Adopting a Contextualized Pedagogical Framework in Training Programmes for Entry-Level Officers of the Bangladesh Civil Service (Administration) Cadre: Enhancing Efficiency and Effectiveness

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Abstract

The effectiveness of public service delivery is contingent upon a workforce that is competent, adaptable, and contextually aware. This study explores the potential of a contextualized training framework to enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of entry-level officers (ELOs) in the Bangladesh Civil Service (Administration) Cadre. Focusing on the Law and Administration Course (LAC) at the Bangladesh Civil Service Administration Academy (BCSAA), the paper critiques the traditional theory-based constructivist model for its limited practical relevance. Drawing upon a review of contextual learning literature, policy documents such as Secretariat Instructions 2024 (MOPA, 2024); Rules of Business 1996 (updated up to 2024) (Cabinet Division, 2024); Administrative Training and Higher Education Policy 2023 (MOPA, 2023); Charter of Duties of Officers of different tiers in the administrative service; and job-specific competency requirements, the study proposes a redesign of the LAC. It advocates for the integration of real-world tasks, institutional objectives, and adult learning principles to bridge the gap between training and workplace demands, thereby fostering a more functional and performance-oriented public administration.

Key Words: Contextualized Learning Approach, Effective Civil Service, Adult Learning, Competency Framework, Policy Integration

Introduction

Public service institutions function within complex, dynamic, and constantly evolving environments, necessitating a workforce equipped with specialized

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competencies, ethical integrity, and responsiveness to the public's needs. Conventional training paradigms, often characterized by a standardized, one-size-fits-all methodology, frequently fall short in addressing the distinct operational challenges and contextual nuances of various public sector organizations (OECD, 2017). In contrast, a contextualized approach to training strategically aligns educational interventions with the specific administrative, cultural, and policy frameworks of individual institutions, thereby enhancing the relevance, applicability, and impact of such programs (*ibid.*).

Within the shifting landscape of governance and service delivery, the significance of contextually grounded training and professional development has become increasingly critical for enabling public institutions to meet the evolving demands of the citizenry (Bouchrika, 2025; OECD, 2017). Contextual training involves designing learning experiences that link theoretical content with real-world administrative scenarios, enabling immediate application of newly acquired knowledge and fostering deeper cognitive engagement and long-term knowledge retention (Cezary, 2016). This approach moves beyond didactic instruction to emphasize experiential learning, utilizing methodologies such as case studies, simulations, and on-the-job learning to build practical problem-solving capacities among public officials (Continu, 2018).

The Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) system presents a distinctive case for contextual training. Among its 26 professional cadres, the BCS (Administration) Cadre holds a pivotal role, performing multifaceted critical executive, managerial, and coordination functions across the tiers of the government (MOPA, 2023). Entry-level officers (ELOs)[1] in this cadre come from a wide array of academic disciplines—including the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, commerce, agriculture, and engineering—which reflects substantial intellectual diversity. Such diversity necessitates a training design that accommodates adult learners with varied educational backgrounds, learning styles, and cognitive capacities (Laskaris, 2016).

[1.] *ELOs are the newly recruited officers of the BCS (Admin) cadre who have undergone FTC at BPATC.*

Effective training programs for these professionals must consider factors such as age, academic maturity, and experiential learning readiness to foster leadership competencies aligned with job responsibilities and national development goals. Public Administration Training and Higher Education Policy, 2023, emphasizes the need for a needs-based, interactive, and dynamic training approach to enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of public service delivery employees (MOPA, 2023). A contextualized pedagogic approach emphasizes work-related experiential learning.

This article aims to demonstrate how a contextualized training framework of law and administration course (LAC) for ELOs of the BCS (Admin) Cadre—when designed around actual organizational roles, responsibilities, and tasks—offers a more relevant, functional, and outcome-driven alternative to conventional training models in achieving the intended objectives of public sector capacity building.

