

Problems of Urban Local Government Functionaries: The Case of the Secretaries of Pourashavas in Bangladesh

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***Abstract :** Pourashavas are engaged in the provisions of compulsory municipal service facilities like construction and maintenance of roads, disposal of wastes, street lighting, water supply, sanitation and drainage etc. Chairman and Commissioners of Pourashavas are responsible for taking policy- decisions in this respect. But implementation of their decisions actually depends on the efficiency of the Secretaries, the head of administrative department of Pourashavas. The Secretaries have prospective socio-economic background in conducting their duties and responsibilities properly. Unfortunately, they are working with a lot of service related problems and limited facilities. Most of them have to suffer with unequal job status and insufficient and irregular salary. They are transferred to a long distance from their home district. Due to lack of specific 'job description' a conflict between generalist and specialist is often observed in Pourashavas. Chairman and Commissioners impose political influence upon the Secretaries if they deny doing any illegal work. They have lack of specialized training. Their provident fund and gratuity are not properly maintained. Moreover, they are not promoted timely. After 5 years completion of service the authority does not approve their selection grade. They have lack of modern office equipments. It is difficult to ensure coordination among other local authorities working in Pourashavas. To solve the above mentioned problems of the Secretaries of Pourashavas the government will have to take policy-decisions to reform Pourashava Ordinance, Service Rules, Business Rules, Provident Fund and Gratuity Rules. Upto April 2005 there were 298 Pourashavas, which are increasing with rapid urbanization in Bangladesh. So it is about impossible for 'Poura-Section' of the Local Government Division to*

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supervise all Pourashavas. Hence, it is necessary to set up 'Pourashava Directorate' under the Local Government Division for the supervision of Pourashavas. It is expedient that if we can resolve service related problems of the Secretaries of Pourashavas, it will surely enhance their job satisfaction as well as the capacity building of Pourashavas that will ensure increasing demands of the city dwellers. It will also be helpful to meet the basic needs of Pourashava functionaries as well as the challenges of 21st Century for effective and efficient urban local governance in Bangladesh through strengthening urban local government institutions.

Introduction

Pourashava (Municipality), an institution of urban local government, is responsible for providing municipal service facilities to the urban inhabitants of Bangladesh. A Pourashava consists of a Chairman, Commissioners and Woman Commissioners for reserved seats. They are elected directly by the people on the basis of adult franchise for five years. So, permanent officials are essential for continuous service, proper implementation of urban develop programmes and managing daily works of Pourashava administration under the leadership of people's representatives. The Secretaries of Pourashavas are performing the above-mentioned tasks as head of the administrative department of Pourashava.

Under the supervision of elected representatives, the Secretaries are conducting their duties and responsibilities like office management, financial management, personnel management etc. for effective service delivery to the Pourashava dwellers. Moreover, increasing population, rapid unplanned urban development activities and various civic needs in Pourashavas are creating an enormous pressure on the daily works of the Secretaries. The service of the Secretaries is prescribed under the Pourashava Ordinance 1977, the Pourashava Personnel Service Rules 1992, the Pourashava Business Rules 1999 and their subsequent amendment. Unfortunately, the Secretaries have to conduct public interest related job with various problems and limited facilities under existing rules and regulations. In April 2005, there were 225 Secretaries out of 298 Pourashavas in Bangladesh.

According to the Pourashava Personnel Service Rules 1992, the Secretaries are classified into three categories, viz. Class-A, Class-B, Class-C on the basis of the class status of respective Pourashava. The Secretaries of Class-B and C Pourashavas belong to low job status. They have pay scale not at par with their duties and responsibilities as head of the administrative department of Pourashava. In fact, there is unequal job status in three departments, viz. administrative, engineering and health, family planning and conservancy. The low status of Secretaries and their respective departments hamper effective co-ordination among the departments of Pourashavas. It is assumed that the Secretaries have to work under mental pressure due to fear of transfer as recommended by the Chairman of Pourashavas. They are not promoted in due time. Some of them have to suffer from irregular payments also. After completion of service, their payment of provident fund and gratuity are also uncertain. Moreover, the Secretaries discharge a lot of works but there is no specific 'job description' for Secretaries under the existing ordinance, entitled business rules and service rules (NILG, 2003: 91).

The problems as faced by the Secretaries in their work place also indicate the problems of sustainable urban development administration in the Pourashavas. Therefore, strengthening urban local government institutions and their capacity building require the solution of problems of urban local government functionaries specially the Secretaries of Pourashavas. In this background, present research is an initiative to know the socio economic profile of the Secretaries and explore their service related problems and also presents their suggestions for overcoming their constraints. This research work is based on a case study on 110 Secretaries of Pourashavas in Bangladesh.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the present study is to know the nature and dimensions of service oriented problems of the Secretaries of Pourashavas and to develop policy-decisions for overcoming such problems. The specific objectives of this study has been laid down below:

- i. To describe the service conditions of the Secretaries of Pourashavas in general perspective;
- ii. To analyze the socio-economic conditions of the Secretaries of Pourashavas;
- iii. To explore the problems of the Secretaries of Pourashavas in performing their official duties;
- iv. To present the opinion and suggestions of the Secretaries of Pourashavas in designing policy-decisions for overcoming their problems in service.

Methodology

The present research is an exploratory one to know the problems of the Secretaries of Pourashavas using both primary and secondary sources of data. The secondary approach is helpful in demonstrating the origin, structure and functions of the Pourashavas and service of the Secretaries of Pourashavas in general perspectives. Review of Pourashava ordinance, rules, documents, books, journals and monographs are used as secondary sources of data. In the first half of 2005, the National Institute of Local Government (NILG) under 'Strengthening Programme of National Institute of Local Government' decided to organize an exclusive training programme on "Pourashava Administration" for the Secretaries of Pourashavas into three courses.

