M/o. Textile	a) M/o. Commerce and Industries
b) Wo. Agriculture, Wo. Fisheries and Livestock, M/o. Environment and Forest and M/o. Food	b) M/o. Agriculture, Food
c) M/o. Youth and Sports, Culture Affairs	c) M/o. Youth Sports and Culture
d) Wo. Social Welfare and M/o. Women and Children Affairs	d) Wo. Women and Children and Social Welfare
e) M/o. Education, WO. Science and Technology, M/o. Religious Affairs and Mass Education Division.	e) Wo. Education; Science and Technology.

Moreover, the following steps may be taken :

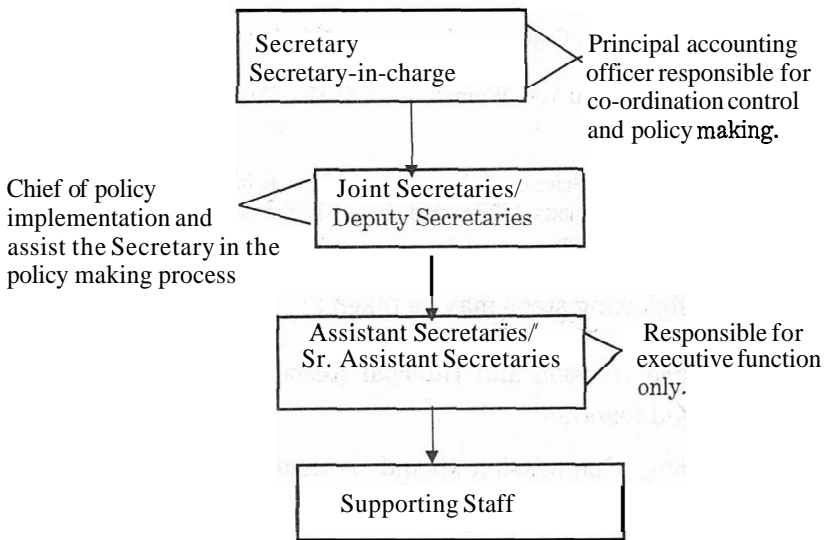
- \* Finance Division and Internal Resources Division may be merged together.
- Planning Commission should be made smaller with highly specialized economists and professionals, numbering not more than 30140 personnel.
- Where applicable, planning cell should be merged with the development branch/wing of the ministry and placed under a Joint Secretary/Joint Chief.
- The Local Government Division and the RD and Co-operative Division should also be merged.

\*If the above recommendations are accepted and implemented, this would cut down revenue expenditure to a considerable extent. This will also strengthen co-ordination and control in the decision making processes.

B. Procedural and functional restructuring

The following diagram depicts the restructuring of the procedural and functional structure :

Diagram No.4 : Functional Restructuring Proposal



%Allocation—of responsibility of every officer should be clearly assigned and should be consistent with delegated powers. Every officer will dispose of his business according to delegated authority and there should neither be any interference from any quarter nor any file be pushed upward unnecessarily. The Secretary's functions would be limited to mainly policy making, supervision and control. He will also assist and advise the Minister as and when required. A Joint Secretary will act a chief executing authority with responsibility for his work. This will develop confidence in disposing of business by officers at different tiers. Accordingly, the administrative and financial power may be re-delegated at every tier as this will ensure quick disposal of business and ensure efficiency.



### C. Restructuring of Civil Servants

#### Recruitment, Training and Promotion Policies

Quality of services mostly depends upon competent personnel employed in the delivery of services. Since Bangladesh came into being the government did not adopt any consistent policy for regular recruitment of qualified personnel in the civil service. In selecting highly qualified personnel, the examination for recruitment requires to be of very high standard and recruitment also must be objective. Unfortunately, after independence civil servants were recruited in large numbers for example more than 500 at a time in 1973 and 650 in 1982 through special nominal examinations. There is no denying the fact that quality of personnel can hardly be ensured if recruitment are in large numbers. As a result a large number of civil servants recruited in those two years are not of acceptable calibre. This sort of recruitment results in inefficiency in bureaucracy. We, therefore, ~~propose~~ propose that recruitment should be on regular basis every year and the examination should be of very high standard. Moreover, a limited number of personnel, say not more than 30 or 40 may be selected at a time and if necessary, recruitment may be made twice a year.

