MAJOR MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN JAPAN AND BANGLADESH: A BRIEF ANALYTIC COMPARISON

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Introduction

Over recent years, Japanese style management practices have attracted considerable attention all over the world mainly because of its high productivity and efficiency (Iwata 1982: I). Scholars of Management and Administration are always curious about the salient features of Japanese style management practices. They often tend to compare management practices of Japan with those of their own countries. Because comparison helps management. systems improved by taking lessons from successful management practices on the one hand and provides avenues for further research and exploration on the other. Comparative management not only interested in finding out similarities and differences among various management philosophies, values, attitudes, and practices that has universal applicability (Chen 1995: 18). Researchers, Scholars, and practitioners in Bangladesh might also feel interested for comparing major management practices between Japan and Bangladesh. Hence, a brief analysis on major management practices in Japan and Bangladesh would likely to provide scope for research and exploration in the relevant field.

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Analysis is mostly based on empirical observation and secondary sources. Instances regarding management practices in both public and private sectors are provided for making the analysis a comprehensive one.

The Comparison

Both Japan and Bangladesh are situated in Asia. Geographical proximity might have contributed some common values, attitudes, beliefs and practices relating to management and administration in Japan and Bangladesh, though the productivity, efficiency and effectiveness of management remain poor and questionable in the later. It seems that relatively close, though not similar, management and administrative culture prevail in Japan and Bangladesh which can be evident from the works of Geert Hofstede. Cultures and Organizations, Software of the Mind he has operationalized culture into four dimensions: (i) power distance, (ii) individualismcollectivism, (iii) masculinity and femininity and (iv) uncertainty avoidance. He conducted survey among IBM employees of fifty countries and three regions of the world to find out the cultural influences on organization and management. Though Bangladesh was not within the preview of his survey, the features and characteristics of organization and management culture as identified by Hofstede in India and Pakistan, would help us locate the position of Bangladesh. In order to grasp cultural influences, it would be pertinent to briefly define the four 'dimensions of culture' as identified by Hofstede which in other way, would help us understand, similarities and differences between Japan and Bangladesh in terms of management practices.

Power distance is defined as 'the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organization within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally' (Hofstede 1997:28). Countries are located in small and large power distance index (PDI) scores. According to PDI scores, large power distance exists in Asian countries. The PDI scores found in India, Pakistan, and Japan are 77. 55 and 54 respectively. The position of

Bangladesh seems to be very near to these scores. Large power distance is characterized, among others, as highly hierarchical and centralize management, inequalities among employees, top-down communication, wide salary gap between top and bottom of organization, managers/administrators are highly respected and benevolent autocratic type.

Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: every one is expected to look after himself and his or her immediate family (Hofstede 1997: 51). Collectivism as its opposite, pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards is integrated into strong, cohesive in groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede 1997:51). Individualism and collectivism are measured by Individualism Index (IDV) scores. Countries having comparatively low IDV scores are characterized as Collectivist. India, Japan and Pakistan are referred as collectivist having 48, 46 and 14 IDV scores respectively. The position of Bangladesh can be guessed considering the above scores, which is likely to be collectivist. Collectivist cultures in organization and management represent comparatively strong bond and relationships between employer and employees where relationship prevails over task.

Masculinity pertains to societies in which social gender roles are clearly distinct (i.e., men are supposed to be assertive, tough and focussed on material success whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life). Femininity pertains to societies in which social gender roles overlap i.e, both men and women are supposed to be modes, tender and concerned with the quality of life. (Hofstede 1997: 82). These features are measured by masculinity Index (MAS) scores, Japan, India and Pakistan all fall within the masculine category having 95, 96 and 50 MAS scores respectively. And Bangladesh would very likely to be in masculine category. In masculine society, managers expected to be decisive and assertive while in feminine society, managers use

intuition and strive for consensus. Stress on equity, competition among colleagues and performance exist in masculine society.