Contextualized Pedagogic Approach to Learning

Contextual learning is a pedagogical approach grounded in the belief that learning is most effective when knowledge and skills are acquired within settings that closely resemble the environments in which they will ultimately be applied. Osayimwense (2017) describes contextual learning as a process situated in real-life scenarios, enabling learners to draw direct connections between new information and its practical relevance. Similarly, Shabnom (2019) characterizes it as a pedagogical method that facilitates the application of theoretical knowledge to real-world situations. It involves fostering critical and creative thinking, nurturing the individual, and reaching high standards (Johnson et al., 2002) and seeks to imbue academic content with meaning by linking it to learners' personal, social, and cultural contexts—ultimately fostering engagement and more profound understanding (U.S. Department of Education, 2001, as cited in Osayimwense, 2017).

Contextual learning integrates principles from both behaviorist and constructivist learning theories. From behaviorism, it adopts the concept of observable behavioral responses to stimuli, while from constructivism, it borrows the notion of knowledge construction through the integration of prior understanding with new experiences (Osayimwense, 2017). As such, contextual learning cultivates critical thinking, metacognition, and self-regulated learning while promoting creativity, problem-solving, and experiential engagement through continuous formative feedback (Haryanto & Areity, 2019; Discovery, 2004). It supports learning as a process of applied cognition, wherein learners contextualize academic material by relating it to real-life challenges and problem-solving scenarios, both within and beyond formal education settings (Lotulung et al., 2018; Haryanto & Ariety, 2019). Through contextualization, learners are better able to retain knowledge and apply it in personal, community, and professional spheres. Assessments embedded within contextual frameworks not only evaluate knowledge acquisition but also relate to real-world applications, thereby enhancing relevance and inclusivity in instructional design(Perin, 2011).

Contextual learning is also underpinned by pragmatist and contextualist philosophical orientations, where meaning and truth are derived from functionality rather than representational accuracy (Fox, 2008; Kosassy et al., 2018; Kawani, 2014; Navita, 2013). According to this view, contextualism emphasizes learning as a purposeful act-in-context, with the utility of knowledge assessed by its capacity to produce tangible outcomes. The task-related approach, which offers the opportunity to acquire knowledge and practical skills, performs well upon completion of training (Dondofema et al., 2020; Vernon, 2020; Wilson et al., 2013) and fosters confidence in learners (Williams et al., 1993).

The contextualized learning approach integrates the adult learning theory (ALT). It emphasizes that mature learners are driven by intrinsic motivation (Knowles, 1980, p. 29) and emphasizes self-direction, flexibility, and the process of learning rather than the content (Shabnom, 2019). It seeks practical learning (Moll, 2025), experience-based instruction (Bouchrika, 2025), relevant, and immediately applicable to their professional roles. Thus, training initiatives must be purposefully constructed to answer critical learner-centered questions: Why is this content important? How does it relate to my responsibilities? Is it relevant to real job functions? Will it enhance my capacity to perform? The contextual approach addresses these concerns by embedding learning in the day-to-day realities of public service work, thereby promoting engagement, relevance, and long-term institutional capacity (Osayimwense, 2017).

Finally, contextual learning empowers learners by motivating them to assume ownership of their pedagogic journeys, encouraging them to link knowledge acquisition with its diverse real-life applications (Knowles, 1980; Satriani et al., 2012). It functions not only as an instructional method but also as a formative assessment tool, helping educators align learning objectives, instructional strategies, and performance benchmarks with real-world tasks and competencies (Tout, 2016). As Continu Inc. (2018) posits, key instructional questions—such as "How will learners apply this knowledge?" and "What relevance does it hold for their professional roles?"—find meaningful answers through the implementation of contextual learning frameworks.

Contextual Approach to Achieving Training Objectives

The foundational principle of the contextual approach to learning is encapsulated in the maxim, "How do I learn? I learn; I use." This pedagogical philosophy emphasizes the practical application of acquired knowledge within relevant real-world contexts (Johnson et al., 2002). The primary objective of

the contextual approach is to design task-oriented and responsive training programs that align with institutional goals, address existing competency gaps, and prepare civil servants—particularly new entrants—for the dynamic demands of public service.

This approach provides a comprehensive framework for training by clearly articulating the rationale (why), content (what), target audience (who), timing (when), setting (where), and method of delivery (how). In doing so, it ensures the immediate applicability of training outcomes in rapidly evolving administrative contexts (Nadler, 1984). The ultimate aim is to enhance the adaptive capacity and functional competencies of public officials operating in a transformative environment.