The first course was held from 23 to 27 April 2005; second course was held from 7 to 11 May 2005; third course was held from 14 to 18 May 2005 at NILG, Dhaka. The numbers of the invited Secretaries were 180 (60x3) out of 225 Secretaries from 298 Pourashavas. The numbers of participants in three courses were 133. For the primary sources of data, 110 Secretaries were selected purposively for questionnaire survey from the participants. Thus, out of 225 Secretaries of Pourashavas only 110 i.e., 48.89 percent of the total populations both male and female were interviewed as sample (Table-1).

A questionnaire was developed for direct interview of the Secretaries. Pre-test of the questionnaire was done before finalization of the questionnaire. The questionnaire contained

fixed-alternative and open-ended questions. Every questionnaire was divided into three parts. Part-A contained socio-economic background of the respondents. Part-B contained problems of the Secretaries in Pourashava service. Part-C contained opinion and suggestions of the Secretaries in designing policy-decisions for overcoming their service related problems.

Table-1: Number of the Secretaries of Pourashavas Interviewed for the Study

Course No.	Population			Sample Size	
	Participants	Invited No. of Secretaries	Total No. of Secretaries	Male	Female
1 st	31	60	225	105	05
2 nd	42	60			
3 rd	50	60			
Total	133	180	225	110	

To increase the reliability and validity of data the researcher conducted interview of the respondents. To minimize the reporting and recording error, questionnaire was prepared in Bengali. Moreover, an attempt was taken to present macro and micro level analysis. The macro level analysis deals with service conditions of the Secretaries of the Pourashavas in general perspective. The micro level analysis is based on responses of 110 Secretaries of Pourashavas. Moreover, the statistical data were coded and tabulated manually and in most of the cases the collected data have been presented in the form of simple frequency table. Most descriptive data have presented in terms of univariate measures as range and percentage.

The study has been conducted under some limitations. Based on a simple questionnaire, a few background information and problems of the Secretaries have been presented. The collected data has

been presented in the form of simple frequency tables. Two-way frequency tables have not given to show the relationship between different variables. The absence of advance quantitative analysis is a limitation of this study. Moreover, it has not interviewed the elected representatives of the Pourashavas for cross checks the problems of the Secretaries. Personal initiative, fund constraints and shortage of time were the main causes in this respect.

Service Conditions of the Secretaries

There is provision to initiate a post of Secretary to manage the secretarial works of Pourashava under section 41(1) of the Pourashava Ordinance 1977. Government has introduced the 'Pourashava Personnel Service Rules 1992' as assigned in Section-44 of the Pourashava Ordinance 1977. Service conditions of the Secretaries like recruitment, promotion, transfer, pay scale and allowance, seniority, leave, conduct and discipline etc. are prescribed in this service rules.

Additional schedule of rules also specified the designation of the post of Secretaries on the basis of the class status of Pourashava, methods of filling vacancies, age limit for direct recruitment, class of post, qualification for the appointment of the post in direct or promotion basis (Table-2). It shows that the Secretaries of Class-A Pourashava are entitled as Class-I officer with respective pay scale but the Secretaries of Class-B and Class-C are treated as Class-II officer and lower pay scale in spite of their job as head of the administrative department of Pourashava. On the other hand, the head of health and engineering department are entitled as Class-I officer and respective pay scale in Class-A, Class-B and Class-C Pourashava.

Table-2: Service Conditions of the Secretaries of Pourashavas

Sl No.	Designation of post and pay scale of post (NPS, 1997)	Method of filling vacancies	Age limit for direct recruitment	Class of post	Qualification for the appointment of the post
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
(1)	Secretary, Class-A Tk. 4300-7740 After five years completion of service, Tk. 6150-9750	25 percent for direct recruitment and 75 percent for promotion	Highest 35 years	1st	<i>Direct:</i> Master Degree with 2 nd class from a recognized university with 5 years experience in administrative work. <i>Promotion:</i> 5 years experience as Secretary of Class-B Pourashava or as Administrative Officer of Class-A Pourashava. Service record must be satisfactory.
(2)	Secretary, Class-B Tk. 2550-5505	25 percent for direct recruitment and 75 percent for promotion	Highest 30 years	2nd	<i>Direct:</i> Master Degree with 2 nd class from a recognized university with practical knowledge in administrative work will be preferred <i>Promotion:</i> 5 years experience as Secretary of Class-C Pourashava or as Administrative Officer of Class-B Pourashava. Service record must be satisfactory.
(3)	Secretary, Class-C Tk. 2375-5130	25 percent for direct recruitment and 75 percent for promotion.	18-30 years	2nd	<i>Direct:</i> Bachelor Degree from a recognized university. Practical knowledge in administrative work will get preference <i>Promotion:</i> 5 years experience as Administrative Officer of Class-B Pourashava or 7 years experience as Steno-Typist of Class-A Pourashava or 10 years experience as Head Assistant of Class-A, B and C Pourashava. Service record must be satisfactory.

Source: NILG (2003: 131)

N.B.: Direct recruitment will be made if official in the feeder post is not available when considering promotion

To execute the functions of Pourashava effectively government introduced the 'Pourashava Business Rules 1999' instead of the 'Municipal Committee Business Rules 1963' as assigned in the Section-146 of the Pourashava Ordinance 1977. But there is no specific job description for the Secretaries in the existing Business Rules. According to the Rule-9 of Business Rules, the Chairman of Pourashava can delegate his power to the Secretary in executing following functions with the approval of Pourashava:

1. Supervision and control of the officer and staff of Pourashava;
2. Implementation of all decisions of Pourashava;
3. Recruitment of staff and taking disciplinary action except officer on deputation and Class-I and Class-II officers of Pourashava;
4. Submission of proposal to prescribed authority with the approval of Pourashava to control, supervise, close, transfer and to take disciplinary action against Class-I and Class-II officers on deputation;
5. Step to collect and accept all taxes, rate, toll, fee and others duty;
6. Accept money on behalf of Pourashava;
7. Maintain any expenditure in the scope of approved budget of Pourashava;
8. Correspondence on behalf of Pourashava;
9. Issuing license, permit and notice on behalf of Pourashava (NILG, 2003: 92).

