

UNDERSTANDING THE FIELD LEVEL INNOVATION TEAMS IN BANGLADESH

Md. Morshed Alom, Ph.D.



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This research report is submitted to the BPATC authority in fulfillment of the researcher's professional obligation to meet a decision taken by its research committee in its 54th meeting held on 15 November 2019. The original title of the work was “An Exploration in the Innovation Initiatives in the Public Offices in Bangladesh”. Based on comments from a faculty seminar, the title was revised to “Understanding the Field Level Innovation Teams in Bangladesh” which was approved by the 56th meeting of the research committee held on 10 May 2020.



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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to attain three objectives of (a) exploring the understanding of ‘innovation’ by the members of the field level innovation teams in Bangladesh; (b) understanding the innovation activities of the innovation teams; and (c) assessing effectiveness and sustainability of the innovations worked out by the innovation teams. It followed an exploratory research design. Data were collected through qualitative interviews. A checklist was used to conduct the interviews. Two trained interviewers were sent to the district and Upazila levels to interview officials of the information teams. The districts and the Upazilas were selected following multistage sampling. Thus, fifteen district level and sixteen Upazila level innovation teams were sampled. The innovation officer and one member from each selected team were interviewed. All together sixty-two officers were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed. Codes were developed from the transcriptions and themes were developed from the codes in line with the three objectives.

With regard to the first objective, understanding innovation involved the meaning of the concept to the research participants, their feeling about the innovation responsibility, and feeling about the task of innovation. Most respondents were found to have a good understanding of the literal meaning of the concept of innovation but they were hardly able to actualize their understanding into meaningful innovation activities within their teams. According to the aggregate perception of the respondents, the concept of innovation becomes meaningful if an activity is new to the organization and it comes from a realization of the introducers that it is beneficial to the citizens and the service providers as well; and it will ultimately result in modernization of society because it uses the updated information and communication technologies. They recognized the innovation responsibility to be a task primarily of the public service providers but innovative ideas could be sought from the service seekers, NGOs, people’s representatives, people with knowledge of science and ICT, and the people in general though no team practiced this process. They had expressed mixed feelings about the task of innovation assigned to them. Some welcomed the task while others considered it an extra burden.

Regarding the second objective, innovation activities appeared to be constrained by some factors such as team culture, teamwork process, and knowledge about the innovation process. Firstly, the officials were found not habituated to team culture. The use of the terms ‘innovation committee’ instead of ‘innovation team’ by the respondents was very conspicuous during many interviews. Secondly, membership in the team appeared to fall short of the willingness principle. Many took their involvement in the innovation team as a burden amid their respective departmental workloads. Thirdly, the current format of the innovation team was less appropriate in the eyes of many. They suggested the inclusion of non-governmental organizations and people’s representatives in the innovation team. Some argued that only office heads should be in the innovation team while others argued for the inclusion of younger officials only. Many believed that every office should have representation in the innovation team.

To generate innovative ideas, the innovation teams sit in meetings. These meetings appeared to be less effective as they were irregularly held and the discussions in the team meetings were half-hearted. As an alternative avenue to innovation idea generation, some respondents believed that organizing innovation fairs and seeking feedback from service recipients might be fruitful but this was not practiced actually. Most innovation team members were found not having proper training. Many of them lacked knowledge even about the government circular on innovation that gives the basic information about the formation of innovation teams and their functions.

The respondents reported some problems. Some respondents believed that innovation works need self-motivation and tireless efforts for success and these characteristics were missing in the teams. Sometimes, innovations done by an official did not continue when the official was transferred to another office. Perceived financial constraints made the innovation teams even not to consider undertaking innovation initiatives that involved costs. The officials also suffered from other organizational capacities. Many of them considered themselves heavily burdened with their respective departmental workloads while others suffered from manpower shortage. Moreover, the teams did not feel any compulsion to innovate because their innovation activities were not monitored. In other words, they did not face any accountability for their innovation performance. These loopholes in the system worked behind poor the performance of the innovation teams.

The innovation team members should undergo quality training on innovation. They should be trained in team culture. True team culture can take out their fear of innovation as an extra burden. Some kind of recognition for innovation has to be in place because innovation involves hard work, and risks in terms of opposition from vested interest groups. The innovation training should make them understand that innovation ideas should come from problems that the team members as well as non-member officials within an administrative unit (district or sub-district) experience in their service delivery systems, and the innovation team is only a facilitator in organizing innovations. The teams should be trained to seek innovation ideas from service seekers. They should look for innovation scope not only in the respective offices of the team members but also in the offices that are not represented in the innovation teams. The innovation teams should be made confident of leadership and financial supports for undertaking innovation initiatives. Moreover, an effective monitoring mechanism should be put in place to monitor the innovation activities of the teams and thereby bringing them under an accountability system. The teams could be formed fully with only interested officials and this could be done through open invitation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations	Equivalence
AC	Assistant Commissioner
ADC	Additional Deputy Commissioner
CoI	Champion of Innovation
BCS	Bangladesh Civil Service
GIU	Governance Innovation Unit
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
IC	Innovation Champion
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
NPM	New Public Management
PRL	Post Retirement Leve
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Worldwide governments expect their organizations to innovate for enhancing public services (Walker et al. 2002; Sørensen and Torfing 2011) and this issue has received increasing attention from scholars and practitioners (Vries et al. 2016). Innovation is viewed as a source for bringing improvement and effectiveness to the services public sector organizations deliver to citizens and solutions to organizational problems (Damanpour and Schneider 2008; Vries et al. 2016). Although public sector organizations and innovation were considered an oxymoron, being influenced by information technology and in the face of criticism (Borins 2002; Hartley 2005) from stakeholders, such organizations engage themselves in innovation efforts to ensure their very survival (Schall 1997). However, embarking on the task of innovation by public sector organizations is not smooth. Their in-built culture creates problems for their innovation activities (Van Duivenboden and Thaens 2008). Therefore, the environment (exogenous) and management (endogenous) factors of bureaucratic organizations have received the attention of researchers as being influential for innovation success. In other words, researchers are interested in understanding the condition in which an organization innovates. In general, researchers have tied innovation to non-hierarchical management style and strategic planning underpinning (Berry 1994) which public sector organizations usually lack. Manager characteristics are other factors that influence the adoption of innovation (Damanpour and Schneider 2008).

According to Rogers (2003) quoted in Vries et al. (2016: 152) most innovation researchers have defined the concept of ‘innovation’ as ‘an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption’. Vries et.al (2016: 152) also found that ‘perceived novelty’ and ‘first adoption of an idea’ have appeared in the past

studies as the two dimensions of the concept. An understanding of the concept of innovation is important because how an organization understands it will affect its treatment to the concept. Osborne and Brown (2011) differentiate between two understandings of innovation: ‘discontinuous change’ and ‘continuous development’. While the former is innovative, the latter is incremental. Thus, innovation is a challenging process. According to the argument of Osborne and Brown (2011), the two understandings require different approaches to their management and sustenance.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) (2013) issued a circular on 8th April 2013 asking authorities at different levels of its public administration system to form innovation teams to increase speed in the works of and innovation skill in the public administration; and inventing and practicing ways to speed up and to simplify service delivery processes. It directs formation of innovation teams at four levels of the public administration system of the GOB—ministry or division level, directorate or agency level, district level, and sub-district level. Each ministry level innovation team is to be headed by a chief innovation officer and that of the other levels is to be headed by an innovation officer. The document does not clarify the concept of ‘innovation’. However, the circular specifies the scope of work of an innovation team and the responsibility and activity of the chief innovation officer or an innovation officer wherein the intended meaning of the concept can be guessed.

As the scope of work of an innovation team the circular mentions, among other things, bringing in a *qualitative change* in the service delivery process and in the internal process of works of the own offices of the innovation team members. The other items in the scope of work relate to the administration of the team’s work. Therefore, bringing in a qualitative change in the service delivery process and in the internal work-process can be taken as an innovative contribution of an innovation team according to the GOB circular.

The other source wherein a meaning of innovation can be guessed is the description of the responsibilities and activities of a chief innovation officer or an innovation officer provided in the GOB circular. The responsibility and activity of the

chief innovation officer and those of an innovation officer are the same. To bring in the desired qualitative change in the service delivery process and in the internal work-process of own offices of the innovation team members the circular outlines responsibilities and activities of the chief innovation officer and that of an innovation officer. These include developing a culture of practicing creativity with the help of information and communication technology (ICT), service process simplification through reforms of the existing system and implementation of citizen's charter; acting as a coordinator for converting all possible services into e-services; e-file management; developing organizational profile through compilation of official information; updating websites and redressing grievances using websites; proper implementation of the ICT Action Plan under the National ICT Policy of the GOB among other things. According to this description of the responsibilities and activities of a chief innovation officer or an innovation officer, innovation appears to be adding e-content to public services or work processes.

From the GOB's (2013) circular perspective, it can be argued that innovation is taken to mean service improvement which is categorized as incremental by innovation researchers (Osborne and Brown, 2011). In this sense of the concept, innovation is tied to the meaning of normative improvement that is planned and always has a positive impact. According to the GOB (2013) document, the task of innovation appears to be limited to the innovation team members only. Therefore, these individuals' efforts for innovation, arguably, are predicated upon their understanding of the concept. While the role of creative individuals is important in innovation, the role of the critical mass of an organization is undeniable (Hartley, 2005). Thus, limiting innovation efforts to a few individuals through public policy may actually bar innovation. Public service innovation is complex. According to Hartley (2005), service innovation is ambiguous because it involves a change in the relationships between service providers and the recipients of those services. Thereby, fixing innovation role to few individuals through public policy and conceiving innovation as incremental change are argued as a flawed model (Osborne and Brown, 2011).

Another source of the GOB, the website of the Governance Innovation Unit (GIU) (2018), defines the concept of innovation in public administration as an effective, creative, and unique answer to a new problem, and a new answer to an old problem. The GIU (2018) identifies novelty, effectiveness, significance, replicability, process simplification, and sustainability as application characteristics of innovation. Thus, the two sources of the GOB show nuance difference in the conception of innovation. Therefore, how the members of the innovation teams of the GOB conceptualize innovation, and how this conceptualization impact upon their innovation efforts appear to be worth studying. A search in the online search engine ‘Google Scholar’ carried out on 25 July 2018 produced no result on the existence of any research studies on any issues regarding innovation in public administration in the Bangladesh context. The personal experience of this researcher shows that ambiguity regarding the understanding of ‘innovation’ exists among public officials in Bangladesh. Therefore, there exists a knowledge gap regarding understanding these issues of public sector innovation in the context of Bangladesh. A better understanding of how the conception of innovation of public officials affects their innovation activities and their sustenance has policy implications. A clear understanding of these issues can make policy-makers able to come up with a precise public policy as to how to proceed with public service innovation.

1.3 Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to explore the innovation activities of the innovation teams working at the field level public offices in Bangladesh. The specific objectives include the following:

- (a) To explore the understanding of ‘innovation’ by members of innovation teams working at the field level of the public administration of Bangladesh;
- (b) To understand the innovation activities of the innovation teams working at the field level;
- (c) To assess the effectiveness and sustainability of the innovations worked out by these innovation teams.

1.4 Significance

After the demise of the New Public Management (NPM), pressure on public organizations is high to innovate ways to meet public demand for quality services while the providers have little resources at hand (Collm and Schedler, 2012). The GOB's initiative to form innovation teams at the different layers of its public administration is directed at meeting the same challenges. Without any research findings on the initiatives taken so far, the GOB is less equipped with means to formulate appropriate policy to expedite its innovation efforts. The rationale of this study lies at this point. Its findings will help the concerned agencies of Bangladesh in redesigning its policies with regard to fostering innovation in the public offices. Its findings will also help researchers for extending their understanding of how the conceptualization of innovation affects innovation activities of the innovators and sustenance of innovations.