@Efficiency of civil servants also depends on regular in-service training relating to laws, rules and procedures for disposal of business, development administration and other current national and international issues. At present civil servants are not given adequate and appropriate training. Even in some cases—there are instances of posting before any training, which ultimately appears to be detrimental to the career building of the officers concerned. New entrants to the service are not supposed to know anything about the way of disposal of his/her business. He/she needs to be adequately moulded for the job. We ~~therefore~~ therefore, propose that Human-Resource Development (HRD) should be given topmost priority in making of civil servants efficient. Refresher courses should be organised on a

regular-intervals at different training institutes. And it should be made a criterion for promotion to the next higher post-(UNDP, 1993 : 14).

TQM approach requires participatory form of management in the disposal of business. At present we are lacking in this respect. There is hardly any attempt on the part of superiors to guide and train his juniors in the transaction of day to day business. The system for sitting down with all officers once a week to pin point the drawbacks, if any, may be introduced. The senior should also guide and teach the juniors so that officers are made skilled through an inbuilt-system. This will help overcome any future vacuum in superior positions. The policy analysis capacity of the government is required to be improved by establishing policy analysis units in the Secretariat and staffing these units with personnel trained in policy analysis.

At present physical facilities in the Secretariat are not properly planned and in some cases are insufficient for the size and personnel of the ministries. The logistic support (office equipment) are either deficient or improperly utilized. This problem needs to be solved by expanding physical facilities and rationalizing office layout and modernizing office equipment through introduction of micro computers, photo-copies-etc. Moreover, training of employees to use the new technology should also be arranged. Moreover, the present system of procurement of office equipment is rigid and time consuming and need to be changed.

## Conclusion

Total Quality Management (TQM) is an evolving competitive strategy for continuous improvement of products, process and services to enhance quality, reduce cost and improve productivity and total customers satisfaction. This approach is applicable mostly in manufacturing industries and it has successfully been adopted in the management of manufacturing sector in Japan. To what extent this

approach can be applied in the Secretariat Administration is yet to be experimented. Public administration is now being re-designed to render quality services to the tax payers at a minimum tax burden on them. The approach, we have proposed may help reduce government revenue expenditure, improve the efficiency and skills of the civil servants for doing right thing in right time to meet the expectations of the tax payers.

Bangladesh will face new challenges as it enters the 21st Century. The internal pressures from a rapidly growing, and a more demanding, electorate will fuse with the external pressure from a much more competitive global economic environment to create new opportunities and new demands (World Bank, 1996). The Secretariat as presently constituted, will not be able to cope unless the government creates adequate number of trained personnel capable of making the transition into the next century.

## References

- Al-Faroque, M.M. (1991), An. *Administrative Dictionary*, Para Parakasoni, Dhaka.
- Ali, A.M.M.S. (1993), Aspects of Public Administration in Bangladesh, Nilkhet Prokashani, Dhaka.
- Centre for Policy Dialogue (1993), *Reforming Public Administration for Improved Performance and Accountability*, Dhaka.
- Dubashai, P.R. (1986), *Administrative Reforms*, Delhi.
- GOB (1976), Ministry of Establishment, the Secretariat *Instructions*.
- GOB (1996), Cabinet Division, Rules of Business.
- GOB, Ministry of Establishment, Statistics of *Civil Officers and Staff of the Government*, Dhaka.
- Mahtab, Shahabuddin (1992), Some Relevant Topics on *Management*, Jamuna Printing and Publishing, Dhaka.
- Rahman, A. Shawkat Ali, A.M.M. Rahman, H. and Siddiqui, K.U. (1993), Towards Better Government in *Bangladesh*, Dhaka.
- Siddique, K.U. (1996), *Towards Good Governance in Bangladesh*, University Press Ltd., Dhaka.
- Sobhan, R (1993), Problem of *Governance* in Bangladesh, UPL, Dhaka.
- UNDP (1993), Report on Public Administration Sector Study in Bangladesh, Dhaka.
- USAID (1989), Public Administration *Efficiency Study*, Dhaka.
- World Bank (1996), *Government that Works : Reforming the Public Sector* Dhaka.