If the Chairman of Pourashava delegates his power to the Secretary, all matters must be executed by the direction of the Chairman of respective Pourashava. According to the Rule-12 of Business Rules, Pourashava Chairman or Poura-Administrator and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or in absence of CEO, the Secretary of Pourashava is responsible to maintain Pourashava fund collectively. A circular was issued by the Local Government Division (Poura-1), Dated: 05.09.1989, No. 1/M-1/89/549(87), wherein it is mentioned that the CEO retains the power to approve

leave of the Pourashava personnel (Class-II and III), which must be forwarded by the Secretary of Pourashava.

Moreover, as mentioned in Rule-5 of the Pourashava Personnel Service Rules 1992, the Secretary acts as the member-secretary on Pourashava personnel recruitment committee (Class-II and III). Despite the above provisions, it has been already mentioned that the Secretaries of Pourashavas are working without specific scope of work. In response to our present study now we are going to discuss about the socio-economic conditions of the Secretaries of Pourashavas.

Socio-Economic Conditions of the Secretaries

The socio-economic background of officials cast important influences on discharge duties and responsibilities assigned to them. Specially, different factors like age, education, training, income, job status etc. contribute enough to engage oneself in any work. The above observation is notable for the Secretaries of Pourashavas. In this context, this part reveals different socio-economic aspects of Secretaries of Pourashavas like age, sex, religion, marital status, family size, educational qualification, monthly salary, training received, types of training and nature of training institutions.

Age Distribution: Age distribution of the Secretaries of Pourashavas is shown in Table-3. It indicates that only 8 percent of Secretaries belong to age group 20- 29 years. The majority of the Secretaries that is 57 percent are in the 30- 39 years age groups. It also shows that about 16 percent of Secretaries are in the age group of 40- 49 years and about 19 percent are in the age group of 50- 59 years. It shows that most of the Secretaries are belong to young and energetic age group in Pourashavas.

Table- 3: Age Group of the Secretaries of Pourashavas

Age Group (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
20- 29	09	08
30- 39	63	57
40- 49	17	16
50- 59	21	19
No Response	--	--
Total:	110	100

Sex Distribution: Table-4 presents the distribution of Secretaries of Pourashavas on the basis of sex status. It shows that 95 percent of Secretaries are male and only 5 percent are female. Although there are reserved quotas for women in public service but present data show women employment in urban local government service especially in Pourashavas are not satisfactory.

Table- 4: Distribution of Secretaries by Sex Status

Sex Status	Frequency	Percentage
Male	105	95
Female	005	05
No Response	--	--
Total:	110	100

Religion: The Secretaries of Pourashavas are grouped by religion in Table-5. If we look at this table, we find that 92 percent of Secretaries are Muslim. Only 8 percent of Secretaries are Hindu. There are no Secretaries from Christian and Buddhist Community. Although every Bangladeshi citizens have equal rights to join in public service irrespective of religion, caste and creed, we did not find its reality in Pourashava administration.

Table- 5: Religion of the Secretaries of Pourashavas

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Muslim	101	92
Hindu	009	08
Christian	--	--
Buddhist	--	--
No Response	--	--
Total:	110	100

Marital Status: Marital status of the Secretaries of Pourashavas is presented in Table-6. It shows that about 90 percent of Secretaries are married and only 9 percent are unmarried. There is no widow or widower. 1 percent of Secretaries did not disclose their marital status. It also indicates that majority of the Secretaries of Pourashavas are live in traditional conjugal life.

Table- 6: Marital Status of the Secretaries of Pourashavas

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	99	90
Unmarried	10	09
Widower/ Widow	--	--
No Response	01	01
Total:	110	100

Family Size: Table-7 gives the family size of the married Secretaries, where family size includes husband, wife and children. It shows that 70 percent of Secretaries have families consisting of 2- 4 members. More than 29 percent of Secretaries have families consisting of 5- 7 members. Only 1 percent of Secretaries have large families that comprise more than 7 members. In fact, most of the Secretaries of Pourashavas have an ideal size of family.

Table- 7: Family Size of the Secretaries of Pourashavas

Family Size	Frequency	Percentage
2 – 4	69	70
5 – 7	29	29
Above 7	01	01
No Response	--	--
Total:	99	100

Educational Qualification: Educational qualification of the Secretaries is shown in Table-8. As per our sample, about 4 percent of Secretaries completed Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination. According to the Pourashava Service Rules 1992, the non graduate Secretaries of the Pourashavas have been recruited through promotion due to 7 years experiences as stenographer of Class-'A' Pourashavas or 10 years experiences as Head Assistant of Class- 'A', 'B' and 'C' Pourashavas with sound job records (NILG, 2003: 131).

It also shows that about 42 percent of Secretaries passed Bachelor Degree from a recognized university, which is now the minimum educational qualification for direct recruitment. Most of the Secretaries, i.e., 53 percent completed Master Degree on various disciplines like political science, public administration, sociology etc. from a recognized university. So it is clear that majority of the Secretaries of Pourashavas have higher level of educational qualification and highly educated persons are coming in this profession.