1.5 Limitations

The study has limitations in the scope of its subject matter and data collection. With regard to its subject matter, the study focuses on three aspects—it describes the understanding of the concept of innovation of the innovation team members, their innovation efforts, and sustenance of the innovations brought by them. With regard to the data collection issue, the study is based on 62 qualitative interviews conducted with innovation officers and members of 31 innovation teams from 16 sub-districts and 15 districts. This small base of data constraints the generalization of the study findings.

1.6 Organization of the Report

The second chapter reviews the literature on innovation in the public sector. This chapter focuses on the concept of innovation, innovation process, and problems of innovation in the public sector. The third chapter describes the methodology followed in the research. The fourth chapter presents the findings of the study. The fifth and final chapter discusses the findings, makes a conclusion, and makes some recommendations based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The public sector has felt overwhelming pressure for becoming more efficient and effective. The ever-growing expectation on the public sector is that it will come out of its organizational culture of rigidity and change itself through new reforms involving innovation. Because of this, it is argued that the public sector is incapable to innovate (Axelson et al. 2017). The belief in its incapability is so strong that scholars even considered the public sector and innovation as an oxymoron (Borins 2002). This conclusion was drawn from the experience of the public sector being monopolies, centralized, rules-based, and change-resistant. However, the ubiquitous nature of the new information and communication technologies and criticism of its inefficiency has compelled the public sector to innovate for its own survival (Borins 2002). Therefore, the demand for innovation in the public sector has gained ground as the tax base of the governments becomes saturated, and the demand for better services increases. A need is felt for bringing efficiency in the public sector through innovation. This chapter presents a review of the relevant literature on public sector innovation. The literature focuses on the concept of innovation, innovation processes, and the problems associated with public sector innovation.

2.2 Concepts

As is usual in social science, the concept of innovation has been defined differently by scholars. In spite of the difference, there are some commonalities that can be found in the definitions. Mulgan (2014) as cited in Bankins et al. (2016) referred to ‘practical ideas’ fetching benefits to the public to mean innovation in the public sector. Bason (2010), cited in Axelson et al. (2017), defined innovation as ‘new ideas’ that create value for society. These definitions depict innovation as ideas that are new and effective, which are

transformed into reality to benefit people. Innovation is an intentional and learning-based practice that is driven by innovation entrepreneurs who identify problems, look for their solutions, and mobilize resources (Sørensen and Torfing 2012).

Osborne and Brown (2011) report the concept of innovation having two connotations: discontinuous change and continuous improvement. They argue that each of the conceptions of innovation requires different management approaches. Conflating these ideas makes innovation difficult.

2.3 Innovation Process

The pressure for public sector innovation is so consistent that, in spite of difficulties and resistance, the concept has entered into the practice of public officials gradually. Bankins et al. (2016) citing Bason (2010) found that innovation in the public sector has moved gradually from a state of awareness about it to identification of the barriers to it, and then efforts to embed innovation in the culture of the public sector. It implies that, if this is true, embarking upon innovation without preparing the ground for it may not bring the desired outcome in the public sector.

Innovation starts with an individual's efforts (Frost and Egri 1991 cited in Bankins et al. 2016). The individual is a key agent in the process. He has to rise above his formal role and push an innovation idea to implementation (Howell et al. 2005 cited in Bankins et al. 2016). Two concepts relating to human agents are dominant in innovation activities: champion and promoter (Bankins et al. 2016). The champions are individuals within organizations, who rise above their formal roles, are courageous and take risks, are persistent and energetic, and bear intrinsic motivation. Champions can be both at the lower and the higher levels of organizations. The concept of 'champion' has two sub-concepts—innovation champions (ICs) and champions of innovation (CoIs). While the former are lower or mid-level managers, the latter are top-level individuals who exert influence over decision-making and resource flow. Considering the hierarchic and power-dependent character of the public sector, Bankins et al. (2016) argued that a public sector

organization needs multiple innovation agents of ICs and CoIs to overcome the complexity and barriers to innovation.

To become successful, innovation requires the collaboration of multiple agents. The public sector innovation is not an exception. The public sector nowadays does not confine its innovation efforts to itself only. It looks outward for new ideas and their implementation. This outward orientation is due to the quality and quantity of the public sector innovations that cannot cope up with the problems that it faces (Bommert 2010). To become successful in the public sector, innovation needs an entrepreneurial practice (Cummings 2015). It requires flexibility because without iterative process and adaptive mentality innovation is not possible. Sørensen and Torfing (2012) argued that the public sector now joins networks, makes partnerships, interacts with other actors for the development and implementation of new ideas to reinvigorate its policies and services. These are multi-actor collaboration for innovation which Sørensen and Torfing (2012) call collaborative innovations.

Citing an example from Denmark, Cummings (2015) argued that the innovation process has to accommodate a network of public and private sector collaboration to search for new ideas and to put them to the test. According to Sørensen and Torfing (2012), innovations in the public sector are driven by supply and demand factors. Digital technologies act as the supply factors that facilitate new ways in the interface between the public sector organizations and the citizens. On the other hand, people's representatives, public officials, and citizen's groups call for new ways of doing things that can be termed as demand factors of innovation.

According to Stewart-Weeks and Kastle (2015) innovation happens in three phases: infection, inspiration, and implementation. Terming innovation as a 'bug', they argued that it affects organizations as a 'good virus'. Organizations adopt innovation to protect themselves from 'bad viruses'. At the inspiration phase, some organizational and cultural big factors determine whether innovation will happen or succeed. These factors include permission from the leadership of the organization. This is reflected in how innovators are treated in the organization. As innovation is a counter-intuitive idea, it

upsets many in an organization as it disrupts vested interests and the settled notion of power, control, and authority. Therefore, innovation requires courage—individual or collective. Another factor that affects the second phase—inspiration—, as is argued by Stewart-Weeks and Kastle (2015), is the creation of opportunities for those who are motivated, courageous, and energetic and wants to innovate. The third phase is the implementation of innovative ideas. It requires a visceral level of commitment. Stewart-Weeks and Kastle (2015) argued that implementation of innovative ideas is not a job of a committee, or a team, or an executive. It is a day job of an individual of an organization who needs persistence, patience, and purpose. This does not mean the exclusion of other people of the organization. He has to take the others onboard. The innovator has to overcome the ‘tyranny of existing routines’ with the help of other people within the system making them endure the discomfort of varying existing routines.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This was exploratory and thereby an inductive study. Research on innovation activities in the context of Bangladesh's public administration is new. Yet more than five years have elapsed since the GOB issued a circular prescribing the formation of innovation teams at the different layers of its public administration. How these teams are working and contributing to the desired end of the government is yet to be known. In the absence of any scientific knowledge on this issue, an exploratory design becomes the most appropriate approach to the understanding of the phenomenon of innovation in the research context. The study started with almost a blank page with very little knowledge of the issues of the study and gradually developed its variables as the research process went on.

3.2 Data collection method

Data were collected using qualitative interviews with innovation team members of two different tiers of the public administration in Bangladesh known as field administration which are district and sub-district levels. A checklist was developed covering the points that emerged from the literature review including the GOB publications. This checklist was followed by the interviewers for conducting their interviews with the public officials involved in the innovation team. The interview checklist covered the major points involved in the objectives of the study. The checklist was pre-tested in interviews with officials from an innovation team and was modified based on the interview experience. Most importantly, in the course of an interview, subsequent questions were asked by the interviewers to the interviewees in the light of the answers given to the previous queries so far.

Two data collectors were engaged in conducting interviews. They had completed their postgraduate degrees from a public university in social science disciplines. Both were given orientation training on how to conduct qualitative interviews using the pre-tested checklist and were informed of the issues that emerged from the pre-test interviews. The interviews were conducted in the Bangla language.

3.3 Checklist for interview

Qualitative interviews are conducted based on checklists which cover important issues of the topic of the study. A checklist for qualitative interviews for this study was finalized after conducting a couple of interviews by the researcher. The following checklist covers only some broad areas of the topic of the study. Conducting qualitative interviews is an art. The interviewer needs to do prompt at relevant points of time of the interview to elicit relevant information from the interviewees. The checklist covered the following major points. The full checklist is annexed to this report as an appendix.

1. A full description of the particulars of the innovation team members as per the format provided by the researcher (see the appendix);
2. Length of experience of being involved in the current innovation team; length of experience of being involved in innovation teams before;
3. Length of experience in the current position; educational background; length of total service in this job;
4. His/her understanding of the concept of innovation; what is innovation in his/her eyes? What are his/her views about the implication of innovation in the public sector? What impact it has on public administration in general and on the service delivery of his/her office or teammates' offices in particular?
5. How does the innovation team work? How does it operate? What does it do for innovation?
6. List of innovation activities of the team so far undertaken; What experience he gathered with regard to innovation activities (both negative and positive experiences);

7. A detailed description of each innovation activity: where the ideas came from; when it was initiated; what it is about; how it contributes to public services/work process; how it works;
8. From his/her point of view, what are the problems/challenges of innovation activities he/she experienced; how he/she has overcome them;
9. Are the innovations still in operation? What problems were there in operationalising the innovations? How do the innovations work? How each innovation benefits service delivery process and service recipients; if the innovation is not in operation, why did it fail?

3.4 Sampling and sample size

The population of this research constitutes all the members and the innovation officers of the field level innovation teams formed following the GOB (2013) circular. The field-level innovation teams include the district level and the sub-district level innovation teams. Each of the sixty-four districts and 491 sub-districts has one innovation team. Accordingly, the research population spreads all over Bangladesh. For this study, a manageable number of samples from two tiers of the public administration, namely district and sub-district levels, were chosen. The unit of analysis was the individual team members of the innovation teams.

The samples for interviews were chosen following a multi-stage sampling process. Each individual was considered as a sample. The samples cover all eight administrative divisions of the country. The first sampling frame constituted the sixty-four districts of the country. From this sampling frame, sixteen districts were proportionately chosen considering the number of districts in each administrative division following simple random sampling. Out of these chosen sixteen districts, one district could not be covered for interviews. Therefore, fifteen districts were covered for interviews. The chosen districts were then excluded from the sampling frame. The sixteen sub-districts were also proportionately chosen from the sampling frame of the remaining fifty districts through simple random sampling. This was done carefully so that the sub-district level innovation teams are chosen from districts that have been left out from the

chosen district-level innovation teams. From this second set of sixteen districts, sixteen sub-districts were chosen from sampling frames of the number of sub-districts of each district through simple random sampling.

Table 3. 1: Number of Interviews for the Study

Tier of Innovation Team	No. of Innovation Team	No. of Interview
District	15	30
Sub-District	16	32
Total	31	62

Table 3. 2: Innovation Teams Selected for Interviews

Administrative Division	Selected District Innovation Team	Selected Upazila Innovation Team
1. Chattogram	1. Cumilla	1. Boalkhali, Chattogram
	2. Lakshmipur	2. Lama, Bandarban
	3. Chandpur	3. Kawkhali, Rangamati
2. Sylhet	4. Moulvibazar	4. Lakhai, Habiganj
3. Mymensingh	5. Netrokona	5. Jhenaigati, Sherpur
4. Dhaka	6. Gopalganj	6. Shariatpur Sadar
	7. Madaripur	7. Sonargaon, Narayanganj
	8. Manikganj	8. Dohar, Dhaka
5. Barishal	9. Bhola	9. Nalchity, Jhalakathi
	10. Pirojpur	10. Mirzaganj, Patuakhani
6. Khulna	11. Meherpur	11. Morrelganj, Bagerhat
	12. Magura	12. Narail Sadar
7. Rajshahi	13. Chapainawabganj	13. Sujanagar, Pabna
	14. Thakurgaon	14. Tanore, Rajshahi
8. Rangpur	15. Panchagarh	15. Dimla, Nilphamari
		16. Chilmari, Kurigram

From each selected team, two persons were interviewed: the innovation officer and another member of the team. According to the GOB (2013) circular, the team leader at the ministry or division level is called the chief innovation officer and that at the other levels i.e. agency, district, and sub-district is called an innovation officer. Fifteen district level and another sixteen sub-district level innovation teams were chosen which resulted in 30 interviews from the district level innovations teams and another 32 interviews from the sub-district level interview teams. The distribution of innovation teams and interviews is presented in Table 1 while Table 2 shows the names of the districts and the sub-districts from where innovation teams are chosen for interviews.