Uncertainty avoidance can be defined as the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations. This feeling is, among other things, expressed through nervous stress and in a need predictability: a need for written and unwritten rules (Hofstede 1997: 113). Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) scores measure uncertainty avoidance. Japan is characterized as high uncertainty avoidance country having 92 UAI scores while Pakistan and India are labeled as medium to low uncertainty avoidance countries having 70 and 40 UAI scores respectively. The position of Bangladesh in terms of UAI scores would likely to be in between Pakistan and India. In strong uncertainty avoidance country, there are always emotional need for rules, even if these will never work, time is considered as money, such feeling as, if time is lost money is lost, emotional need to be busy and inner urge to work hard, precision and punctuality are felt will come naturally deviant ideas and behavior are suppressed, innovations are resisted, motivation is upheld by security and esteem or belongingness.

If we compare the above scores we find a large difference between India and Pakistan with Japan in terms of Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) scores and low difference in terms of other three index scores, although all three countries are considered having, more or less. same dimensions of cultures as identified by Hofstede. Since differences exist in India and Pakistan with Japan in terms of above index scores, there is every possibility that differences regarding management practices would also be found . visible between Japan and Bangladesh though findings of Hofstede cannot be all conclusive.

Decision Making

Decision-making in Japan tends to be centralized though decision making through group process and consensus is highly

practiced. There are certainly cultural roots of decision making, as the Japanese believe that wa or harmony, which constitutes the essence of Japanese life. Decisions thus reached can be carried out most efficiently (Chen 1995:184). Many firms practice consensus decision-making which promotes greater participation and democracy in the organization. Moreover, it tends to reduce the danger of a decision being manipulated by certain individuals, and because the decision is generally accepted, the implementation will be easier and more efficient. There are, however, a number of shortcomings associated with this process. Often too many people and sections get involved; too many meetings are held, with many unnecessary questions and suggestions raised. According to a report of the Japan Management Association, managers spend around, 40 percent of their time in conferences and meeting (Chen 187). This may significantly delay business decisions, which often require swift response.

Decision making in Bangladesh is highly centralized in most cases. Private organizations do have a system of consensus building with labor union members, but authorities prefer to take management decision at the top of the hierarchy keeping the members of the lower tier away. Decision-making tends to be topdown. Highly centralized decision-making process delays the decision output resulting in unaccomplishment of a particular job in many instances. Most of the decisions in the Civil Service of Bangladesh are actually made at the highest level. The delegated powers are exercised within narrow limits, especially by the middle and junior level officers for fear of contravening the decisions higher up as well as for lack of self-confidence and hesitancy to assume responsibility (Ministry of Establishment 1989: 12). As a reason, Civil Servants in Bangladesh prefer to push decisions to ever-higher levels, even when rules allow decisions at lower levels. The centralization syndrome is pervasive (World Bank 1996: 106). Furthermore, there is no particular incentive to take initiative and the perceived risks of making decisions outweigh both benefits and

risks of not making them (Ministry of Establishment 1989: 12). There is also strict adherence to rules and regulations which are the characteristics of large power distance and strong uncertainty avoidance cultures. Most of the decisions in the Civil Service are delayed because of over emphasis on rules and regulations. Moreover, because of over emphasis on rules and regulations and less initiative and creativity, most of the officials are found involved in too many meetings with limited real decision output.

Socialization and Egalitarian Groupism

With exchange of commitments, a substantive socialization process begins with the entry into a Japanese company. During the initial years. a new employee is constantly shifted between departments to learn job skills as well as the nature of the company's activities, its history and its culture. In this way, the Japanese company becomes a real family-type social organization. Moreover. a major feature of Japanese organizations is egalitarianism that as far as possible treats all members the same. Western companies usually have separate dining facilities for managers and ordinary workers. In Japan, except for the most senior executives, company cafeterias are not segregated. Despite sharp status distinctions in Europe, Japanese companies there have used common eating rooms with favorable results (Hayashi 1988: 109). While in Bangladesh, such situation and relationships seem to be very rare. High management staff would hardly mix freely with employees and laborers. Management tries to maintain an artificial distance from employees. Moreover, employees are also found striving for taking illegal advantage of the situation even if the management mixes freely with the labor-employee unions.