Methods of the Research

This study undertakes a document-based analysis of the LAC, drawing on a range of key texts, including training guidelines, the Public Administration Training and Higher Education Policy, 2023 (MOPA, 2023), Secretariat Instruction, 2024 (MOPA, 2024), Rules of Business updated up to 2024 (Cabinet Division, 2024), official duty charters for ELOs, Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs), and Deputy Commissioners (DCs), and other relevant documents. The investigation critically examines the current roles, responsibilities, and job profiles of ELOs alongside the existing curriculum of the LAC. The objective is to evaluate the extent to which the training content aligns with the practical demands and contextual realities of administrative service in the field.

Scope and Limitations

This article focuses specifically on the application of a contextual learning approach to enhance the effectiveness of training for ELOs of the BCS (Administration) Cadre. The analysis is based on a limited dataset, sufficient to identify emerging trends; however, the generalizability of the findings remains constrained. To draw broader and more robust conclusions, further empirical research incorporating diverse data sources and a comprehensive exploration of the integration of multiple contextual dimensions into training design is recommended.

Contextual Learning and the Context of BCS (Admin) Cadre

The contextual approach to learning enables individuals to connect theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios and emphasizes learning through practical

experience (Shabnom, 2019). For instance, organizing a monthly district development coordination meeting is a key responsibility of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) at the district level. While theoretical concepts and coordination processes can be learned through books, articles, and off-the-job training, practical application in real-life situations offers a deeper understanding. Learners can acquire theoretical knowledge on coordination, which may not be applicable universally, but specific contexts, locations, and situations provide valuable lessons that are unique to real-life experiences.

Skills such as organizing meetings, issuing notices, and writing meeting minutes can be taught through simulation exercises. However, more complex aspects, such as time management, ensuring participation, handling contentious debates on critical issues, addressing unforeseen pleas, and managing unexpected challenges, can only be effectively learned in real-world situations that align with the specific context.

Situational challenges, such as individuals providing excuses for not attending a meeting (e.g., citing sickness or unavoidable circumstances) or delaying tasks by offering last-minute pleas, can result in organizational disruption. These types of issues are better understood through direct engagement with real-life scenarios (Plaza, 2023).

Experience sharing by supervisors, detailing what occurred, the reasons behind it, and how it was managed, is often more impactful than theoretical lecture-based instruction. Practical skills in facilitating decision-making—such as presenting information, supporting logic and arguments, and linking decisions to real-life contexts—are most effectively learned through on-the-job practices. Officers of the BCS (Admin) Cadre working in field administration interact with local communities whose cultures, environments, and languages are specific to the area. These nuances are best understood through direct experience within the local context.

Administrative tasks, such as docketing, writing notes, drafting briefs, preparing reports, issuing notices and circulars, preparing working papers, and writing meeting minutes, are most effectively learned through hands-on practice at the Deputy Commissioner's office.

The Analysis of the Context of Training Needs

Training needs are related to the accomplishment of tasks and job responsibilities. For assessing training needs and developing a competency framework, tasks are analyzed in three steps: the organizational context, the task itself, and the person's context.

Organizational Context

Training needs are shaped by an organization's strategic goals and the specific tasks required to achieve them. In the public sector, each entity—be it a ministry, department, or local body—aligns its vision and objectives with national priorities. Employees are trained to fulfill defined roles that contribute to these goals.

In the case of the Bangladesh Civil Service (Administration) Cadre, ELOs are integral to the decision-making process at various administrative levels, from grassroots operations at the Upazila and District levels to the national level within ministries. Their work contributes directly to achieving national vision and goals, and they provide essential input into the development of long-term governmental plans and programs. Thus, task analysis, from an organizational perspective, was done at three key administrative hierarchies: the ministry, district, and upazila levels.

The Context of Tasks

A task is a purposeful activity aimed at achieving a specific goal, characterized by a clear beginning and end. In public administration, frontline employees are responsible for executing these tasks, and their effectiveness depends on their competencies. Therefore, task analysis is essential for designing effective training programs.

Task analysis involves identifying tasks, breaking them down into subtasks, and further breaking these subtasks into specific activities. For example, preparing a cyclone report is a task; collecting and compiling data are sub-tasks; and typing and processing are specific actions. This analysis helps determine the appropriate training for each position, utilizing sources such as job descriptions and work distribution.