3.5 Data Processing and Analysis

After conducting the interviews, they were transcribed verbatim. The analytical process followed the thematic approach. In this process, the first ten interviewees were thoroughly read to develop a good understanding of the opinions of the interviewees to develop codes. Two types of codes were developed. First, the meaningful parts of the interviews were coded through descriptive coding. Then looking at the patterns of the descriptive codes, further pattern codes or interpretive codes were developed. These pattern codes were arranged into a thematic framework keeping in view the three objectives of the research. Then the thematic framework was applied to the rest of the interviews. In other words, data from the rest of the interviews were added to the thematic framework. After completion of writing the draft report, the researcher validated the findings by visiting one district innovation team—in Mymensingh district—and another sub-district innovation team—in Bhangura sub-district of Pabna district—and talking to the team members. These visits provided an insight into the different dimensions of the innovation team that had been incorporated in the report.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study in different sections. After this first introductory section, a discussion on the demographic information of the respondents is presented in the second section. Findings on the three objectives of the study have been sequentially presented in the next three sections. In doing so, to fulfill the first objective, the meaning of innovation, as per the understanding of the participants, is presented in the third section. Concerning the meaning of innovation, the analytical framework, that developed in the process of data analysis, has resulted in six dimensions of the concept i.e., newness, self-realization, citizen's benefits, service provider's benefits, modernization of society, and use of ICT. In understanding the meaning of innovation, this section also presents the respondents' perception about who should do innovation, and how they feel about the innovation task. The fourth section presents the innovation activities of the innovation teams and this fulfills the second objective of the study. This section first looks at some aspects of the 'team' culture of the respondents. A reflexive discussion is offered on their 'team' spirit, attitude towards their team membership, feelings about their team membership, and their opinions about innovation team formation. This section then discusses the process of work of the innovation teams. It also looks at two aspects of innovation training: the training that the respondents have received and the training they expect to have. Finally, this section gives an account of the actual innovation activities of the innovation teams. To fulfill the third objective of the study, the fifth section presents the perceptions of the respondents about the effectiveness and sustainability of their innovation activities. It highlights the problems the respondents mentioned that hinder their innovation activities.

Table 4. 1: Selected Innovation Teams for Interviews

Demographic			
Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender n=62	Male	55	88.7
	Female	7	11.3
Age n=62 Mean=37.84	Up to 25 years	0	0
	26-35 years	25	40.3
	36-45 years	28	45.2
	46-55 years	8	12.9
	56 years and above	1	1.6
Highest Education n=62	Bachelor	11	17.7
	Master	51	82.3
Experience in Current Job n=62 Mean=9.53	Up to 5 years	14	22.6
	6-10 years	26	41.9
	11-15 years	13	21.0
	16-20 years	6	9.7
	21 years and above	3	4.8
Experience of working in Current Innovation Team n=60 Mean=2 years Min= $2\frac{1}{2}$ months, Max: 5 years	Less than 1 year	7	11.7
	1-2 years	26	43.3
	Above 2 years	27	45.0
Experience of Working in Previous Innovation Teams n=61 Mean=2 years 9 months Min=10 months, Max: 77 months	No experience	30	49.2
	Less than 1 year	2	3.3
	1-2 years	12	19.7
	Above 2 years	17	27.9

4.2 Demographic Information

Table 4.1 shows some demographic information of the respondents. Over 88 percent of them were male. Most respondents were in the middle-aged group. Their mean age was nearly 38 years. The respondents were moderately experienced in their current job. Their mean job experience in their current job was about 10 years. Over 80 percent of the respondents had a master's degree. Their average experience in the current innovation team was 2 years while the minimum was two and a half months and the maximum was 5 years. Nearly half of the respondents had the experience of working in previous innovation teams of different lengths while the minimum was 10 months and the maximum was 6 years and 5 months.

4.3 Understanding Innovation

The first objective of this study was to explore the understanding of 'innovation' by the members of the innovation teams working at the field levels of the public administration of Bangladesh. Understanding of the concept of innovation, from the research participants' points of view, has been explored from the perspectives of the meaning of the concept, responsibility to innovate, and feeling about the innovation task. Therefore, the understandings are presented here in three sub-sections. Firstly, the meaning of the concept of innovation has been presented. Secondly, what the respondents think about who should innovate. Thirdly, how they feel about the task of innovation.

4.3.1 The Meaning of Innovation

The research participants were asked to share their understandings about the concept of innovation. It is found that they bear different ideas about the concept. Looking at their patterns, the ideas have been subsumed under six categories: *newness*, *self-realization*, *citizens' benefits*, *providers' benefits*, *modernization of society*, and *information and communication technology*. Besides these dimensions, a different but narrow understanding of innovation was sensed in the interviews and that was the *visibility* of innovation. In other words, innovation should be something that others can see. One innovation officer told: "It is something that is visible. (It is) a work that can be

understood” (Interview 4). One district level innovation officer identified the invisibility of innovation as a challenge. This respondent was worried whether he could “show something visible” as his innovation (Interview 48). Citing visibility of distribution of allowance or agricultural works, he told: “... the extent innovation is visible in these cases, is not visible in our service delivery. This is another big challenge for an innovation team” (Interview 48). However, the dimensions of the concept as are understood by the participants are elaborated below:

4.3.1.1 Newness

Newness is a common dimension in the understanding of the research participants of the innovation concept. It refers to something new or a new way of doing something. This may relate to a new way of delivering services which makes a delivery process easy and the new way is better. These are better ideas about the organized way of service delivery that leads to better lives. “Doing something new is innovation ... for the benefit of the public or for the service provider” Interview 25). Ideas that combine existing detached things are also branded as new ideas and thereby are innovations (Interview 3).

4.3.1.2 Self-Realization

According to the perception of the respondents, self-realization is a part of innovation. This self-realization involves a change in the mental software of a person (Interview 7) which guides him to have good practices and good behaviours (Interview 9). Self-realization is a pre-condition to innovation without which one cannot undertake innovation activities. Self-realization directed innovations lead to practices and behaviour that brings transparency and accountability in the service delivery processes (Interview 3) and ultimately it leads to a corruption-free society (Interview 10).

4.3.1.3 Citizen's Benefits

Innovation is for the benefit of citizens by making service delivery easy. Therefore, innovation is a simplification (Interviews 5, 11) and stopping harassment of people (Interview 34). In other words, innovation is simplifying service procedures ensuring harassment-free service delivery (Interview 57). This results in a reduction in the cost of

the services, and a reduction in the time that service takes for delivery. Therefore, innovation reduces the number of visits a service seeker makes for getting a particular service. It speeds up service delivery and reduces the sufferings of service seekers. It is “doing something that serves the people or does welfare for them or is positive” (Interview 50). Thus, innovations result in the satisfaction of the citizens. Referring to the scope of benefiting citizens, one interviewee told: “In our country, in many cases, people do not get expected services in the way they should get” (Interview 11). The citizen’s benefits lie in making complex procedures simpler through innovation:

Sometimes, it is seen that in the instructions of the government we need to proceed with complex procedures but the tasks can be done in simple procedures compared to the prescribed ones (Interview 6).

4.3.1.4 Service Provider’s Benefits

Innovation also benefits service providers. According to the understanding of the respondents, each innovation makes service delivery easy through simplification of the processes (Interview 10). “When we face any problems in our works, then innovative ideas come to our mind” (to remove the problem) (Interview 29). It makes tasks easy (Interview 6). “Reducing the gap between the service provider and the service receiver is innovation” (Interview 30). Therefore, innovation brings some sort of relief to service providers. One interviewee explained how innovations benefit service providers:

Doing innovation is not an additional load. Rather it reduces the workload. Serving a client traditionally takes time. But if we can simplify the service process through innovation, the workload reduces. So, we have to take some additional workload (for doing innovations) to remove a larger workload (Interview 59).

4.3.1.5 Modernization of Society

Innovation is directed to the modernization of society (Interview 7). It brings in the modern work process in service delivery. This results in positive changes in the socio-economic condition in society. Referring to the complexities in the public offices where service processes are designed by the central administration but implemented by the local

administration, a sub-district level innovation team member noted that sometimes the processes “don’t adjust to the practical lives” but people expect better services (Interview 50). Failure to meet the people’s expectations creates problems and “innovation is necessary to remove these problems” (Interview 50). This means simplifying the “traditional work process by reducing time and deleting unnecessary activities without hampering the main output” (Interview 47). Thus, innovation contributes to the modernization of society. Innovation is “how well we can do what we are supposed to do ... how better we can serve people” for “qualitative change” (Interview 54). It is needed to match with time (Interview 44).

4.3.1.6 Use of Information and Communication Technology

The research participants generally believe that innovation is the use of information and communication technologies (ICT). Without using ICT it is difficult to make services easy. Therefore, the introduction of ICT in the service delivery system is innovation (Interview 5) although it does not necessarily relate to technology only (Interview 40). One district level innovation officer explained:

Innovation is not only about technology, or the use of computers or laptops. There can be innovations in the manual processes through which services are given to citizens. The goal is how easily services can be given (Interview 57).

4.3.2 Innovation Responsibility

To innovate is a responsibility primarily of the public officials although mixed opinions about the task are available among the officials involved in the innovation teams. Almost all agree that it is a task of the service providers. However, many respondents said that innovation ideas may come from the service seekers or from the people who have knowledge about science and technology. Others included the people’s representatives in the people who can do innovation. There are also opinions about NGOs who can provide innovative ideas. The following excerpt is a reflection of the general opinion of the respondents:

In general, the job of innovation should be the responsibility of those who provide public services. However, this should not be limited to them only. If the NGOs and the general citizens can understand at the time of seeking services (from the public offices) that the service can be given in a particular way, they also can provide innovation ideas (Interview 10).

The respondents also think that the job of innovation can also be left for people outside the government who have the expertise and are enthusiastic in innovation activities. One innovation officer opined that “external experts—they may be teachers or student groups—who are nowadays doing things such as stopping child marriage” may provide innovation ideas (Interview 2). Recognizing the frustrating nature of the innovation teams, a district-level innovation officer suggested the establishment of research cells (Interview 7) and a sub-district-level innovation officer suggested creation of a new post of innovation officer (Interview 59) for doing innovation tasks: “it (innovation) is not being fruitful. A research cell could be established to do this” (Interview 7). In other words, the task of innovation may lie with the ministries or agencies as is identified by another district-level innovation officer:

It would not be appropriate to leave innovation only to the district or Upazila innovation teams. Ideas can be generated centrally from the Cabinet Division or the departmental headquarters and given to the field level teams for implementation (Interview 61).

4.3.3 Feeling about Innovation Task

It is a general understanding developed from the interviews that the officials involved in the innovation teams did not enjoy the innovation task although some of them reported their enjoyment in the task. Feeling proud of working in the innovation team, one sub-district level innovation officer told:

We dream to be a developed country by 2041. To materialize that dream we need to work hard. The complexities in our service delivery processes make us worried. As a son of this nation, I feel an urge from inside that I have to do something for

the country and the nation. Therefore, I work (in the team) feeling good (Interview 49).

Scope to innovate lies in the normal office activities (Interview 8). Another district-level innovation officer who did not take part in any innovation training took the innovation task as a regular activity of his daily routine:

We always try to do our tasks (providing services) in the shortest possible time and invent a new delivery process. Innovation is a part of this endeavor. We don't feel it an extra burden (Interview 47).

Presenting the innovation task as a passion, one sub-district level innovation officer asserted the following:

My involvement in the innovation team is most liking to me and I love to do this (innovation). I did many innovation works in my previous offices when I was posted as an assistant commissioner (in the land offices) in Narayanganj Sadar and Putiadi Upazila of Kishoregonj district. I got awards at the district and divisional levels for my innovation works (Interview 4).