Lifetime Employment and Organizational Commitment

One of the striking features of the Japanese management system is lifetime employment which can be better described as long-term employment with a single firm. This system consists of several key components: direct recruitment from schools rather than from an

open job market, recruits are expected to stay with the company for a lifelong period and can in turn expect lifelong job security and recruitment is more focused on the general characteristic and abilities of potential employees than on a particular technical skill (Thomas 1993: 137). By recruiting some one, the company assumes the obligation of a family to take care of him for his entire career. Therefore, employees remain highly committed towards the company.

Like business organizations, public organizations in Japan try to promote a harmonious working environment, one in which the individual members can satisfy most of their life's needs (Jun and Muto in 1995: 127 cited in Jamil 1998: 190). Moreover, who enter the civil service in Japan are likely to remain with whatever ministry he enters. since lateral movement between ministries is limited. Such low inter-ministerial mobility promotes loyalty to a particular ministry rather than to overall public service (Heady, 1996: 259 cited in Jamil 1998: 190). A high level commitment to a particular organization makes the civil servants more loyal to organizational policies and its overall objective. Less mobility, however, also likely to enhance efficiency and expertise among the civil servants as civil servants have to work with similar nature of duties through out their career. But practice of lifetime employment seems to be changing in recent years. In Japan, 50 percent of new senior high school graduates leave their first job in three years (Lorriman & Kenjo 1996: 66). Even in many of Japan's largest and best-known companies, the continuing recession of the 1990s has forced the implementation of compulsory early retirements (Lorriman & Kenjo 1996: 152). Some estimates indicate that only 40 to 60 percent of those working in large manufacturing companies and trading houses are covered by lifetime employment (Sethi, Namki and Swanson, 1984 cited in Thomas 1993: 137).

Lifetime employment in its original sense, is not practiced in Bangladesh. Organizations whether public or private, do not recruit candidates directly from education institutions. Candidates have to face tough competition in order to secure any job in either public or in private organizations since the job opportunity is very scanty in Bangladesh. Moreover, employee mobility between organizations remains high, as there are always search for lucrative and betterpaid jobs. Therefore, employee commitment and dedication to a particular organization remain low. Only in Government Services, employee tend to stay for longer period usually twenty five to thirty five years, from joining till retirement, since government services are considered highly secured and socially respectable.

In Bangladesh, loyalty and commitment of civil servants is mostly respective specialized service based administration, taxation, customs, police etc.). This engenders loyalty to the respective services rather than to the organization (ministry or field agency) in which the civil servants work. Civil servants quite often move from one ministry/organization to another but their basic attachment is towards the respective service. Such movements, however, reduces loyalty and commitment of civil servants to any organization for which he or she temporarily works. It also creates obstacles in gaining expertise in specific jobs, which are designed for a particular organization to perform. Often, civil servants are transferred so frequently that they do not have enough opportunity to acquaint themselves with organizational policies and practices. A consequence of rotation of civil servants is more orientation to routine matters rather than engaging in novel or innovative efforts (Jamil 1998: 191). A major weakness of the Civil Service seems to be the frequent rotation of senior civil servants. This erodes the concept of accountability, losses the benefit of accumulated experience, and weakens commitment to the immediate task (World Bank 1997: 129). That is probably why Public Administration Efficiency Study which was conducted by the Ministry of Establishment, Government of Bangladesh. recommended reducing staff transfer or rotation by extending positing to 5 years in allied functional areas (Ministry of Establishment 1989: 3).

Recruitment and Training

In Japan. considerable care is taken while selecting employees. A complicated process is involved, ranging from academic examinations of candidate, investigations of the family background, and an individual history, to detailed personal interviews. The main considerations are general ability and the likelihood of fitting in (Thomas 1993: 137-136). New employees are given intensive training as well as more general induction into the firm's culture, covering such matters as its history and philosophy. Further training is provided during each stage of the employee's career, and is expected to be taken very seriously. For example, promotion to higher levels may depend on successful completion of the firm's promotion examinations (Thomas 1993:138).