In the BCS (Administration) cadre, ELOs perform various duties, from providing public services to supporting decision-making by preparing files with relevant information and recommendations. They also handle tasks that require independent decisions, such as conducting inquiries, holding mobile courts, resolving disputes, and coordinating with other public offices, local bodies, and NGOs. These complex responsibilities are best learned through on-the-job training, guided by experienced officers who share practical insights.

Context of the Individual

This level emphasizes the individual needs of employees related to their tasks and job responsibilities. Employees, as rational beings, are the driving force of

an organization, producing results through job-specific qualities known as competencies (UNESCO, 2016). A competency framework outlines the personal attributes required to perform a job effectively. Competencies encompass individual characteristics such as knowledge, skills, abilities, self-image, personality traits, mindsets, feelings, and ways of thinking (ILO, 2004). When applied appropriately, these traits enable individuals to achieve desired outcomes. Analyzing an individual's background, environment, motivations, values, capabilities, and constraints is crucial for organizational efficiency, especially in public service delivery. Such analysis aids in designing training programs that align with individual roles, tasks, and team dynamics, optimizing performance.

By integrating organizational, task, and individual analyses, training programs can be crafted to be both practical and relevant, aligning with strategic goals and employee needs. For instance, if a public sector department aims to enhance service delivery skills, organizational analysis might identify this as a strategic priority, while task analysis pinpoints specific service-related tasks requiring improvement.

The Analysis of the Context of Job Responsibilities of ELOs

The tasks and job responsibilities of an Executive Land Officer (ELO) are multifaceted, encompassing a range of public service, executive, managerial, and coordinating functions that are both situational and influenced by the specific location and cultural context. An ELO from the Bangladesh Civil Service (Administration) Cadre, typically posted to upazilas and districts after completing the Foundation Training Course (FTC), assumes the role of an assistant commissioner and plays a pivotal part in field administration. Key responsibilities of the ELO include managing land and revenue administration, enforcing laws in the capacity of an executive magistrate through mobile courts, executing protocol duties, and coordinating development projects and programs (Cabinet Division, n.d.). Furthermore, the ELO ensures the effective delivery of public services by coordinating the activities of various government departments at the local level, assisting in maintaining law and order, and serving as a liaison between the government and the public. Additionally, the ELO represents the government at local events, implements policies, and addresses citizen grievances, thereby, laying the groundwork for future leadership roles within public administration.

Job Responsibilities of ELOs at Ministries

ELOs, typically possessing several years of field-level experience, usually around five years, are subsequently posted to ministries as assistant secretaries or senior assistant secretaries, or placed in various departments on deputation.

The governmental operations are outlined in the Rules of Business 1996, revised up to 2024 (Cabinet Division, 2024), which specifies the allocation of responsibilities across ministries, as detailed in Schedule I of the Rules. Each ministry is responsible for formulating policies, plans, programs, and strategies related to the business assigned to it. The drafting of these policies and programs begins at the desk level, where a desk officer is actively involved in the early stages of formulating the ministry's policies, strategies, plans, and programs (MOPA, 2024). This process involves multiple stages and inter-ministerial consultations that require specialized knowledge and skills. Consequently, a thorough understanding of the ministry-specific responsibilities is essential for developing practical draft proposals that can facilitate informed decision-making. Therefore, while posted at departments and government agencies on deputation, ELOs are required to possess department-specific expertise.

Analysis of ELO's Job Responsibilities at the Field Administration

ELOs of the Bangladesh Civil Service (Administration) Cadre are assigned to districts and upazilas, where they work under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) at the district level and the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) at the upazila level. The job responsibilities at both the district and upazila levels can be broadly categorized into three main areas: executive, coordinating, and managerial functions. The specific tasks, roles, and responsibilities of the DC and UNO are defined in their respective charters of duties (Cabinet Division, n.d.). For ELOs to perform effectively in these roles, a thorough understanding of the responsibilities and functions of the DC, UNO, and other administrative heads at the field level is crucial.