However, the verbal assertions as stated above are countered by some dissenting arguments. To many of the respondents, the innovation task was annoying because, in their consideration, it was a task imposed on them by another ministry and therefore was an extra burden amidst their regular activities. They took it as an extra pressure (Interview 40). One sub-district level team member said: "it (innovation activity) appears to be pressure because the government's activities are increasing and we cannot keep pace with cool head (Interview 50). A district-level innovation officer considered doing innovation an extra work:

Innovation is outside our regular work. It needs extra hard work, extra time. Not all have a mindset of giving extra effort or extra time to innovation (Interview 61).

Some respondents recognized the innovation initiative as a good one but denied it to be their responsibility:

It (innovation) is, of course, a good aspect ... (but) we are always busy with our works. We do a lot of works. In the midst of these, it (innovation) is not our departmental work... It has come from the Ministry of Public Administration (Interview 3).

The shortage of time due to workload has appeared as a factor. Sometimes, pressure comes from meeting deadlines: “if we are told to send innovation ideas every month, it becomes a pressure on us. It creates pessimism instead of enthusiasm” (Interview 31, sub-district level innovation officer). Another sub-district level innovation officer told: “I don’t get time to think of innovation due to my huge workload” (Interview 59). This workload even keeps them away from sitting in innovation meetings: “all are busy with their respective departmental works. We cannot manage time to sit together” (Interview 51). Meeting deadlines has been a cause of annoyance. One district level innovation officer explained his cause of annoyance in the following excerpt:

(This innovation task is) very annoying ... Innovation cannot be done hurriedly and not everyone can do it... The system requires us to do meetings every month. But due to our busy schedule, we cannot do it (every month). When we get pressure from the above, we begin it... Meetings are held for the sake of formality only and to take credit (Interview 2).

One district level innovation officer who identified himself as a chief innovation officer in the interview saying “I am chief innovation officer by the designation” had arranged one meeting of the team after joining the district team and found in that meeting that the members of the team were “not involved in the team in the true sense” (Interview 48). Showing his frustration over the innovation task, another district-level innovation officer expressed his feelings in the following words:

We cannot finish our office work even. (Therefore), thinking about innovation is difficult for us. Let me tell you the truth. No one has a mentality to innovate. All run after money. There is no headache about service to people. It will not work in

this way in this country. We remain so loaded (with works) that we even cannot think about it (innovation). I don't know what information you have. But I can tell you that in the last three years or so it has not progressed well. I keep information from all districts and I know that it is everywhere the same. Everybody does things (about innovation) being in a fix. This cannot take us very far. You (the government) are imposing works (on us) one after another but not increasing manpower or other things. We need to observe 100 to 150 different days out of the 365 ones (Interview 7).

4.4 Innovation Activities

4.4.1 *Team versus Committee*

The government decided to introduce one innovation team in each ministry, division, agency, district, and sub-district with the objectives of enhancing dynamism in works of and the capability of innovation in the public administration of the country; and innovating and practicing ways to deliver public services quickly and easily (GOB 2013). To attain these noble objectives, the government introduced 'teams' in the work process of the public administration by forming the innovation teams. The concept of a team in the field of private sector management has meanings that, in general, are contradictory to the practices followed in public sector management. The public bureaucracies work in a hierarchic structure which contradicts with features of team works.

The extant literature on teams does not present an agreed-upon definition of the concept and its framework. However, a team is a body of multiple people of divergent qualities. After reviewing scholarly works, Cohen and Bailey (1997) arrived at a definition of teams, irrespective of their typologies, as a body of individuals who are independent in their tasks but have shared responsibility for achieving desired outcomes, who are seen by others as an intact social entity embedded in a larger social system, and who manage their relationships across organizational boundaries. Belbin (1981, 1993), cited in Aritzeta et al. (2007), argued that a team to perform well needs representation of nine team roles which are completer-finisher, implementer, team worker, specialist,

monitor-evaluator, coordinator, resource investigator, plant, and sharper. On the other hand, Cohen and Bailey (1997) presented a heuristic framework for the effectiveness of a team where they argued that several factors determine a team's effectiveness: environmental factors, design factors, group process, and group psychosocial traits.

The qualities of a team are usually not found in the public sector workgroups. The public officials are not habituated in team works. They are used to work in committees. The committee culture is so inbuilt in their work process that although the interviewers asked the interviewees questions about innovation teams, they mentioned the terms 'innovation committee' repeatedly in their responses. When a district-level innovation officer was asked how he became involved in the innovation *team*, the reply was:

... The UNOs are the *chairpersons* of the Upazila level *innovation committees* ... on the other hand, ... the ADC General is the chairperson of this committee (district level) ... The Upazila committees send us their innovative ideas (Interview 2).

Another sub-district-level innovation team member shared his understanding of his innovation team: "... (it is) prescribed from the ministry that he (UNO) would be the *chairperson* and most probably another four or five are members of this *committee*" (Interview 3). Explaining his membership in the innovation team, another district-level team member said: "... (I) have come here as an ex officio member of this *committee* ... these works are presented before the *committee* ..." (Interview 8).

4.4.1.1 Team Formation Guidelines

The GOB (2013) has prescribed how innovation teams at the different tiers of the public administration, i.e., ministry/division, directorate/agency, district, and sub-district, should be formed. Each team at the ministry/division level will have a chief innovation officer and 3-5 members. Each team at the directorate/agency, district, and sub-district levels will have an innovation officer and 3-5 members. The GOB (2013) has almost fixed who would be the chief innovation officer or the innovation officer at each level of the tiers. At the ministry/division level, an officer equivalent to an additional secretary or a joint

secretary will be the innovation officer. At the directorate/agency level, an officer of the rank of a director will be the innovation officer. At the district and sub-district levels, an additional deputy commissioner and the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (sub-district executive officer) respectively will be the innovation officer.

Team formation authority lies with different officials for the different tiers of public administration. The secretary of a ministry or a division will form its innovation team. The head of a directorate or an agency has the authority to form its innovation team. The deputy commissioner of a district is the authority to form innovation teams for the district as well as for each of the sub-district under the district. The GOB (2013) has some guidelines for selecting the members of an innovation team. Out of the 3-5 members of an innovation team, at least one member will be from each of the ICT and the planning departments of a ministry/division, at least one member will be from each of the ICT and the planning cells of a directorate/agency. In the case of the district innovation team, one member will be an assistant commissioner; and in the case of the sub-district level innovation team, the assistant commissioner of the land office of the sub-district will be a member.

The previous discussion reveals that the authorities at the different tiers of the public administration have limited leeway in forming innovation teams. They can choose only 2 or 3 members for each team following the guidelines outlined in the GOB (2013) circular. One guideline is higher-level training or education of an officer under consideration. It does not clarify what is meant by higher-level training or education. Another guideline is the mentality of the officer under consideration of taking extra responsibility. Another important guideline is the eagerness of the officer under consideration in taking part in innovative activities. The other guidelines include leadership capability, mentality, and capability of working in teams, and that of helping others. Once a team is formed, its members can be changed on the ground of transfer of an officer or any other logical causes. This research, therefore, wanted to know what the respondents thought about their memberships in the innovation teams. The next section discusses this membership issue.

4.4.1.2 Membership

As is discussed in the preceding paragraph, each innovation team is led by a chief innovation officer or an innovation officer and these are ex officio positions. Even for choosing members of the innovation team at each level, there are some ex officio positions too. Therefore, very limited scope is there for authorities to choose members for the innovation team. The respondents were asked for opinions about their memberships in the innovation team. In fact, in the field level innovation teams i.e. Upazila and district levels, the authority—the deputy commissioner—has chosen members based on his/her understanding about the quality and experience of the officers. It appears from the interviews that the team members were not asked whether they want to join the innovation team. Rather the authorities had chosen the limited members based on their understanding of the ability of the officers.

One district level innovation team member shared his perception about team formation by telling that the offices which were “big in size” and were “advanced in innovation activities” were included in his team (Interview 42). Mentioning the criteria of membership in the innovation team, another district-level innovation team member explained his understanding of innovation team formation in the following words:

In fact, the deputy commission sir has formed this team with those who are skilled in this work and seem to have eagerness ... and are involved in such type of work” (Interview 1).

A sub-district level innovation officer described how the members of his team were chosen:

We formed the innovation team considering few qualifications (of the officers) which are ICT- and science-related mindset, leadership capability, willingness about innovation, and experience in innovation works or of working in an innovation team” (Interview 4).

Echoing a similar type of qualification, another sub-district-level innovation officer mentioned the process of selection of members for the team:

Officers are called in a meeting and are asked to express their willingness to join the innovation team. So the team is formed based on their willingness (Interview 49).

Although these interviewees referred to ‘willingness’ as a criterion for choosing a member, it was not substantiated by the discussion with the other members. In fact, one member told that he knew himself as an ex officio member of the team. Therefore, it does not matter whether he was willing or not. One member of an innovation team told: “(I) did not express (my) willingness. UNO sir selected (us) as he needed 4 or 5 members” (Interview 10). When a member of a district innovation team was asked about his willingness to join the team, his reply was: “no, we were not given an option (about joining the team)” (Interview 13). Even a district-level innovation team member did not know about his membership in the team before the interview date: “I did not attend any meeting of this committee. I knew this today although it was formed one year ago” (Interview 25). Pointing to the arbitrary nature of membership selection, one district-level team member commented: “the innovation team members have been chosen whimsically. Team members have to be innovative which has not happened” (Interview 26).

4.4.1.3 Expected Innovation Teams

There is an overwhelming understanding among the interviewees that the current team formation requires reformation although some respondents believe that the current formation can continue. However, most respondents opined in favour of reformation. Also, there are differences in the opinions of the members of the innovation teams over who should be involved in the team. One of the reformulation issues is who should be in the innovation teams. Three categories of opinions were found. One category suggests how innovation teams should be formed i.e., how the members of the teams should be selected. Another category suggests that membership in the team should be selective while the other one suggests team membership to be open to all.

The opinions about team formation argue that innovation teams should be formed in a participatory manner. In other words, membership in the team should not be fixed as ex officio. One member of a team who had been working in a sub-district level

innovation team for over a year suggested that members of the team should be chosen through community participation to benefit the team (Interview 30). This caution is necessary because “an innovation team should be formed with those who are good in this job, are willing ... to implement innovative ideas” (Interview 11). “Flexibility in forming an innovation team is needed with an option to co-opt other members” (Interview 40). This flexibility should allow a change in the membership, based on yearly performance assessment of the members. A district-level team member opined:

I think the team can be changed each year based on the members’ performance. It is observed that many do not get involved in innovation activities. They remain just for as their names are in the team. So the eager persons can be included in a revised team (Interview 38).

One district team member placed his arguments in favour of reformulation of innovation teams consisting of officers who are interested in innovation activities through an analogy with a group of farmers:

If the farmers sit together, they will discuss their produce and their land. Likewise, innovation teams should be formed with officials who understand it and are willing. Then they will at least discuss it (Interview 58).

To some interviewees, only office heads should be involved in the team while others argued that young officers should be in the team. These are mutually exclusive opinions because, usually, the young officers are juniors and they are not the office heads in most cases. The current structure of the innovation team “is not bad ... but it should consist of the heads of the offices” (Interview 7). However, in contradiction to this view, there are opinions that “all officers are not equally innovative” (Interview 33). Therefore, membership to the teams should be selective, and “... the young should get priority in an innovation team. Young officers always think and practice creativity” (Interview 5). These “officers have eagerness and curiosity about innovation” (Interview 32).

According to the GOB (2013) circular, each innovation team can have 3-5 members. Contradicting this number of members, many respondents opined to increase

the number to include all offices of an administrative unit i.e., Upazila or district. “The team is small. It should have representatives from all offices” (Interview 26). Placing his argument for this logic, one sub-district team member opined: “there are other officers beyond the team members. We are not taking their ideas. Every officer should get involved it (Interview 34). An argument behind an enlarged team is idea generation: “an enlarged team will have the possibility of receiving more innovative ideas” (Interview 41). Another member of an innovation team placed his arguments in favour of idea generation logic:

I think officers from all offices of the district should be included because we 5-7 persons do meetings and I don't think that this is effective. If all offices are included, more (innovative) ideas will come and few from them can be chosen for implementation (Interview 1).