While Japan's Civil service from its very origins in the late nineteenth century. has attracted the country's best and brightest, at least as measured by the nation's highly competitive educational system. Civil servants are recruited through a national testing system administered by the National Personnel Authority (Kim ct. al. 1995:8). Extensive internal training is available to civil servants. Through the system, most civil servants work long and hard, competing vigorously with one another for the rewards of promotion and ever higher and more responsible position. As a consequence, the personnel system in Japan's civil service works exceptionally well to attract, retain and train a highly skilled group of individuals. Throughout their careers, individuals are constantly engaged in a bounded, but quite real, competitive situation that encourages them to demonstrate high degrees of loyalty, diligence, and initiative (Kim et. al. 1995: 9).

In Bangladesh, no systematic procedures of recruitment are followed in most cases, particularly in private organizations. Though there do have system of recruitment through which meritorious and experienced candidates are preferred, but large

scope for favoritism and nepotism create obstacles for the real meritorious and experienced candidates in the private sectors. Training remains occasional and not well designed compared to Japan. Employees work mostly with their personal experience rather than with experience gained from organized training. Even if employees receive training in few cases, duration of training is very insufficient. Recently large private commercial banks, insurance companies, multinational companies and few large NGOs arc imparting systematic and well designed training to their employees but its percentage are meagre compared to the entire private sector. As a result, efficiency and productivity in private sectors, in general, remain low. It is often argued by conscious quarters that private sector in Bangladesh is not able to catch up with the pace of globalization and open market economy due to lack of well educated and trained manpower.

The position of civil service is no exception to that. Although civil servants in Bangladesh are recruited through an open competitive examination conducted by an independent Public Service Commission basing mainly on merit and quota system (district, women, freedom fighters, minority, tribals etc.), Civil service recruitment in Bangladesh, over the years, have been characterized by irregularities, inconsistencies and political interventions. These have had grave consequence for bureaucratic autonomy, performance, inter-service coordination, loyalty. commitment and integrity (Jamil 1998: 195). The training in civil service is also considered scanty and having less impact on the performance of the officers compared to what was expected. Efficiency of civil servants 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. But it seems that civil servants are not imparted adequate and appropriate training at present (Karim, et al. 1998: 81). Moreover, inappropriate posting of officials very often negate the benefits of training even if they receive need based training. World Bank Study Report says, "a fundamental issue is that the Government gives training a very low priority in its budget allocation And even when people are trained in a particular skill they often get posted to perform unrelated duties" (World Bank 1996:130)

Pay and Promotion

Pay and advancement in Japan are heavily dependent upon an employee's length of service with the firm. Rewards are awarded chiefly on the basis of seniority although individual merit and ability do play a part. On entry to the firm, each employee is given a grade higher or lower according to age. This grade determines the employees' basic salary, to which substantial bonuses may be added. For core employees, advancement within the hierarchy is automatic at the lower levels but becomes more competitive once the ranks of management are reached. To encourage flexibility, employees are discouraged from identifying with jobs. Their status in the firm is given by their rank than their job.

In the Civil Service of Japan, up to a certain limit, promotion depends on length of service although functional promotion depends on merit. Thus the system generates fierce competition for functional promotion, which is extremely important for later promotion to selective merit-based positions as well as for postretirement assignments (kim et. al 1995:529). Promotion takes place from within a lifetime career structure and again until the highest levels are reached, is relatively independent from politics (kim et. al. 1995:487). Prospects for promotion remains very bright as because retirement comes relatively early and with apparent grace leaving top positions free from gerontocracy and open to be filled by individuals in their late 40s and early to mid-50s (kim et.al 1995 :8). The general levels of status and remuneration accorded to civil servants, especially in the senior grades, are relatively high (kim et. al. 1995: 487). Furthermore, salary scales have been attractive, although not quite as high as they are in Japan's large private sector. These scales, as well as changes in them, are monitored by the National Personnel Agency, which makes recommendations for appropriate annual adjustments (Kim et. al. 1995: 529).

Like Japan. promotion in Bangladesh is also based on merit, performance and seniority although the prospect of promotion is large in private sectors compared to public sectors. While dealing with promotion. private sectors consider performance and seniority of employees although there remains the possibility of favoritism. A systematic, well organized and performance based promotion system are being practiced in most multinational companies, foreign banks insurance companies and large international fund based NGOs which are positively contributing to the overall performance and productivity of these organizations in general and to the upliftment of employee motivation in specific. Salaries are high and remuneration packages in general are lucrative in many private organizations compared to public organizations. Salary in the civil service is based on rank and corresponding grades in the national pay scales.