Table- 8: Educational Qualification of the Secretaries of Pourashavas

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Master Degree	58	53
Bachelor Degree	46	42
Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC)	05	04
No Response	01	01
Total:	110	100

Monthly Salary: Under the Pourashava Service Rules 1992, Pourashavas are classified into three categories, viz., Class-A, Class-B and Class-C. Class-A Pourashavas are those that have an average revenue income of more than Tk. 6 million over a three-year period from their own sources. Class-B Pourashavas are those having an average revenue income of between Tk. 2.5 million and Tk. 6 million over a three-year period from their own sources. Class-C Pourashavas are those having an average revenue income of less than Tk. 2.5 million over a three-year period from their own sources (NILG, 2003: 95).

Table- 9: Monthly Salary of the Secretaries of Pourashavas

Class of Secretaries	Monthly Salary (According to NPS'97)	Frequency	Percentage
Class- A (with 2 special)	Tk: 4300- 7740	37	34
Class- B	Tk: 2550- 5505	22	20
Class- C	Tk: 2375- 5130	51	46
Total:	--	110	100

Table-9 presents the monthly salary of Secretaries on the basis of the class of Pourashavas and the National Pay Scale 1997. Data show that 34 percent of Secretaries have monthly salary at pay scale Tk. 4300- 7740. About 20 percent of Secretaries have monthly salary at pay scale Tk. 2550- 5505. The majority that is 46 percent of the Secretaries have monthly salary at pay scale Tk. 2375- 5130. It is shown that most of the Secretaries of Pourashavas are belong to low monthly salary in respect of their job status.

Working Experience: Working experience of Secretaries is shown in Table-10. It denotes that more than 90 percent of Secretaries were recruited during Bangladesh period. It also shows that about 6 percent of Secretaries have less than 1 year job experience, 24 percent of Secretaries have 1- 5 years job experience, 27 percent of Secretaries have 6- 10 years job

experience, 25 percent of Secretaries have 11- 15 years job experience, 4 percent of Secretaries have 16- 20 years job experience and 3 percent of Secretaries have 21- 25 years job experience. A little, about 10 percent of Secretaries have more than 25 years job experience. Therefore, majority of the Secretaries have an experience of working for 6 to 10 years in Pourashava administration.

Table- 10: Working Experience of the Secretaries in Pourashava Administration

Experience (in year)	Frequency	Percentage
Below 1	07	06
1-5	26	24
6-10	30	27
11-15	28	25
16-20	04	04
21-25	03	03
Above 25	11	10
No Response	01	01
Total	110	100

Training: Job performance is closely related with the training. Table-11 presents professional or special training already received by the Secretaries. It shows that about 82 percent of Secretaries received professional or special training and 10 percent of Secretaries have no professional or special training. About 8 percent have no response on training. So it is clear that most of the Secretaries have already received essential professional or special training.

Table- 11: Professional or Special Training Received by the Secretaries

Professional or Special Training	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	90	82
No	11	10
No Response	09	08
Total:	110	100

Types of Training: Types of training received by the Secretaries are shown in Table-12 where multiple answers are possible. It denotes that more than 53 percent of Secretaries received foundation-training course and more than 48 percent have training on Pourashava administration. It also indicates that more than 39 percent of Secretaries received training on office management and more than 12 percent have training on refreshers course on Pourashava administration.

Remaining 25 percent of Secretaries received training on various subjects, viz., Pura tax assessment and collection, integrated urban policy, financial administration, audit method, slum development, birth and death registration, water supply, sanitation and sewerage, human resource management, project management, Municipal development etc. Now it may be mentioned that majority of the Secretaries received training on closely related subject to their job.

Table- 12: Types of Training Received by the Secretaries of Pourashavas

Types of Training	Frequency	Percentage
Foundation Training for Pura Secretaries	48	53
Pourashava Administration	43	48
Office Management	35	39
Refreshers Course on Pourashava Administration	11	12
Pura Tax Assessment and Collection	04	04
Integrated Urban Policy	02	02
Water Supply, sanitation and Sewerage	02	02
Financial Administration	01	01
Audit Method	01	01
Slum Development	01	01
Birth and Death Registration (TOT)	01	01
Human Resource Management	01	01
Project Management	01	01
Municipal Development	01	01
Others	09	10

$f = 90$

Note : Multiple answers are possible.

Training Institute: Table-13 presents the types of training institutions where the Secretaries received training. It shows that more than 96 percent of Secretaries received training from the National Institute of Local Government (NILG) and 6 percent from the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), Dhaka, others, i.e., 17 percent from various institutions like the Bangladesh Institute of Management (BIM), Regional Public Administration Training Centre (RPATC), Chittagong and Concern, India. So it is clear that the National Institute of Local Government (NILG) is playing a unique role to train up the local government functionaries specially the Secretaries of Pourashavas.

Table- 13: Types of Training Institute where the Secretaries Received Training

Training Institute	Frequency	Percentage
NILG	86	96
LGED, Dhaka	05	06
RPATC, Chittagong	03	03
LGED, Comilla	02	02
RPATC, Rajshahi	02	02
Asian International Center, Kobe, Japan	02	02
Kerala Province Govt. of India	01	01
BIM, Dhaka	01	01
Others	05	06

$f = 90$

Note : Multiple answers are possible.

Problems of the Secretaries in Pourashava Service

Secretaries of Pourashavas always have to face a lot of problems while performing their administrative duties. Based on data from the present study, the various problems of Secretaries in Pourashava service are shown in Table-14.