However, opinions for an enlarged team with office heads only are also suggested:

An expansion of this (innovation) team would be better. All offices provide services. (Therefore) accommodating all offices (in the team) will not be bad. I think placing the office heads (in the team) will be good (Interview 10).

Countering the idea of office-heads-only in the innovation team, a sub-district level team member is in favour of seeing innovation ideas from lower-grade officials too:

Nowadays, people with master's degrees are joining lower grade jobs. These officials can give innovative ideas as well (Interview 60).

The views of a district-level innovation officer are supportive of the above-mentioned flexibility:

In my personal opinion, if we can know that somebody is innovative and can be helpful to us, we should consider his involvement in the team (Interview 47).

Apart from opinions on inclusion of public officials in innovation teams, some respondents also suggested the inclusion of officials from elected representatives to local

bodies, teachers and students, officials from non-government organizations (NGOs) among others. A sub-district level innovation officer argued: “teachers and local elected representatives should be included in innovation teams because many innovation initiatives require them for implementation” (Interview 54). Another sub-district level innovation officer told:

Innovation should not be limited to a boundary—the government officers only. It should be open-ended. Whoever would like to contribute should get an opportunity to be involved in innovation works such as NGO representatives, private service holders, teachers, and journalists (Interview 49).

Funding for innovation activities is a concern for innovation teams. The innovation officers think that the inclusion of NGOs in innovation teams can mitigate the funding problem to some extent. Here is an argument from a district team member:

The committee formation (innovation team) is okay. However, the placement of NGOs (in the team) will be good because they have fund and they can use the funds for multipurpose use at the local level. But in our case, everything is decided centrally. We don't have the power to spend fund (for innovation activities) (Interview 8).

4.4.2 Work Process

The concept of ‘work process’ is used here to mean the way the innovation teams perform their assigned responsibilities. When the respondents were asked to tell about their work process, most of them gave an account which can be termed as the normative one. This account does not resemble their descriptive work process which can be sensed from the circumstantial evidence. According to the normative picture, each innovation team works through meetings. In these meetings, the participants do brainstorming and discuss ideas that are generated. They discuss the pros and cons of innovation ideas. In the normative scene, the innovation ideas originate from problems: “we take note of the sufferings of people when delivering services. Then we think about how the problems can be solved” (Interview 50). Some respondents told that, before a meeting is held, ideas

from other offices are sought through sending letters to them. One respondent gave a very normative view of the process:

Each office is given a letter so that they share their innovation ideas (by sending the ideas to the team) and these (the ideas) are read out in the meeting and opinions of the meeting participants are sought. The good ideas are selected and the offices (whose ideas are selected) are encouraged that they can work on these (selected ideas) (Interview 1).

From the above-mentioned excerpt, it also appears that the innovation team's meetings work as a validation authority for ideas concerning whether the idea-submitting offices should proceed with their innovative ideas. This attitude is supported by another excerpt from a district-level innovation officer:

We ... discuss (innovation ideas sent by the UNOs) and advice them for implementation. ... The district (innovation) committee discusses the feasibility of what the Upazila committee sends (Interview 2).

The normative work process is not representative of the descriptive one. This becomes evident when the excerpt from Interview 1 is juxtaposed with the simple confession of Interviewee 2. Both interviewees were from the same innovation team. Moreover, Interviewee 1 was a member of the team while Interviewee 2 was the innovation officer of the same team. There is more evidence of the innovation team performing as a validating authority of innovation ideas and advising others. Rather than solving service delivery problems in own offices, a sub-district level innovation officer told that his innovation team suggests students take science projects, gives guidelines to unemployed youths:

When science fairs of the children are organized, we give them some ideas. We sit with them on behalf of the innovation team. Sometimes, they pick up some ideas and use them in their science projects. Secondly, we also sit with the entrepreneurs of union digital centres. ... We give them some constructive and

positive plans. ... Moreover, we sit with youth groups, employed or unemployed, and give them some guidelines” (Interview 4).

The innovation team’s meetings also discuss who is implementing what and if there are new ideas. One district level innovation officer said that the innovation team also arranges financial support for the implementation of innovative ideas: “if someone shows eagerness to implement new ideas, the committee (innovation team) helps him through projects” (Interview 11). “The innovation ideas that are feasible, people-centric (are discussed) in the monthly meetings and are accepted unanimously and steps are taken for implementation” (Interview 12, district-level team member). The innovation teams also motivate other officers to be innovative: “as each office provides services, we call innovative officers or the office heads of the offices and motivate them for innovation activities” (Interview 57).

However, the descriptive picture shows anomalies in the work process. After depicting a good work process, the respondents could not substantiate the depiction with examples of their innovation works. As mentioned in the quote above from a district innovation officer that his team discusses the feasibility of the innovation ideas sent by the sub-district level teams (actually he mentioned committees instead of teams), he simply confessed that his team could not innovate anything rather he sent reports on the innovation activities of the sub-district level innovation teams to the Divisional Commissioner’s office: “we show to the Commissioner’s office that our activities are going on” (Interview 2). His confession is not an exception. For example, a sub-district level innovation officer simply said: “we could not do anything mentionable” (Interview 29). A district-level innovation officer told that he had no idea about his team’s innovation works (Interview 47).

The hollowness in the team’s performance has been recognized by some interviewees. A district innovation officer could not tell what innovative works his team had done in the district on the ground that he was new in the team (Interview 47). “Nothing has been finalized yet” was the answer from a district team member to the question of what innovation his team has made (Interview 41). A sub-district team

member could not give any idea about his team's innovation works although he had been in the team for the previous six months (Interview 36). A district innovation officer disclosed a fact that the ideas come from his Deputy Commissioner: "it is rare that the innovation team members have given any innovation idea or have implemented such ideas. The DC has given these ideas" (Interview 37). When a sub-district team member was asked to comment on the quality of innovation works of his team, he said the following:

In fact, the question of quality, (idea) collection, and implementation comes when there is an innovation. So far, I did not receive or see any idea. Therefore, the question of implementation does not come. We did not do anything beyond our routine work (Interview 32).

Another characteristic of the work process is that meetings are not held regularly. The GOB circular requires meeting to be held every month. The respondents were asked how often they sit in a meeting. One sub-district level team member said: "every three months the team sits in a meeting" (Interview 30). Organizing meetings does not follow any timetable too. Another member from another sub-district team said: "we do not have specific timetable for (organizing) meetings but, usually, it is held in every three months" (Interview 34). A sub-district level team member said that he was not aware of his team's meeting in the previous six months (Interview 46). Referring to irregularity of meetings, another member told: "as a team, we could not do anything so far. Meetings are also not held" (Interview 52). Identifying the busy schedule of the innovation officer as a barrier one member told that the "UNO is a busy person ... To speak the truth; no meeting was held in last 6-7 months" (Interview 53).

An interviewee (Interview 12) who had given a normative picture of the work process (described above) was asked to describe the innovations that his district team had initiated by then, he described innovations that were taken in the past:

I have seen, after joining this district, that the former DC sir took an innovation to convert two abandoned places into eco parks. It has created employment for

around 50 people. Moreover, there was a gentleman who used to go to the homes of lepers and gave them treatment” (Interview 12).

Moreover, sometimes, meetings are held for the sake of formality only. Although the preceding paragraphs look sound as an innovation work process, other officials depicted a different picture of the process. The innovation meetings appeared to be ineffective. A district team member said: “to speak the truth, meetings are called but little discussions are held ... The team is formed for formality only but is not effective (Interview 58). The formality is maintained to convince the authority only:

The system requires us to hold meetings every month which, sometimes, is not possible due to workload. Meetings are held for the sake of formality only to take credit. ... We show the Commissioner Office that our activities are continuing” (Interview 2).

Therefore, the meetings are held as there is compulsion to do so but without good intension. Thus, the meetings remain unproductive: “we forcibly do meetings with those who ... do not show their willingness” (Interview 40). The team’s “effectiveness is questionable” because meetings are “not being held regularly” (Interview 26). Another respondent told:

The fact is that meetings are not held regularly. When pressure comes from the DC (Deputy Commissioner) office, it (meeting) is held. A report is made quickly and sent” (Interview 3).

The meetings are not devoted to innovation talks only. During the meeting, senior participants (innovation officers) get involved in other works as well. “We do meetings but the sirs (the seniors) remain busy in the meeting (with other things)” (Interview 1). Describing the innovation work process one respondent told:

We receive letters (from the government) through which innovation plans are sought in tabular format. ... Then implementation progress is sought. There is nothing more than this. ... Meetings are held where progress is discussed. But the

step by step works are not done. ... I am in this team for eight months but could not involve myself in it. It is my failure” (Interview 8).

When a member of an innovation team was asked about the interval between meetings, his reply was “we don’t do meetings ... there should be an accountability of higher authority” (Interview 6). Referring to the inadequacy of a meeting time, one member of a sub-district team said:

There was a meeting in the last month. It ended in a very short time. It was not expected because so many district and sub-district offices are involved (in innovation). If discussion on the innovation activities of each of these offices is held, it would require at least a half day meeting” (Interview 16).

When the participants were asked whether they had prepared any work plans or annual reports on their innovation activities, they told that they did not do those. But the GOB circular (2013) asks every team to prepare an annual plan and an annual report on its innovation activities. Even many of them did not know that they needed to do so. “It was not sought from anyone (of us). If it is sought, we will comply” (Interview 3). Some respondents blamed the process for not happening of innovations: “many of us want innovations but it is not happening because of (a faulty) process” (Interview 2). Documents that the teams are supposed to produce are not done. And the result is no meaningful innovation emerged from the teams.

4.4.2.1 Expected Innovation Work Process

Besides holding meetings of the innovation team, some respondents suggested that innovative ideas could come from different sources. The current process of innovation work involves the team members only who sit in meetings and discuss about innovation initiatives. The interviewees expected this innovation work process to be different from the existent one. Most of them believe that innovation should not be a work of the team members only. Innovative ideas could be sought from the citizens and students that could be refined in the innovation teams (Interview 4). A district innovation team member opined that innovation ideas should also come from citizens:

It should not be a duty of the officers only. It should be a responsibility of all employees of an office. It is also a responsibility of the citizens to provide ideas (about innovation) (Interview 1).

Another expectation is that the local level people's representatives should be involved in the innovation activities. Different logics are placed for inclusion of people's representatives in the innovation teams. One sub-district level innovation officer opined that besides including people's representatives in innovation teams, innovation fairs can be organized to get innovation ideas:

The people's representatives of the Upazila and Union Parishad should be in the innovation teams because the government gives them money to spend which can be coordinated (with innovation works). Moreover, innovation weeks can be observed once or twice a year (Interview 4).

There is another argument for inclusion of people's representatives which is explained in the following excerpt:

When we work at the field level, the local people's representatives look for their interests i.e., what is there for them or what they would be given. This kind of mentality has grown. ... If they are included in the innovation team, they can get involved in the innovation process (Interview 16).

The innovation teams expect innovation ideas to come from others voluntarily. They don't consider it as a part of their work process to seek ideas from others including service seekers as feedback on the service delivery process. A district innovation officer expected: "Non-government organizations or those who teach technology in educational institutions can tell us what to do. Service seekers can suggest innovation to us" (Interview 2).

Apart from expected team formation and idea generation, there is another expectation concerning the work process and that is a pressure-free work process. Innovation happens spontaneously and willingly (Interview 40). "Not all have innovative thinking. Innovation cannot happen under pressure. Those who do innovations, they do

willingly” (Interview 27). Meeting deadlines in the case of innovation does not produce good results: “We have to be allowed to think freely and not to be forced” (Interview 39). Innovation has to be an individual responsibility with the team’s role to be encouraging individuals to innovate, monitoring and supervising the innovation activities (Interview 48).