Executive Functions: The executive functions of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) encompass a broad spectrum of responsibilities across multiple sectors. These duties include maintaining law and order, managing jails and treasuries, and coordinating and implementing government policies, decisions, plans, and programs at the local level. Their roles span areas such as general administration, land management (which includes maintaining land records, collecting land development taxes, and overseeing mutation processes), resource mobilization, educational management, and conducting mobile courts to enforce law and order. Additionally, the DC and UNO are tasked with protecting the public interest by ensuring consumer rights, overseeing food safety, regulating the use of drugs, and preventing food adulteration. In addition to these routine administrative responsibilities, the DC and UNO must also manage and

coordinate responses to various crises, including public health emergencies like the coronavirus pandemic, natural disasters such as cyclones and floods, fluctuations in the market prices of essential goods, fires, accidents, and resolving disputes.

Managerial Role: Officers of the Bangladesh Civil Service (Administration) Cadre, working in field administration, undertake managerial responsibilities across various facets of development administration, public service delivery, and governance. Their duties encompass the management of educational institutions, including schools, colleges, madrasas, and maktabs, as well as overseeing other religious and philanthropic organizations, trusts, and similar entities. Moreover, these officers play a key role in resource mobilization and the effective management of crises, including natural disasters such as floods, cyclones, river erosion, and earthquakes, as well as public health emergencies like the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Coordinating Role: Field-level officers of the BCS (Admin) cadre are central to coordinating activities across a wide array of sectors, encompassing public sector departments, agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private sector entities, voluntary organizations, trade unions, associations, civil society groups, and political organizations. Their coordination efforts span all administrative levels, from Upazila to Ministry. The complexities associated with these managerial and coordination responsibilities should be integrated into training programs to ensure effective functioning in these multifaceted roles.

Social Safety and Welfare: The job responsibilities of officers also extend to managing programs aimed at poverty reduction, addressing public grievances, and ensuring the welfare of individuals across all segments of society. These duties encompass a broad range of initiatives designed to support vulnerable populations and promote social equity.

Analysis of Contexts of LAC

Contents of LAC

The preceding sections have outlined the tasks and job responsibilities of ELOs within various administrative setups at different levels. These responsibilities, as discussed, are applicable to officers at all levels of the organization. The Law and Administration Course (LAC) primarily emphasizes theoretical content. Table 1 illustrates the applicability and relevance of these theoretical concepts to the tasks and job responsibilities of ELOs.

Table 1: LAC Contents and Applicability in Performing Tasks and Job Responsibilities

M	Module Titles	Applicability in performing tasks, and job responsibilities of ELOs and other officers of the BCS (Admin) Cadre
01	Manners, Etiquette, and Protocol	Applicability is very high and relevant to entry-level officers up to senior positions
02	Jurisprudence and the Constitution of Bangladesh	Relevant mainly to the officers at the field level and generally to the officers at all levels
03	Laws Relating to CrPC, Penal Code, Evidence Act	Relevant mainly to the tasks and job responsibilities at the field administration
04	Mobile Court, Magisterial Responsibilities, Minor Acts	Applicable at a high level and mainly relevant to the field administration
05	Civil Laws	Generally relevant mainly in field administration
06	Land Administration and Management	Applicability is very high and relevant at very high level to entry-level positions and also to senior positions
07	Land Laws	Very high and relevant from entry-level positions to senior positions
08	Administrative Rules and Procedure	Very high and relevant from entry-level positions to senior positions
09	Public Administration, Policy, etc.	Relevant from entry-level positions to senior positions
10	Public Procurement	Relevant from entry-level positions to senior positions
11	E-governance, Digi-tech, 4IR	Relevant to all levels
12	BD Studies, Economy, Contemporary Issues	Relevant mainly to the officers who are involved in development planning
13	Workshop and Seminar	Relevant
14	English Language Skills	Not directly applicable
15	A. Chinese	Not directly applicable
	B. Arabic	Not directly applicable
16	a. Social Research,	Not directly applicable, but useful in the decision-making process.
	b. Attachment	Highly relevant to learn by doing
17	Art of Public Speaking	Very high and relevant from entry-level positions to senior positions
18	Health and Wellness	Relevant from entry-level positions to senior positions