Table-14: Problems of the Secretaries in Pourashava Service

Nature of Problems	Frequency	Percentage
Unequal Job Status with Insufficient and Irregular Salary	75	68
Problems of Transfer	70	64
Unspecific Job Description	67	61
Problems Created by the Engineers (Generalist vs. Specialist Conflict)	64	58
Problems Created by the Commissioners	62	56
Lack of Specialized Training	61	55
Uncertainty of Provident Fund and Gratuity	54	49
Excessive Work Load	52	47
Problems of Promotion Timely	47	43
Problems Created by the Chairman	43	39
Lack of Physical and Other Facilities (Office Equipment)	30	27
Problems of Coordination with Other Local Authorities	12	11
Problems Created by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	07	06
Delay of Notification from Ministry	06	05
Residential Facilities	04	04
Inadequate Manpower in Various Department	02	02

$f = 110$

Note : Multiple answers are possible.

Unequal Job Status with Insufficient and Irregular Salary:

Almost 68 percent of the Secretaries of Paurashavas mentioned unequal job status with insufficient and irregular salary as their prime problem. In organogram, equal job status has been maintained among three the head of department, namely administration, engineering and health, family planning and conservancy. But except Class-A, Secretaries of Paurashavas hold lower job status than others departmental head due to salary discrimination. All types of the Secretaries of Paurashavas get less salary than the head of other departments, which has been shown in Table -15. A secretary remarked:

"As head of the administrative department the Secretaries of Paurashavas are involved in almost all daily activities including investigation and coordination. But Secretaries of Class-B get salary on the basis of second class pay-scale and Secretaries of Class-C hold second class official rank with pay-scale at Tk. 2375-5130, which means they get salary as third class employees. The subordinate Accountant gets more salary than the Secretary. Consequently, administrative discipline, working speed and the coordination among departments are hampered."

Not only the unequal official rank and pay scale but also many Secretaries of Paurashavas do not get salary regularly. According to the Secretaries, they do not get their salary like other officials due to the appointment of master role officials lying beyond the organogram, imbalance between income and expenditure, spending money from one project to another, not keeping in knowledge of Pouro-Council about the collection Pouro taxes, reducing and waving taxes fees etc. before election. So, the working speed is hampered.

Table-15: Unequal Job Status and Pay Scale in the Departments of Pourashavas

Class Status of Pourashava	Head of the Departments of Pourashava					
	Administration		Engineering		Health, Family Planning and Conservancy	
	Post and Pay Scale (NPS' 1997)	Class of Post	Post and Pay Scale, (NPS' 1997)	Class of Post	Post and Pay Scale (NPS' 1997)	Class of Post
Class-A	Secretary-A Tk. 4300-7740	1st	Executive Engineer Tk. 7200-10840	1st	Medical Officer Tk. 6150-9750	1st
Class-B	Secretary-B Tk. 2550-5505	2nd	Assistant Engineer Tk. 4300-7740	1st	Medical Officer Tk. 6150-9750	1st
Class-C	Secretary-C Tk. 2375-5130	2nd	Assistant Engineer Tk. 4300-7740	1st	Medical Officer Tk. 6150-9750	1st

Source: NILG (2003: 131,142,147)

Problems of Transfer: According to present survey, 64 percent of Secretaries have to face various types of problems during their transfer. Although the Secretaries are officer according to service rules, the Secretaries of Class-B and C are staff in respect to pay scale. They are transferred to a long distance from their home district considering as a officer. It is really tough to maintain their family in the context of present market situation with low income. Moreover, the rule of transfer after 3 years is not maintained properly. A Secretary mentioned:

"The rules are not properly implemented during transfer. It has been observed that one Secretary has been working for 8 to 10 years in a Pourashava, whereas another may have transferred for 2 to 3 times in a year. Very often if the ministry transfers one, the Chairmen do not release from the station, again even if they release, they do not want to join them in their new posts. The salary of the time that is passed due to the late joining is not paid."

In addition, if the Secretaries are transferred, they have to face various problems in transferring their salary, provident fund and gratuity from their previous station. On the other hand, at times they are not transferred to their concerned class of Paurashava. The Secretary of Class-A' never feel enthusiasm to join in Class-B or C Paurashava. In many cases, they are transferred without verifying the accusation of Chairman. Persuasion in the ministry regarding transfer has become a matter of convention.

Unspecific Job Description: According to 61 percent of Secretaries, due to the lack of specific job description they have to face various problems while working in the Paura-administration. Although the Chairman and the Chief Executive Officer have specific job description, the Secretaries have no specific job description according to the ordinance of Paurashava or any other rules. Chairman orders the Secretary to solve any problems. But as there is no specific job description, it is not possible to coordinate and implement the decisions, which are closely related with other departments. Specially, the head of engineering and health department do not want to submit their files to the Chief Executive Officer or to the Chairman through Secretary. As a result, legal advice cannot be included in those files. Consequently, objections arise during audit and the Secretaries of administrative department have to bear all responsibilities.

Problems Created by the Engineers: About 58 percent of Secretaries viewed that the engineers create problems to their activities. According to organogram, Assistant and Sub-Assistant Engineers are subordinate to Secretaries in the Class-A Pourashava by post but due to the discrimination of pay scale,

they are not interested in administrative coordination. Without consulting with the Secretary, they present files to the chairman. They claim bill without considering the fact that there is allocation in the budget for the concerned matter or not. As the Secretaries are not included in the Public Procurement Regulation (PPR) 2003, the engineers do not emphasize adjoining of the Secretaries in the tender committee. The Secretaries have no authority to supervise the improper project implementation by the engineers, as there is no administrative control on engineers. As a result, a conflict between generalist and specialist is often observed.