4.4.3 Training on Innovation

4.4.3.1 Knowledge about Innovation Circular

The GOB (2013) circular provides the basic information about the innovation activities to be carried out by an innovation team. It is a 3-page government publication printed by the Bangladesh Government Press and circulated by the Cabinet Division in 2013. It outlines the broad scope of work of an innovation team and the role of an innovation officer or a chief innovation officer. The interview data reveal that few of the officers involved in the innovation teams, both the members and the innovation officers, knew about the GOB (2013) circular.

Many of the interviewees do not have any knowledge about this important government circular. When interviewees were asked whether they knew about the circular, most of them replied in the negative. One reply was: “there is a circular on innovation but cannot remember exactly what is written in that” (Interview 1). One district level innovation officer shared imaginary information about the circular which is partially true and shows his attitude towards the concept of a team:

(The circular) is in the file; (I) cannot remember the steps, for example, (perhaps it shows) the structure of the (innovation) committee. Through the circular, the government says that the ADC general will be its chairperson. The circular shows this committee structure and it is in the file (Interview 2).

Some respondents did not feel the need to look into the circular as was implied in the quotation cited in the preceding paragraph. Some respondents explicitly told that they did not need to read the piece of paper. A sub-district level innovation team member

shared his opinion: “the circular is not with us. It is with the UNO sir. He writes to us and calls a meeting every month” (Interview 3). Casting doubt about the piece, he added:

Maybe it was given. Maybe it is in my previous station (his former office from where he was transferred to the current office). In fact, I know about it. So, I did not feel the need to look for it”.

When this respondent was asked to tell what was in the circular, the reply was:

I cannot remember this at this moment. I did not study it. I have seen it many days back and recently I have not seen it again (Interview 3).

Some respondents claimed to know more than the particular circular. One sub-district level innovation officer said:

I cannot tell at this moment about this office. But I can tell from the past experience that we have got many demi-official letters relating to this (innovation), guidance about forming innovation teams, guidance about how to run (the team), what activities to do regularly ... Not only that we have also got many letters from the innovation fund of the Prime Minister’s office asking (us) to submit project proposals (on innovation) to them (Interview 4).

4.4.3.2 Formal Training on Innovation

Many of the respondents participated in formal training on innovation although a significant number of them (42.6%) did not have any training on the subject. Those who received training had a sharp variation in the period of their training. This variation is evident in the training of the innovation officers and that of the members of the innovation teams. The innovation officers mostly received a 5-day training provided by the access to information (a2i) project of the Prime Minister’s office. On the other hand, the members received a 1-day training mostly provided by the Deputy Commissioner’s office. Some of the respondents, mostly the members of the innovation teams, did not receive any training on innovation from anywhere. Table 4.2 shows training on innovation received by the respondents.

Table 4. 2 Innovation Training of Respondents

Training Duration (Days)	Team Role		Total
	Innovation Officer	Member	
No Training	8 (30.8)	18 (69.2)	26
	(13.1)	(29.5)	(42.6)
1	2 (28.6)	5 (71.4)	7
	(3.3)	(8.2)	(11.5)
2	3 (50.0)	3 (50.0)	6
	(4.9)	(4.9)	(9.8)
5	13 (68.4)	6 (31.6)	19
	(21.3)	(9.8)	(31.1)
6	0	1	1
		(1.6)	(1.6)
7	2 (100.0)	0	2
	(3.3)		(3.3)
Total	28	33	61
	(45.9)	(54.1)	(100.0)

Note: Figures in parentheses show percentage.

Members of the innovation teams expressed their dissatisfaction over the quality of the 1-day training on innovation. One district level team member commented: “the one-day training is not effective. What we had been shown there had finished by the time we returned (to our work stations)” (Interview 1). Some are not willing to recognize the one-day training programme as training: “it can be called an orientation only” (Interview 10).

The respondents opined that extended training on innovation is needed for the team members. One district team member said:

It should be at least a 10-day course. All will understand their works (about innovation) if they can do something about innovation practically in the training otherwise not. ... This is my thinking” (Interview 1).

The respondents were asked about the issues on which they felt the need for training. Three kinds of opinions could be extracted from the interviews: (a) no training,

(b) general and motivation training, and (c) departmental training. The ‘no training is needed’ arguments claim that innovation does not depend on training (Interview 34, 51) because it happens spontaneously (Interview 40), and it is a matter of thinking (Interview 34). One district level innovation officer explained why training is not necessary:

Innovation is making service delivery easy. Those who have a mentality to serve people can do this without training. I don’t think that this needs a separate training. However, training can be arranged to motivate (officers to innovate). But it is not like that training is necessary for this. All officers have their respective departmental training. Now it is their duty to simplify their service processes through the implementation of innovative ideas. No one can train them to implement their ideas (Interview 11).

The expectations on general training include the basic idea about innovation (Interview 48), how innovations are done step by step including coordination with different offices (Interview 31), how to create innovation ideas (Interview 38), and how to begin and implement innovations (Interview 62). A member of an innovation team who had received one-day training in a Deputy Commissioner’s office said: “(training should include) ... the different techniques relating to how a work can be done in an innovative way ” (Interview 6). Another sub-district team member who had been involved in the team for three years but did not receive any training on innovation said: “of course, I need training (on innovation) on how I can start. No one knows about innovation sufficiently” (Interview 3).

Respondents also put emphasis on training on motivational change (Interview 5, 8, 51, 58). Motivational change is very important for innovation which “is difficult to do if the attitude is not changed” (Interview 8). Echoing this argument a sub-district level innovation officer explained in details:

In fact, I think the number one (requirement) is training on changing the mindset ... because if someone’s mindset does not change how he can simplify the service delivery process” (Interview 5).

The motivation for innovation may come from seeing others' innovation. Therefore, visit to “see some innovation activities that have happened before and how they are running now” can be effective to “newcomers in the innovation teams to generate ideas about innovation” (Interview 47). A district-level innovation officer pointed out that foreign tour can be a part of innovation training:

The members of the innovation team can be taken to visit the innovation works in developed countries or even in neighbouring countries where different departments have done innovative works (Interview 2).

Training on ICT has been a priority as well. A sub-district level innovation officer placed ICT next to motivational training: “The second one is training on ICT. This is the age of ICT. Using ICT many things can be simplified” (Interview 5). Giving emphasis on ICT another respondent said:

I think that the innovation team members, firstly, need to be enriched with ICT knowledge. It is the basic (requirement) ... All have more or less departmental training. They need more ICT training (Interview 10).

Some other respondents mentioned training on leadership and project management as their training needs while others focused on sector-wise or department-wise training because each department's work is different from others' (Interview 35).

4.4.4 Innovation Activities

Some innovation team members simply confessed to the poor performance of their innovation teams. A sub-district level innovation officer who had been working in her innovation team for nearly a year said that her team could not do anything that could be mentioned as innovation (Interview 29). In most cases, the respondents referred to the past innovation activities that they did in their previous work stations when they were asked to describe the innovation activities of their innovation teams. A district-level innovation officer who had come to his present work station two months ago said: “I am very new here” (Interview 11). Then this innovation officer stated what innovation he had done in his previous three stations but he could not tell anything about his present team's

innovation activities. Some respondents have simply shared their limitations to innovation activities: “We have limitations in this (innovation activity). We could not perform well. In fact, we could not do anything that we could mention” (Interview 26). The problems of their limited innovation activities are discussed in a later section.

Some personal anecdotes had been found in the interview transcriptions from where it appears that in spite of not having any training on innovation or not participating in the innovation team’s activities some officers had set some examples of innovation that are commendable. A sub-district level team member who never joined the innovation team’s meetings in the previous six months had built a bamboo bridge to facilitate students’ commute to a school in an inundated locality (Interview 46). One district level team member, who had no training on innovation, shared his personal innovation initiative that did not involve any cost:

Inter-primary school sports and cultural competition has ended in this district yesterday. (The usual practice is) it starts at 9:30 in the morning and the chief guest gives prizes in the afternoon. They (students) wait all day sitting on the ground. They come from remote places and remain hungry. I told the deputy commissioner that they can be given prizes when an event is over. He appraised the idea as a good one and we followed this. It was a small innovation this year. We do these through our work (Interview 8).

The same respondent had undertaken a new innovation initiative for implementation. He wanted to complete the process of sanctioning post-retirement leave (PRL) two months before the retirement of each teacher. As part of its implementation, he was making the teachers aware by visiting the subordinate offices and inspiring the teachers to apply for the PRL three months before their retirement. His motivational efforts were also being done through Facebook. He said: “I am developing my officials accordingly” (Interview 8).

The interviewees mentioned some names of their innovation activities during their interviews as the outcomes of their team efforts. However, it was not possible to verify the existence of the innovation activities by the interviewees. They claimed that some of

these were just ideas while some others were being implemented. Table 4.3 lists the innovation activities. Detailed accounts of the innovation activities were not available. A broad category of innovation activities can be their implementation status. Some of them were claimed to be running while others were either under process or just ideas only. Secondly, they can also be categorized as specific services simplifying activities and activities related to the creation of general facilities. Most of the activities were targeted to the citizens and few of them were targeted to officials.

Table 4. 3: Innovation Activities (raw data)

Innovation Activity	Status
1. Sitting arrangement for lactating mothers	Running
2. Drinking water for service seekers	Running
3. Reception room in land office	Implemented in previous workstation
4. Proactive disclosure of information	Running
5. Complain box	Implemented in previous workstation
6. Contact cell number	Running
7. Calling bell	Implemented in previous workstation
8. VGD rice home delivery	Idea only
9. Mobile healthcare clinic	Running
10. Cooperative registration simplification	Running
11. Demand-driven mobile training	Idea only
12. Family planning service simplification	Running
13. E-mutation	Running
14. Allowance distribution simplification	Running
15. Allowance beneficiary selection	Running
16. Digital training store house	Piloting
17. Digitization of land record	Under process
18. Online database of ethnic minorities	Running

Innovation Activity	Status
19. Citizen help desk	Running
20. Online khotian	Running
21. Payment of allowance through bank account	Running
22. Digitalization of citizenship certificate	Idea only
23. Providing dealership license from UDC	Running
24. Hanging of emergency numbers	Running
25. Income tax return simplification	Idea only
26. Freelancing work station	Running
27. Setting up ideal village	Running
28. Introducing Wi-Fi zone	Running
29. Introduction of Upazila facebook page	Running
30. Computer training for office staff	Running
31. Construction of roads in front of office	Running
32. Office area lightening	Running
33. Setting up CCTV	Running
34. Setting up intercom	Running
35. Alor feriwala (Vendor of light)	Running
36. Land fertility test	Stopped with the transfer of the concerned officer
37. Agricultural light house	Running
38. Mustered cultivation	Running
39. Organic fertilizer	Not known
40. Online agriculture service	Running
41. Fair price for farmers' produce	Idea only
42. Bazaar monitoring	Inception level
43. Audio-visual display	Under process
44. Honesty store	Running
45. Mentors appointment for quality education	Running
46. First aid box in exam halls	Running
47. Facebook ID for every school	Running

Innovation Activity	Status
48. Biometric attendance of teachers	Running
49. Scholarship distribution through mobile banking	Running
50. Using multimedia in classrooms	Running
51. Flower garden	Running
52. Beautification of environment	Running
53. Setting up of library	Running
54. Mother's food in school	Running
55. Cleaning of school campus	Running
56. Google tracking of educational institutions	Running
57. My school my responsibility	Running
58. Friend teacher	Running
59. Correct pronunciation of Bangla language	Running
60. Monitoring of students	Running
61. Shahid minar in each school	Running
62. Digital attendance in schools	Running
63. CCTV in exam centres	Running
64. Students' database for stopping child marriage	Continuous
65. Muktijudho corner	Running
66. Language club	Running
67. Health awareness program for adolescent girls	Running
68. Manobotar deyal	Idea only
69. Bamboo bridge	Running
70. Beggar rehabilitation	Running
71. Drug-related mobile app	Running
72. Online blood group sharing	Idea only

4.5 Effectiveness and Sustainability

The third objective of the research was to assess the effectiveness and sustainability of the innovations worked out by the innovation teams. The respondents were asked to share their perceptions about the factors that contributed to the sustainability of the innovation

initiatives that were continuing since their inception. They were also asked to identify the factors that caused the failure of the innovation activities that could not continue. As the interviewers could not practically verify the innovation activities described by the interviewees, the identified causes of success and failure discussed in the next subsections are only perceptions of the interviewees.