Table 1: Civil service and Private Sector Salaries in Bangladesh (Taka per month in 1995)

Post	Home Pay without Perks	Pay with Perk (a)	Comparable Private Sector (b)	Value in Taka Ratio: b/a
Secretary	13,080	27,000	176,000	6.5
Joint Secretary	11.000	22,000	107,000	4,9
Deputy Secretary	8.952	12,000	72,000	5.9

Note: Perk expressed in moneterized value.

Source: World Bank (1996). Bangladesh, Government That Works, Reforming the Public Sector, Dhaka: UPL. P. 120

In public sector, more specifically in the Civil Service of Bangladesh. the existing principal criterion for promotion is seniority-cum-merit. Although it is mostly seniority cum subjective preferences of the bosses (Siddique 1996: 92). Setting of irrational promotion criteria, irregular application of selection tests, subjective approach in performance appraisal and de-emphasizing the linkage of promotion to career planning have been the principal reasons for all the quandaries (Zafarullah et. al. 1995:9). More often than not, certain individuals either with political connections or because of their closeness to the chief executive have been favored while those with proven competence were ignored when it came to deciding promotions. This sort of manipulation adversely affected moral and impaired efficiency in many public organizations' (Zafarullah et. al. 1995:9), Moverover, prospect of promotion in Civil Service remains bleak because of unplanned and huge recruitment at a time and limited posts at the upper tiers. After independence of Bangladesh, 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 (Karim et. al. 1998:81). Moreover, it has been observed that almost 1000 officers had been recruited during 1985-86 only in one service. There is no denying the fact that quality of personnel can hardly be ensured if recruitment in large numbers take place within such a short period of time.

Welfare Benefits

Japanese firms provide a wide range of welfare benefits. These may include financial assistance with housing and education, medical services, free transport and social facilities. Generally, about one-third of the total annual compensation is paid in the form of a semi annual bonus during the traditional gift-giving seasons at mid year and year-end (Whitehil 1991: 179 cited in Chen 1995:193). Japanese compensation system helps make the Japanese company a much more egalitarian and integrated organization than most of its western counterparts. While in Bangladesh, although welfare benefits are being offered by both public and private organizations, the extent of these welfare benefits tend to be very

insufficient and cannot act as a strong motivating factor for employee sincerity and efficiency.

Management-Subordinate Relationship

Management subordinate relationship in Japan is very cordial which is often cited as something outstanding that not only provides new employees with on the job training and role models, but also established a personal bond between superiors and subordinates (Clark 1979: 126 cited in Chen 1995: 189). Subordinates know that superiors will protect them if something goes wrong, and are more willing to be fully devoted to the work. The relationship is not restricted to business, as the partners are expected to discuss their personal lives with each other as well. One of the former Japanese ambassador to the UK, Hiroshi Kitamura, in a lecture entitled 'European Trends Seen From the UK', said that 'What the British really appreciate in the Japanese is their management-label- relationship rather than her production technology or management know-how. In Japanese-owned firms in the UK, not a single day has been lost through strikes' (Lorriman & Kenjo 1996:231).

While in Bangladesh, it has been observed that few multinational companies and large -scale industries operated under foreign direct investment encourage better labor management relationships to create a congenial environment for the management. Such better management relationships have contributed positive impact over the performance of such organizations. But the percentage of such better labor management relations seem to be very low as clashes and tussles between management and labor unions are often reported. Public enterprises in Bangladesh suffer mostly due to poor labor management relationship. Many economists opine that one of the factors that are responsible for the poor productivity of state owned enterprises in Bangladesh is poor labor management relation. A hostile relationship very often coexists between management arid employee even in large organizations like Bangladesh Power Development Board, Jute Mills, Fertilizer companies etc.