Problems Created by the Commissioners: About 56 percent of Secretaries have to face various problems created by the commissioners. Commissioners impose political power upon the Secretaries and misbehave if the secretaries deny in doing any illegal works. Commissioners are not properly educated. They are not helpful to collect taxes. But if their own wards are not allotted much, they accuse the Secretaries instead of the Chairman. A Secretary remarked:

"Commissioners think that the Secretaries hamper their essential works by showing laws. They initiate project considering vote, not considering the reality. They do not want to obey the rules to get the bill through file-work. If the payment of the bill is delayed they use slang language and complain to the Chairman for transfer."

On the other hand, Woman Commissioners like to believe that they have become the owner of three seats and claim extra project, old-aged allowance and Vulnerable Group Feedings (VGF) cards. Commissioners do not send the list timely to the Secretary during VGF distribution. They do not help much in birth and death registration and conciliation of disputes in their respective areas. But it is true that Woman Commissioners for reserved seats comparatively create fewer problems to the functions of Secretaries.

Lack of Specialized Training: Even though 55 percent of Secretaries of Paurashavas have general training on Paurashava,

they have lack of specialized training like computer, office management etc. On the other hand, there is no opportunity in field training on model Paurashava management and development strategy. There is a shortage of training on paurashva's resource mobilization. They are not efficient in financial management, tax assessment and collection. They have also lack of training on estimation, survey and measurement, comparative study on urban local government of developed and developing countries.

Moreover, they have lack of training about development project implementation, inspection and evaluation. In addition, they have lack of training on how they can work in joint venture with the non- government organizations (NGOs). Above all, they have not any specialized training on facing the challenges of modern development administration. Besides, the Secretaries run short of the training on fund utilization, audit and community development approach.

Uncertainty of Provident Fund and Gratuity: About 49 percent of Secretaries said that their provident fund and gratuity are not properly ensured according to the rules of 1988. If the Secretaries are transferred, the money of this fund is not transferred in due time to their new office. Moreover, after retirement the Secretaries have to move from one station to other station to raise the money and thus the Secretaries are harassed. When the Paurashavas have to run with shortage of money then the salary of the staff have been provided from this fund. Due to the crisis of revenue fund, in certain cases the Chairman pays the salary without provident fund, which increases complexity to maintain this fund.

Excessive Work Load: According to about 47 percent of Secretaries, they are working under enormous pressure. They have to work a lot of functions namely, maintain personal files of officers and staffs, monitor the works of tax collection, license section and accounts, coordinate among the different departments, prepare working papers for meetings, manage the meetings of committees and sub-committees with logistic support, examine daily attendants of staffs, take necessary steps to observe national days and programs, maintain vehicles and furniture, inspect

various departments, process recruitment of Paurashava personnel, review the progress of cases, coordinate with other local authorities. Besides, they note down the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) of second class and third class staff of Paurashava, aware everyone about the circulation of ministry, monitor the collection of revenue income in Paurashava's fund, ensure the response to the government and semi-government letters and provide legal opinion to the concerned files. Thus they are responsible to complete a lot of works and can be regarded as the engine of the Paurashava. But unfortunately, they are paid insufficient salary for such a mammoth job.

Problems of Promotion Timely: About 43 percent of Secretaries complained that their promotion is not approved in proper time. There is no scope for promotion of Class-A Secretaries. On the other hand, even there are rules for higher pay scale in absence of promotion, prescribed authority does not follow that rules. After five years completion of service the ministry does not approve their selection grade. A secretary mentioned:

"I was directly recruited as a Secretary of Class-B Pourashava in 1993. After 5 years completion the copy of the service book along with 5 years ACR were sent to the ministry through the Nowga Paurashava for the approval of selection grade. Then after transfer the reminder letter was sent to the ministry from the Bogra Paurashava for approval. But the approval has not reached till April, 2005."

The observation of Secretaries is that the government officers get their selection grade in two stages, but there are no similar rules for the officers of Paurashavas. Even, the ministry does not promote them against the vacant posts. Basically the promotion of secretaries is remaining delay due to the disregard of prescribed authority, which has become a great hindrance in performing their duties with enthusiasm and excitement.

Problems Created by the Chairman: About 39 percent of Secretaries mentioned that, they have to face various problems

created by the Chairman. Chairman does not obey the rules and regulations and if the secretaries mention rules they are threatened for transfer and harassment. They recruit staff illegally who are not able to perform the administrative works. If the Chairman is informed about the rules and regulations of the ministry, he does not pay attention to it. A Secretary remarked:

"Chairman ignores the rules and regulations written in the files and says what the Paurashava will pass that is law and you will work in that way. If you deviate this your ACR will be worsen or you are worthless and I will write to the ministry against you."

In fact, due to the autocracy of the Chairman, the Secretaries of Paurashavas are performing their works under enormous pressure and problems.

Other Problems: Besides the above mentioned problems, about 27 percent of Secretaries believe that they do not possess physical and other facilities. In many offices, still there is no computer facility. Many Paurashavas do not have permanent buildings. 11 percent of Secretaries think that as egoistic problems exist between Chairman and Upazilla Nirbahi Officer (UNO) or Deputy Commissioner (DC), coordination is hampered. Administrative cooperation is not available from the local authorities in collecting taxes. Again, 6 percent of Secretaries viewed that the Chief Executive Officer is an officer of cadre service, generally who is not regular in office. So, the routine works are delayed but the Secretaries are undone due to heartiest cooperation between the CEO and the Chairman of Paurashava. About 5 percent of Secretaries mentioned that as the office order, gazette notification, letters etc. are not received from the ministry in due time, taking necessary steps is often delayed. Besides, 4 percent of Secretaries mentioned that they have been suffering from residential facilities and 2 percent expressed that they have inadequate manpower in various departments.

Suggestions Offered by the Secretaries

The prime objective of this study is to present the various service related problems of the Secretaries and their suggestions to solve those problems as well. In this perspective the suggestions of the Secretaries are given in the following table.