4.5.1 Causes of Success

From the accounts from the mouths of the interviewees presented in this chapter, it can be argued that only a few innovation activities were undertaken by the innovation teams out of which some might have been successful. The research found an innovation team member who had been 8 months in the team but did not receive any training. Even in these 8 months, he could not participate in the team meetings because he was not informed whether any meeting was held during this period. However, this member was found practicing innovation in his daily works. Therefore, personal motivation and efforts were behind his success in innovation practice. In the language of a sub-district level innovation officer: “only the will power is the cause of success (Interview 54).

Another factor for success has been the support of different influential people. A sub-district level social service officer who had been a member of the concerned sub-district innovation team was working to improve the selection process of beneficiaries of government allowances. From his hindsight, he told that, in many cases, the targeted people did not get the allowances because of loopholes in the selection process. Therefore, he was trying to improve the selection process through small innovations. He successfully implemented his ideas in four of the seven unions of the sub-district by the time of the interview. This was possible because of support from the UNO and the local political leaders (Interview 50). The UNO’s role has been highlighted by others too:

We need an active innovation team. The UNO needs to play an active role at the Upazila level because he is a guardian at this level and he is the centre of power. If he wants, many problems can be solved (Interview 32).

One district innovation officer called the success factor “supporting surroundings” (Interview 57). This officer was working to improve the quality of education of school students, health awareness of adolescent girl students, a medical facility for out of reach day labourers through innovation activities. He realized that “financial support, strong determination, support from higher authority, support from local elected representatives, supportive surroundings are needed” for successful innovation (Interview 57).

4.5.2 Causes of Failure

The interviewees were found reserved to tell that any of their innovation initiatives failed. However, some of them mentioned that, in some cases, innovation initiatives had stopped working. The main cause of the halt of an undertaken-innovation was its ownership problem. When an officer innovates something and starts practicing, it functions. As soon as the officer is transferred to elsewhere the functionality of his innovation stops. An innovation work of an official is seen by others as his initiative. Therefore, when he is transferred, the ownership of the innovation suffers a setback. In other words, the innovation initiatives remain non-institutionalized.

4.5.3 Problems in Practicing Innovation

Beside the causes of failure discussed above, the interviewees mentioned some other problems that are associated with practicing innovation works. The problems revolve around lack of many things. They include lack of motivation to innovate; attitude to change; lack of resources which include money, manpower, and time; lack of monitoring; lack of teambuilding; administrative complexity; lack of incentives; and frequent transfer of officials. Innovation requires dedication which is missing in officials involved in innovation teams (Interview 44). It is an “exceptional work” in the sense that it is “outside the regular activities” demanding officials “to be more motivated, more active” (Interview 61). Innovation affects self-interests of some people and they create problems (Interview 50). This kind of barriers happens particularly where multiple entities are involved in decision-making (Interview 30). Identifying the role of attitude of the innovation officer one district team member said:

Everywhere the innovation officer is in the position only but they are not so in their mentally (Interview 58).

The motivational problem originates in the attitudes of the officials. They are used to work in the old system while an innovation introduces a change. The attitudinal problem is also attributed to governmental way of work. The governmental approach is top-down: “the top says you do it” (Interview 48). The mentality of looking at the top for directions hinders innovation initiatives: “people are habituated with the old system and show no interest in adopting a new one” (Interview 47).

Lack of resources—“man, money, and materials”—appear to be a formidable problem on the way to innovation (Interview 30). Manpower shortage is a frequently mentioned problem told by the interviewees: “we have workloads but limited manpower. Many posts are vacant (Interview 60). To indicate the severity of the manpower problem a district team member told:

I have 31 posts of Office Assistant in the district out of which 27 are vacant. Only four persons are working. Sometimes, we work till 8 or 9pm in the offices” (Interview 8).

Another member of a sub-district level innovation team gave an account of his manpower shortage problem:

We are only 4 officials working in our office out of 14. Doing the work of 14 persons by only 4 is difficult. Therefore, we cannot afford our attention to innovation work” (Interview 24).

Unavailability of fund is another major problem in practicing innovation in the public offices at the field level. Most actions incur some costs but the innovation teams have no budget. A sub-district level innovation officer told:

To innovate something, in most cases, some money may be needed and some logistic supports may be needed. Innovation is not possible in empty hands

(absence of money). In some cases, investment of money is needed” (Interview 5).

The budget constraint also hinders their thought process. They don’t think of the innovation initiative that incurs money. “We do (innovations) considering what we can do with our logistic support” (Interview 5). The provision of budget is related to accountability. One respondent described it in this way:

For every work, a budget is needed. In fact, where there is a budget, there is accountability also. Here (in case of innovation activities) there is no such accountability” (Interview 3).

However, there is also argument that fund for innovation is not a problem. A district level innovation officer who had been very new in the district—just two months—but had served as UNOs in three Upazilas shared his contradictory perception about funding issue. When he was asked about problems in innovation initiatives, he mentioned two problems: “There are a financial barrier and transfer of innovator” (Interview 11). At the same time, this officer also believed that fund can be mobilized from Upazila Parishad, district administration, concerned directorates, and the Access to Information (A2I) project.

Another frequently-mentioned problem in the resource-constraint category is busy schedule of the officials. A district innovation team member told: “we get less time for innovation because of our busy schedule” (Interview 41). A district innovation officer explained this problem in the following words:

Because of my busy schedule, either I am not willing or I have less opportunity to innovate. We have also procrastination tendency. The government wants to do a variety of job through us or we need to do so (Interview 2).

Absence of a monitoring framework has been identified as a major problem by the interviewees for non-functionality of the innovation teams. The innovation teams did not feel any pressure to innovate. The team members felt the need of a strong monitoring mechanism. In other words, they have to be made compelled to innovate (Interview 29).

A district innovation officer told: “there should be monitoring of what we are doing or not doing” (Interview 21). It has been a characteristic of the public administration that “we don’t work unless we are pocked” (Interview 2). Therefore, the innovation team’s effectiveness will depend, to some extent, on a strong monitoring mechanism:

There should be a team to monitor whether (innovations) are being implemented. If it remains in the condition in which it is now—a cursory type one, innovation team will not be effective (Interview 3).

Innovations, in some cases, cannot be introduced because the government has fixed tiers to be followed as a process for a task. Although the tiers can be reduced through innovation, because of government rules, it cannot be done. One member of a district level innovation team expressed his helplessness in the following words:

In case of transfer of a teacher from one division to another, the application of transfer moves from tiers to tiers including Dhaka head office. It moves from table to table and the service seeker suffers accordingly. This can be simplified through innovation. But I don’t have scope for innovation here as it is a prescribed process of the government (Interview 8).

Although the officials assigned with the task of innovation were supposed to work in teams, team building appeared to be missing. One member of a district innovation team indicated this problem: “lack of coordination among the offices is a big problem” (Interview 26). One innovation officer found a “chain of command” problem in his team (Interview 48). The chain of command issue does not match with teambuilding culture. That innovation officer applied his chain of command technique in his previous workstation:

“I was the chief innovation officer when I was an UNO. I nominated the other members of the innovation team. I could call them because, as an UNO, I had the overall command in my hand. When I came to the district, I became the second in command. ... In my last meeting, I found that none (members) remained present. They sent their juniors who are not willing to take decisions. It is not possible

without (the involvement of) an office head. But the office heads don't attend meetings (Interview 48).

Table 4. 4: Term of Office of Officials in the Position of ADC (Education and ICT) in a District

Term	Days Served	Comments
28/8/2012 – 19/12/2013	467	
19/12/2013 – 20/2/2014	61	
20/2/2014 – 05/6/2014	106	
05/6/2014 – 28/8/2016	795	
28/8/2016 – 20/7/2017	322	
20/7/2017 – 10/9/2017	51	Additional charge
10/9/2017 – 12/7/2018	302	
12/7/2018 – 23/10/2018	101	
23/10/2018 – 03/02/2019	101	
03/02/2019 – 06/5/2019	93	Additional charge
06/5/2019 – 09/9/2019	123	
09/9/2019 – 03/3/2020	173	03/3/2020 was the data collection date

Another factor appeared to be influential in hampering teambuilding and that is instability of influential members in the teams. In both categories of innovation teams—district and sub-district—two members are from the administrative service cadre of the Bangladesh Civil Service. In each team, one of them works as the innovation officer and the other works as a member. In the district level team, normally, the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) who is in the charge of education and ICT works as the district innovation officer; and an Assistant Commissioner (AC) who is in the charge of ICT becomes a member of the team. In the case of the sub-district level innovation team, the UNO is the innovation officer and the AC of the land office becomes a member of the team. These officials are from the administrative service and play influential roles in their teams in terms of decision-making. The members of this service hold key positions in the overall bureaucracy of the country. The following Table 4.4 shows the term of office

served by the different officials in the position of ADC (Education and ICT) of a district. Table 4.5 below shows the term of office served by the different officials in the position of UNO of a sub-district.

Table 4. 5: Term of Office of Officials in the Position of UNO in a Sub-district

Term	Days Served	Comments
14/9/2011 – 03/8/2014	1032	
03/8/2014 – 13/8/2014	10	Additional charge
13/8/2014 – 12/3/2017	919	
12/3/2017 – 30/3/2017	18	Current charge
30/3/2017 – 17/4/2017	18	Current charge
17/4/2017 – 21/12/2017	244	
21/12/2017 – 18/3/2018	85	Current charge
18/3/2018 – 30/8/2018	162	
30/8/2018 – 16/5/2019	256	
16/5/2019 – 05/3/2020	288	05/3/2020 was the data collection date

Both tables (4.4 and 4.5) reveal that the leaders of the district and sub-district level innovation teams had been changed frequently. On the average, the district innovation officer had served 225 days and the sub-district innovation officer had served 303 days. On the other hand, 22 officials had served in the AC (ICT) position during the period of issuing the government circular on innovation team formation and the date of data collection which means that, on the average, each official had served 112 days. During the same period, 10 officials had served in the position of AC (Land) office in the case of the sub-district team. The average is 303 days. Out of these 10 terms, only one official was found to be posted to the position in three terms and, in the case of the other terms, other officials were in additional charge or current charge.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Discussion

This study proceeded with three objectives—exploring the understanding of innovation, innovation activities, and effectiveness and sustainability of the innovations of the innovation teams. The understanding of innovation has been explored from the perspectives of the meaning of the concept of innovation, responsibility to innovate, and feeling about the task of innovation. The respondents attached different meanings to the concept of innovation which have been subsumed under six dimensions including newness, self-realization, citizen's benefits, service provider's benefits, modernization of society, and information and communication technology. Thus the concept of innovation becomes meaningful if an activity is new to the organization and it comes from a realization of the introducers that it will benefit the citizens, the service providers, and it will ultimately result in modernization of the society because it uses updated information and communication technologies. In the context of public administration, the understanding of the concept by the public servants is significantly meaningful because it is similar to what innovation scholars have argued. For example, Mulgan (2014) referred to 'practical ideas' fetching benefits to the public and Bason (2010) referred to 'new ideas' that create value for the society. However, the good understanding of the literal meaning of the concept barely resulted into meaningful innovation activities.

From the perspective of innovation responsibility, the public officials' understanding was divided. Although they recognized that innovation was primarily a responsibility of the public officials, many of them did not want to shoulder this responsibility. They wanted this responsibility to rest on external experts who might be individual citizens or officials working in the ministries. This finding supports the argument that innovation requires individuals to rise above formal role (Howell et al. 2005). According to this research, many public officials did not want to rise above their

formal roles. From the perspective of feeling about the innovation task, the public officials had shown similar attitude as was with the responsibility to innovate. Perhaps, because of the social desirability effect, some of the respondents told that they enjoyed the task. However, in confidential talks, many simply shared their feeling of annoyance with the task. They put their workload as a cause which an analyst cannot ignore. The feeling of workload comes from two facts. In the context of a populous country as Bangladesh, the field level offices need to serve many people. Contrarily, they suffer from shortage of manpower and other logistic supports. However, how much of this limitation of resources impact on their feelings about the innovation task is questionable because resource constraints in the frontline bureaucracies is also reported in other contexts.