Production Methods

Although employee and personnel practices have usually been seen as the most distinctive elements of Japanese management. there has been a growing recognition that Japanese production also of considerable importance, Japanese manufacturers have sought to eliminate waste, inefficiency and errors from manufacturing operations by emphasizing total quality control (Oliver and Wilkinson 1988 cited in Thomas 1993: 140). To achieve this, a combination of techniques is used such as 'just-in time' methods 'tight in process controls' and 'quality circles'. The key elements of just-in-time system are: small batch sizes, reduced material handling. level scheduling, low inventory levels, and production control. The system removes slack from production such as (1) safety stock to protect against poor quality and inadequate forecasting; (2) excessive machine capacity to cover long set-up time requirements; and (3) under utilized labor because of poor planning and scheduling (Srinivasan 1990:95). This approach combines the seemingly conflicting objectives of low cost, high quality, manufacturing flexibility and delivery dependability (Srinivasan 1990:95). Finally, Quality circles are small groups of people who do similar or related work who meet regularly to identify, analyze and solve product-quality and production problems and to improve general operation (Whitehall 1991: 238). Objectives of quality circle activity include quality and productivity improvement, but also personal training, improved morale, leadership development, and job enrichment (Whitehall 1991: 238).

While it is very difficult to identify and describe specific production methods which are being followed in Bangladesh. Although few studies have been conducted on specific industries/companies, specific production method, which has wide

applicability. seems to be difficult to identify. There is no denying the fact that most of the industries and companies in Bangladesh suffer from poor productivity and inefficiency. But it is not merely because of the production method itself, socio-political and economic environments of the country are largely responsible for poor productivity and inefficiency. Bangladesh's overall production environment is characterized by volatile political situation, inadequate infrastructure, frequent power failures, labor unrest, rampant corruption, natural disasters etc. (Ahmed, M.U.2000:12). However, many companies and industries in recent years, are being inspired by modern management concepts like Management by Objectives (MBO), Total Quality Management (TQM), although impact of these methods are yet to assess. Moreover, concepts of New Public Management also being considered in recent Public Sector reform efforts.

Average working hours

Average working hours is comparatively higher in Japan than most Western countries, which considered by many management experts, have contributed high growth and productivity. Shifting to an annual basis. excluding overtime and absenteeism, the Japanese worked 2,192 hours, compared with 1,850 in the United States and an average for fifteen Western countries of 1691 (Whitehall 1991: 188). The average official weekly working hours in Bangladesh would be near about 40 hours. But it seems to be less than 40 hours in practice.

Table 2: Average Weekly Working Hours in 1986

Japan	46.0
United States	40.7
West Germany	40.4
France	38.6
UK	41.6

Source: Whitehill, Arthur M (1991), Japanese Management, Tradition and Transition, London: Routledge, P.188.

Unequal Participation of Women

One of the striking features in Japan is that participation of women in public or private sectors are very marginal and unequal in comparison with male counter parts, despite having the fact that Japan is one of the developed countries in the world. Cultural factors seem to be major reasons for the unequal and less participation. It is argued by many scholars that Japan is one of the most male-chauvinistic countries in the world and few women can yet expect to reach senior positions in their careers. An opinion poll in 1986 by a leading Japanese daily newspaper, the Asahi Shimbun, showed that 68 percent of Japanese men are not prepared to take orders from a women boss under any circumstances. Less than I percent in EEC countries and 35 percent in the United States (Lorriman & Kenjo 1996: 74). In Bangladesh, although job opportunities remain equal and special quota is preserved for women in both private and public sectors, participation of women is far below than their male counterparts. In 1992, out of total public sector employment, only 8.2 percent were women. This is despite the reservation of quotas: 10 percent for class I and II posts, and 15 percent for class III and IV posts (world Bank 1996: 129). However, the percentage of women in government services is gradually increasing. Out of total 9,30,391 government employees (working in the Secretariat, Directorates and autonomous bodies), the number of women employee was 99,380 on 1997, and the percentage was 10.64 approximately (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2000: 152). While the proportion of women taking the examination for jobs increased over this period, there was no substantial corresponding change in the proportion of women selected. Socio-cultural barriers, lack of motivation and education etc, are often cited as major reasons for unequal participation of women.

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