Table-16: Suggestions Offered by the Secretaries

Suggestions	Frequency	Percentage
Ensuring job status in respect to the Head of Administrative Department with appropriate salary in due time	75	68
Transfer in home District	70	64
Specifying job description	67	61
Ensuring training on Paura-administration for the Chairman and Commissioners	67	60
Providing promotion or time-scale in proper time	62	56
Ensuring training on Paura-administration for the Head of Engineering and Health Department.	61	55
Reservation of the provident fund and gratuity centrally	54	49
Providing modern office equipment including computer	30	27
Canceling Service Rule 53 (2)	29	26
Others	25	23

$f = 110$

Note : Multiple answers are possible.

If we carefully look at the table above, we find that almost 68 percent Secretaries suggested for equal job status as departmental head and appropriate salary in due time. Secretaries have already informed their demands to the respective authority. The General-Secretary of 'Bangladesh Pura- Secretary and Administrative Officers Association' have suggested in a letter, dated 22.12.2004, to the Secretary of Local Government Division that states, "The salary may be upgraded on the basis of schedule of The Pourashava Personnel Service Rules 1992. It is mentionable that the prescribed authority may fix the salary indiscriminately in response to the rule 13(4). According to this rule, recruiting authority will maintain salary structure evenly for the described post in schedule among other departments of same organization." An appendix maintaining salary structure, job status, recruitment and promotion have been added with this letter is shown in Table-17.

Table-17: Proposed Service Conditions of the Secretaries of Pourashavas

Serial No.	Designation of post and pay scale of post (NPS, 1997)	Method of filling vacancies	Age limit for direct recruitment	Class of post	Qualification for the appointment of the post
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
(1)	Secretary, Class-A Tk. 7200-10,840 After five years successfully completion of service selection grade will be admissible	100% promotion	--	1st	5 years experience as Secretary of Class-B Pourashava. Service record must be satisfactory.
(2)	Secretary, Class-B Tk. 6150-9750	100% promotion	--	1st	5 years experience as Secretary of Class-C Pourashava. Service record must be satisfactory.
(3)	Secretary, Class-C Tk. 4300-7740	70 percent for direct recruitment and 30 percent for promotion	18-30 years	1st	<i>Direct:</i> Master Degree from a recognized university. Practical knowledge in administrative work will get preference <i>Promotion:</i> 5 years work experience as Administrative Officer. Service record must be satisfactory.

Source: BPSAOA (2004 b: 5).

Again, 64 percent suggested to transfer in their own Districts but not in their own Upazilla. Besides, 61 percent secretaries suggested for specific job description. In this context, the President of 'Bangladesh Poura-Secretary and Administrative Officers' Association' have suggested in a letter, dated 06.04.04, to the Secretary of Local Government Division for the following 'job description' of Secretaries:

1. Secretary will perform duties as head of the administrative department. He will write down the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) of all officer/ staff and the Chief Executive Officer/ Chairman will counter sign in it;
2. He will be the member-secretary of the Pourashava personnel recruitment selection committee;
3. He will be the member-secretary of the Pourashava's tax assessment review committee;
4. He will be the member of Pourashava's tender committee. But in absence of the Executive Engineer/ Assistant Engineer he will act as the member-secretary of tender committee;
5. He will act as member-secretary in any committee formed by the Chairman;
6. The fund of Pourashava will be governed by the joint signature of Secretary and Chairman in absence of the Chief Executive Officer;
7. All files signed by the head of all sections of administrative department will be submitted to the Chief Executive Officer/ Chairman through Secretary;
8. Files of all departments will be presented to the Chairman through Secretary in absence of the Chief Executive Officer;
9. Secretary will control all subordinate officers/ staff of administrative department. He will also control all officer/ staff in absence of any other departmental head;
10. Leave of all Pourashava's staff will be granted by the recommendation of Secretary and will grant leave of all staff by the recommendation of section/ departmental head in absence of the Chief Executive Officer;

11. He will be responsible for the health, family planning & conservancy department in absence of the Medical Officer;
12. He will supervise and control the Pourashava's revenue management;
13. He might be present in the meeting of Pouro-Council and might explain concerned matters ordered by the Chairman, if necessary. But he will not be able to vote in the meeting;
14. He might be able to inspect all development projects and to express opinion to the Chairman;
15. He will act as the chief advisor to Chairman regarding all administrative and policy matter of Pourashava;
16. Secretary will complete all functions relating office management of Pourashava;
17. He will perform other duties delegated by the Chairman/ Chief Executive Officer;
18. He will also perform any other duties assigned by the government/ prescribed authority (BPSAOA, 2004 a: 2-3).

Again, 60 percent Secretaries suggested for training to the Chairman and Commissioners of Pourashavas about Pourashava administration. Besides, 56 percent have demanded promotion or time-scale in due time. Another 55 percent Secretaries have suggested for the training about rules and regulations of Pourashava administration to the Head of Engineering and Health Department. In addition, 49 percent Secretaries have suggested for conserving provident fund and gratuity centrally. Moreover, 27 percent Secretaries believe that computer and telephone facilities will pace the momentum of Pourashava's administrative works.

Another 26 percent Secretaries suggested to abolish the Rule 53(2) of the Pourashava Personnel Service Rules 1992, which states, "Recruiting authority is able to discharge any personnel within 90 days without any show-cause notice or instantly with 90 days salary". This is important because it is violation of the fundamental rights of a citizen. Others 23 percent demanded for residential facilities, formulation of guideline to coordinate with local authorities and for sending letter and notification of ministry

to Pourashava timely. Secretaries of Pourashavas earnestly believe that the implementation of the above mentioned suggestions will enhance their efficiency and will play an important role in their job satisfaction.