LAC Delivery Style

The Law and Administration Course (LAC) encompasses a comprehensive range of content, comprising 18 modules, 223 topics, and 643 sessions, as outlined in Table 2. The primary instructional method employed is Lecture and Discussion (L&D), which constitutes 35.5% of the total session hours, underscoring the traditional focus on didactic teaching for the dissemination of knowledge. Following this, Field Attachment (FA) and Exercises (E) each represent approximately 13.5% and 13.2%, respectively, highlighting a growing emphasis on integrating practical experience and applied learning into the curriculum. Other significant methods include Lecture, Discussion, and Case Studies (LDCS) at 12.4%, workshops (WS) at 9.3%, and group presentations

(GP) at 3.4%. The methods that are less frequently utilized include seminars (S) and case studies (CS), both of which account for 0.03%, suggesting a limited use of participant-centered or analytical pedagogical approaches.

Table 2: Delivery Methods of LAC and Distribution of Session Hours

M	L&D	L&E	LCS	CS	GP	E	WS	S	P	FA	DR	Ex	T
M-01	06								04	12	04		26
M-02	10		04									02	16
M-03	12	10	10	02				0	02			02	38
M-04	14	00	14					02	04		02	02	38
M-05	14	00	12					00		06	04	02	38
M-06	06	02	16		02					06		02	34
M-07	14		18		02	02						02	38
M-08	04	06	00		04	04				06	04	00	28
M-09	16									15	04	01	36
M-10		08				07							15
M-11						20							20
M-12	24		06							24			54
M-13							60						60
M-14	46					18							64
M-15	40												40
M-16	14					02			06	18			40
M-17	04				14	16					04		38
M-18	04					16							20
Total	228	26	80	02	22	85	60	2	16	87	22	13	643
%	35.5	4.0	12.4	0.03	3.4	13.2	9.3	0.03	2.5	13.5	3.4	2.00	100

Notes: M for Module; L &D for Lecture & discussions; L & E for lecture & exercise; LCS-lecture, discussions and case studies; CS-case studies; GP-group presentation; E-exercise; WS-workshop; S-simulation; P-practical, FA-field attachment; DR-demonstration; Ex-examination; T for total

Source: *Course Guideline (138th, 139th, 140th) Law and Administration Courses of BCSAA, 2025*

A considerable portion of the content in the curriculum is of a general nature. For instance, the English language course comprises 64 sessions (10%), while the Chinese/Arabic course spans 40 sessions. While these courses are valuable, they have minimal direct relevance to the officers' specific duties or job responsibilities, offering limited immediate applicability to their professional tasks. However, in the long term, they may have some bearing on the officers' progression to senior positions, albeit to a limited extent. Despite this, certain job responsibilities detailed in the charters of officers within the BCS (Admin) Cadre, whether in field administration or ministries, are not addressed in the Law and Administration Course (LAC). The variety in instructional strategies aims to create a balance between theoretical knowledge and practical competence, yet the predominance of lecture-based methods indicates that there is potential for innovation, particularly through the adoption of more experiential and participatory learning approaches.

\Evaluation Method

Table 3: Evaluation Methods of LAC and Distribution of Marks

M	WE	CT	IA	GA	PT	MT	CE	AP	CS	GP	WS	PE	P	O	T
M-01					10										10
M-02	20		10	20											50
M-03	60	10	10			10									90
M-04	30	20				10	10	10							80
M-05	30	30	10							10					80
M-06	40	20	20							20					100
M-07	40	20							20	20					100
M-08		20								20					40
M-09	20								10	10					40
M-10		20								20					40
M-11												30			30
M-12														10	10
M-13											40				40
M-14														30	30
M-15														20	20
M-16													20	20	40
M-17														30	30
M-18		10										20		10	40
Total	240	150	50	20	10	20	10	10	30	100	40	50	20	120	870
%	27.6	17.2	5.7	2.3	1	2.3	1	1	3.4	11.4	4.6	5.7	2.3	13.8	100

M-Module, WE-written examination, CT-class test, IA-individual assignment, GA-group assignment, CE-class exercise, PT-practical test, P-presentation, O-others (Others include tour, UR, language test, debate, PE for physical exercise, RP submission, BR for Book Review, notes, interviews, etc.), and t denotes total marks against each module and the last two rows for grand total.