The second objective was to know about the innovation activities of the innovation teams. The study tried to know about this in terms of the team's teambuilding attitude, team work process, and the officials' training on innovation. The innovation teams were introduced for fulfilling the objectives of (a) enhancing dynamism in the works of the public administration; (b) enhancing the innovation capability of the public administration; (c) instilling the practice of innovation in the public administration for quick and easy delivery of public services to the citizens (GOB 2013). Attainment of the third objective can help attainment of the first and second objectives.

An innovation team is formed with officials from various departments of an administrative unit be it a sub-district (*Upazila*) or a district. These officials together neither felt themselves nor worked as a team. A team's characteristics such as group process and group psychological traits or being an intact social entity with shared responsibility (Cohen and Bailey 1997) are found missing in the innovation teams. These teams are formed by authorities based on their perceived ability and suitability of the officials whereas the GOB's (2013) criteria have been higher education or training, eagerness to take extra workload and innovation works, ability to lead, mentality to work in teams and help others of the candidate officials. The team members have taken the innovation work, in some cases, as an extra workload. The teambuilding attitude suffered

a major setback in the innovation teams. There are fewer interactions among the team members. Their meetings are infrequent and irregular.

Each team in a district is headed by an Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) of Education and ICT or ADC (Education and ICT) and that in a sub-district is headed by an Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO). These officials are from the administrative service cadre of the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS). They are influential officials in the government because officials from this cadre hold important positions in the bureaucracy and thereby play crucial roles in decision-making and implementation of decisions. Another two members of this service are also in both teams by dint of their positions, i.e. Assistant Commissioner of ICT in the district team and Assistant Commissioner of the Land Office in the sub-district team. The term served by each of these officials was not stable. They were transferred frequently. Stability in positions is important in for planning and implementation of plans. Therefore, the instability of the administrative service officials in innovation teams might have impacted planning and implementation of innovation works.

The members hardly think about service simplifications beyond their own offices. Instead of studying the problems of the service delivery processes of all offices, the team members search for innovation ideas in their brains and heads sitting in meetings and they focus on their own offices only. Most of the members of the innovation teams either don't have any formal training or have inadequate formal training on innovation. Innovation team members have less opportunity to get longer duration training than the innovation officers. Even they have inadequate knowledge about the government circular that provides the basic information about formation of innovation teams and tasks of the members and the innovation officers. These factors have contributed to fewer and often less prioritized innovation works done by the innovation teams.

Concerning the third objective—effectiveness and sustainability of the innovations—the study sought perceived causes of success and failure from the respondents. 'Will power' appeared to be the most crucial factor for effectiveness and sustainability of innovations. This factor is very weak if not absent in most individuals

and the teams. Personalization of innovation initiatives was identified as a cause of failure of once successful ones. An innovation initiative is identified as one's own as, in some cases, the individuals are recognized and awarded. This might create envy in others. As a result, once the initiators are transferred to other stations, the innovation initiatives are not carried over to the next officials and they stop functioning. Moreover, the frontline bureaucracies suffer from shortages of resources such as human resources and money. Their workloads have grown over time but not manpower. Therefore, innovation is perceived as an extra burden by many officials.

5.2 Conclusion

On the face of it, the introduction of innovation teams in the field administration has helped the concept to get currency among the frontline bureaucracies though it is far way from making innovation a cultural practice. The officials involved in the innovation teams have, more or less, appropriate perceptions of innovation but the good perception has been kept away from actualization. The non-actualization of the concept into meaningful innovation activities is rooted in many limitations which have been discussed above. One of these limitations has been, as it appeared in the research, that membership in the team suffers a willingness problem. Some members considered their involvement in the team as an extra burden amid their respective departmental workloads although many verbally confessed that they enjoyed their innovation work. This willingness issue affected teambuilding in the innovation teams. It made team members believe in reforming the teams with appropriate members.

The innovation team members sit in meetings to carry out their team responsibilities. However, these meetings resulted in very few meaningful innovations. They use brainstorming sitting in the meetings to search for innovative ideas. This was a result of the team members' lack of proper knowledge on how to proceed with innovation responsibility. Even they were found to be unaware of the government circular on innovation which gives vital basic information about the formation and the core responsibilities of an innovation team. This circular also provides an insufficient work process.

The research was conducted based on in-depth interviews with officials involved in the innovation teams. The interview findings are not triangulated by any other methods. Because of social the desirability effect, some respondents might have varnished reality. This is a limitation of the study as is the case with any other social research that relies exclusively on in-depth interviews. Future researchers may look into the teambuilding psychology of the innovation team members. This research postulates that the innovation teams are not proper workgroups. Identification of the factors that contribute to the non-functionality of the innovation teams will help formulate appropriate teams for innovation works.

5.3 Recommendation

Firstly, this study recommends an investigation into the teambuilding problems in the innovation teams. The problems in the teambuilding of the innovation teams have to be recognized, identified, and removed. Secondly, the innovation team members should undergo quality training on innovation. They should be trained in team culture. True team culture can take out their fear of innovation as an extra burden. The innovation training should make them understand that innovation ideas should come from problems that the team members as well as the non-member officials within an administrative unit (district or sub-district) experience in their service delivery systems; and the team is a facilitator in organizing innovations. The teams should be trained to seek innovation ideas from service seekers as well. They should look for innovation scope not only in the respective offices of the team members but also in the offices that are not represented in the innovation teams. Thirdly, the innovation team's roles and responsibilities along with the processes to be followed by the teams have to be clearly spelled out and equally conveyed to all officials involved in the innovation teams. Fourthly, some kind of recognition for innovation has to be in place and in action because innovation involves hard work and risks in terms of opposition from vested interest groups. Fifthly, the innovation teams should be made confident of leadership and financial supports for undertaking innovation initiatives. Sixthly, an effective monitoring mechanism for oversight of the innovation activities of the innovation team has to be developed and

operationalized. Finally, the teams should be formed truly with only interested officials and this could be done through open invitation.

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APPENDICE

INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

ইনোভেশন সাক্ষাৎকার নম্বর:

প্রথম অংশ: সাক্ষাৎকার প্রদানকারীর কতিপয় ডেমোগ্রাফিক তথ্য

- ১। টিম পদবী: ☐ ক চিফ ইনোভেশন অফিসার ☐ খ ইনোভেশন অফিসার ☐ গ সদস্য
- ২। লিঙ্গ: ☐ ক পুরুষ ☐ খ মহিলা
- ৩। সর্বোচ্চ শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা: ☐ ক ব্যাচেলর ডিগ্রী ☐ খ মাস্টার্স ডিগ্রী ☐ গ এমফিল ☐ ঘ পিএইচডি
- ৪। সর্বোচ্চ শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতার বিষয়:
- ৫। অফিস পদবী:
- ৬। বয়স: বছর
- ৭। বর্তমান ইনোভেশন টিমে যোগদানের তারিখ:
- ৮। পূর্বের কোনো ইনোভেশন টিমে কাজ করার অভিজ্ঞতা: বছর ও মাস
- ৯। বর্তমান দাপ্তরিক পদে কাজ করার অভিজ্ঞতা: বছর ও মাস
- ১০। বর্তমান চাকুরিতে কাজ করার অভিজ্ঞতা: বছর ও মাস

দ্বিতীয় অংশ: সাক্ষাৎকার প্রদানকারীর কতিপয় মতামত

- ১। বর্তমান ইনোভেশন টিমে আপনি কীভাবে যুক্ত হলেন? জেলা প্রশাসকের নিকট আপনি ইচ্ছা পোষণ করেছিলেন কিনা।
- ২। বর্তমান ইনোভেশন টিমে অন্য সদস্যগণের সম্পৃক্ততার বিষয়ে আপনার ধারণা কী? তাঁরা টিমে যুক্ত হওয়ার জন্য ইচ্ছা পোষণ করেছিলেন কিনা।
- ৩। ইনোভেশন টিমে আপনার সম্পৃক্ততাকে আপনি কীভাবে দেখছেন (ভালো লাগা/খারাপ লাগা)?
- ৪। ইনোভেশন টিমের গঠন-প্রক্রিয়া কীরকম হলে ভালো হয় বলে আপনি মনে করেন? কাদের এই টিমে থাকা উচিত?
- ৫। ইনোভেশন বিষয়ে আপনার কীধরণের প্রশিক্ষণ আছে?
- ৬। কোথায় এবং কত দিনের প্রশিক্ষণ নিয়েছেন?

৭। ইনোভেশন টিমের সদস্যদের কী বিষয়ে প্রশিক্ষণ থাকা দরকার বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

৮। ইনোভেশন বিষয়ে সরকারি কোনো কাগজপত্র (পরিপত্র ইত্যাদি) আপনার কাছে আছে কি? থাকলে সেগুলো কী বিষয়ে?

৯। ইনোভেশন টিমে আপনারা কীভাবে/কোন প্রক্রিয়ায় কাজ করেন?

১০। ইনোভেশন টিম ইনোভেশনের ধারণা কীভাবে সংগ্রহ, প্রক্রিয়াকরণ, সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ, ও বাস্তবায়ন করে?

১১। আপনার কাছে ইনোভেশন কী অর্থাৎ ইনোভেশন বলতে আপনি কী বোঝেন?

১২। ইনোভেশন কী জন্য দরকার বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

১৩। সরকারি অফিসে ইনোভেশনের উপযোগিতা কী রকম বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

১৪। সরকারি সেবা প্রদানে এর কী প্রভাব আছে বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

১৫। ইনোভেশন করা কাদের কাজ হওয়া উচিত বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

১৬। এখন পর্যন্ত আপনাদের টিম যে যে ইনোভেশন করেছে নিম্নে সেগুলো সম্পর্কে তথ্য দিন:

টিমের ইনোভেশনসমূহের			
নাম ও উৎপত্তির ইতিবৃত্ত	উপকারভোগীগণ	প্রক্রিয়া (যেভাবে কাজ করে)	বর্তমান অবস্থা

১৭। গৃহীত ইনোভেশন ব্যর্থ হওয়ার কারণ কী কী (যদি সেরকম হয়ে থাকে)?

১৮। গৃহীত ইনোভেশন সার্থক হওয়ার কারণ কী কী (যদি সেরকম হয়ে থাকে)?

১৯। পূর্বের বছরগুলোতে বা বর্তমান বছরে ইনোভেশন সংক্রান্ত বার্ষিক কর্ম-পরিকল্পনা করা হয়েছিল কি? না হলে তার কারণ কী? (কর্ম-পরিকল্পনাসমূহের একটি কপি দিন)

২০। পূর্বের বছরগুলোতে ইনোভেশনের সার্বিক কর্মকান্ডের উপর কোনো বার্ষিক প্রতিবেদন তৈরি করা হয়েছে কি? না হলে তার কারণ কী? (প্রতিবেদনসমূহের একটি কপি দিন)

২১। ইনোভেশন টিমের সভা সাধারণত কত দিন পর পর হয়? সভার কার্যবিবরণী আছে কি? (বিগত ৬টি সভার কার্যবিবরণী দিন)

২২। আপনাদের ইনোভেশনের সার্বিক কর্মকান্ড সম্পর্কে আপনার মূল্যায়ন কী (মান/উপযোগিতা/স্থায়িত্ব ইত্যাদি)?

২৩। আপনাদের ইনোভেশন প্রক্রিয়া (ধারণা সংগ্রহ, প্রক্রিয়াকরণ, সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ, ও বাস্তবায়ন) সম্পর্কে আপনার মূল্যায়ন কী?

২৪। ইনোভেশন করার পথে অন্তরায়/বাধা কী কী দেখেন?

২৫। কার্যকর ইনোভেশনের জন্য কী কী দরকার বলে আপনার মনে হয়?