Conclusions

Pourashavas are engaged in the provisions of compulsory municipal service facilities like construction and maintenance of roads, disposal of wastes, street lighting, water supply, sanitation and drainage facilities, maintenance of public markets, plantations of trees on road sides, prevention of infectious diseases, registration of birth, death and marriages, maintenance of slaughter houses, control over traffic etc. Ensuring all of them mostly depend on the effectiveness of Pourashava administration.

Representatives of Pourashava dweller like Chairman and Commissioners are responsible for taking policy-decisions in this respect. But implementation of their decisions actually depends on the efficiency of the Secretaries, the head of administrative department of Pourashava. Unfortunately, there are a few works to explore the service related problems of urban local government functionaries specially the Secretaries of Pourashavas. Present research is an initiative to fill this gap on the basis of a questionnaire survey on the Secretaries of Pourashavas. Now we may discuss the major *findings* of the study.

The research findings show that most of the Secretaries of Pourashavas are belong to young and energetic age group. Employment of Women in urban local government service especially in Pourashavas is not satisfactory. The Muslim community dominates job of the Secretaries of Pourashavas. Majority of the Secretaries are live in traditional conjugal life and have an ideal family size. Most of the Secretaries of Pourashavas have higher level of educational qualification and highly educated persons are engaging themselves in this profession.

The Secretaries of Pourashavas are drawing a very low monthly salary in respect of their job status. Majority of the Secretaries have an experience of working for 6 to 10 years in Pourashava

administration. Most of them have already received essential professional training in home and abroad. They have received training on closely related subjects to their job. The National Institute of Local Government (NILG) is playing an important role to train up the local government functionaries specially the Secretaries of Pourashavas. If we look at the socio-economic conditions of the Secretaries, we find that the Secretaries have prospective background in conducting their duties and responsibilities properly. Unfortunately, they are working with a lot of service related problems and limited facilities.

Most of them have to suffer with unequal job status and insufficient and irregular salary. The Secretaries are classified into three categories, viz. Class-A, Class-B and Class-C on the basis of the class status of respective Pourashava. All types of Secretaries get less salary than the head of other departments. All of them belong to low job status except Class-A Pourashava. They are transferred to a long distance from their home district. The rules are not properly followed during transfer. Due to lack of specific 'job description' they have to face various problems. The heads of engineering and health department do not want to submit file to the Chief Executive Officer or Chairman through Secretary. There is no administrative control over engineers. A conflict between generalist and specialist is often observed in Pourashavas.

Chairman and Commissioners impose political influence upon the Secretaries and misbehave with them if they deny doing any illegal work. Woman Commissioners of reserve seats comparatively create fewer problems to the functions of the Secretaries. The Secretaries have lack of specialized training like computer, office management, resource mobilization, personnel management, community development etc. Their provident fund and gratuity are not properly maintained according to the rules. The money of this fund is not transferred timely to the new office during transfer. They are working under enormous pressure. But they are paid insufficient salary for such a mammoth job.

Moreover, they are not promoted timely. After 5 years completion of service the prescribed authority does not approve their selection

grade. Again, the Chairman does not obey the rules and regulations. If the Secretaries mention rules they are threatened to transfer and harassments. They have lack of modern office equipments like computer and telephone facilities. It is difficult to ensure coordination among other local authorities working in Pourashavas. The office order, notification, letter etc. are not received from the ministry in due time. They have to work with limited residential facilities and inadequate manpower in respective department.

To solve the above mentioned problems of the Secretaries of Pourashavas the prescribed authority or government will have to take *policy-decisions* to reform Pourashava Ordinance, Service Rules, Business Rules, Provident Fund and Gratuity Rules and other rules and regulations. All class of the Secretaries of Pourashavas should be entitled as 1st class officer. Their salary discrimination with other similar position should be removed and their salary should be paid timely. They may be transferred in their home District but not in their respective Upazilla. Their 'job description' should be specified in no time. To maintain administrative discipline all files should be presented to the Chief Executive Officer/Chairman through Secretary. Consequently, it will be possible for the secretary to note down legal advice, which will increase transparency.

Chairman and Commissioners should be trained on Pourashava administration so that they can be sensible about rules and regulations. It is necessary to provide promotion or time scale in due time to maintain alacrity. The head of engineering and health department should also be trained on Pourashava administration. Their provident fund and gratuity should be maintained centrally so that they would not be harassed after retirement. Advanced office equipments like computer and telephone facilities should be supplied in administrative department. Computer software should be given for proper office management, personnel management, tax assessment and collection etc. The service rule 53(2) should be abolished immediately.

Moreover, residential facilities will enhance their sincerity in service. A guideline should be formulated by the ministry, which will ensure the coordination with local authorities. Office order, letter and notification of ministry should be sent to the Pourashava in due time. The Local Government Division of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Developments and Cooperatives is entitled as prescribed authority of Pourashavas. Upto April 2005 there were 298 Pourashavas, which are increasing with rapid urbanization in Bangladesh. So it is about impossible for the 'Poura-Section' of the Local Government Division to supervise all Pourashavas. Hence, it is necessary to set up 'Pourashava Directorate' under the Local Government Division for the supervision of Pourashavas and implementation of the above mentioned reform agenda.

On the basis of the findings it is expedient that if we can resolve service related problems of the Secretaries of Pourashavas, it will surely enhance their job satisfaction. It will also strengthen the functions of Pourashava administration as well as the capacity building of Pourashavas that will ensure increasing demands of the city dwellers. In fact, the above mentioned policy-decisions and suggestions of the Secretaries will also be helpful to meet the basic needs of Pourashava functionaries as well as the challenges of 21st Century for effective and efficient urban local governance in Bangladesh through strengthening urban local government institutions.

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