Source: *Course Guideline of (138th,139th,140th) Law & Administration Courses of BCSAA, 2025*

Table 3 illustrates the evaluation methods and the distribution of marks. The written examination (WE) constitutes the primary mode of assessment, accounting for 27.6% of the total marks, highlighting the significant emphasis placed on evaluating conceptual understanding and legal knowledge through formal testing. Following this, class tests (CT) contribute 17.2%, reflecting the course's focus on both academic rigor and the development of communication skills. Group Presentations (GP) (11.4%) and Workshops (WS) (4.6%) are integral to the assessment of teamwork and applied competencies. In contrast, Individual Assignments (IA) and Group Assignments (GA) collectively represent only 8%, indicating a limited focus on evaluating analytical and collaborative writing tasks. Less heavily weighted components, such as Class Exercises (CE), Practical Tests (PT), and Other assessments (O), collectively underscore an effort to incorporate fieldwork, debates, physical exercises, and reflective tasks into the evaluation process. While the diversified assessment approach aims to align evaluation with the varied learning outcomes of the modules, the predominance of traditional exams suggests that there is potential

to place more emphasis on continuous, formative, and performance-based assessments, which could promote deeper learning and enhance practical application.

Findings

The content of the Law and Administration Course (LAC) encompasses a broad range of topics, with some directly relevant to the tasks and job responsibilities of the ELOs, while others have less immediate applicability (Table 1). The predominant delivery method of the LAC is traditional and lecture-based, which may be less effective for ELOs, who possess diverse backgrounds and substantial intellectual insights (Table 2). The tasks and job responsibilities of ELOs are extensive, varied, complex, and frequently context-dependent. While off-the-job training can enhance theoretical knowledge, effectively addressing these complex issues demands a context-specific, real-life-oriented learning approach. However, the LAC does not adequately reflect these critical needs.

The evaluation methods employed by the LAC place significant emphasis on written tests, which tend to encourage rote memorization rather than problem-solving exercises, a strategy that may be less effective for promoting deeper learning (Table 3). There is considerable potential to integrate a variety of contextual approaches within the LAC, which would make the learning process more closely aligned with the practical demands of the ELOs' roles. This integration would help ensure that the training remains not only work-oriented but also sustainable in the long term.

Comparison of Designs of Foundational Courses of Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka

The comparative analysis of the training programs for the ELOs in the respective administrative services of Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka reveals notable differences in design philosophy, instructional methods, and alignment with competency development (Table 4). The training program at the **Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA)** in India is distinguished by its comprehensive, competency-based, and experiential approach, which is grounded in a national training policy. In contrast, the **Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA)** offers a more structured, feedback-driven model that integrates governance, communication, and soft skills but lacks a formalized competency framework. Meanwhile, the **Law and Administration Course (LAC)** in Bangladesh is predominantly procedural and legalistic, with limited application of training needs assessment (TNA), participatory methods, or focus on soft skills development. This

analysis highlights the necessity for the LAC to incorporate modern training principles, such as TNA, a public service competency framework, and a contextualized approach, in order to better equip civil servants to address the complexities of governance.

Table 4: Comparative Analysis of Foundational Courses of Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka

Criteria	LAC of BCSAA, BD	FC of LBSNAA, India	IT of SLIDA, Sri Lanka
Target Group	ELOs of BCS (Admin) Cadre	ELOs of IAS & Other all India services	Grade III (equivalent to ELOs) officers SLAS
Duration	5 months	3.5 months	4 months
Main Objective	Orientation in law, rules, administration, procedures,	Socialization, cross-service bonding, value inculcation, basic administration	Professional grounding in public service, governance, soft skills
Use of TNA	No formal TNA; centrally developed curriculum	Based on stakeholder consultations, past feedback, and service needs	Institutional TNA and performance-based feedback incorporated
Use of CFW	Not formally adopted	Competency-based design aligned with the National Training Policy	Partially reflected through skill-based modules
Curriculum Focus	Laws, rules, and administrative procedures,	Ethics, public policy, management, governance, physical training, IT	Public administration, bilingual communication, IT, service ethics
Training Design Philosophy	Law and rule-oriented, procedural approach	Competency and task-based, diverse experiential learning	Balanced a mix of governance, leadership, and soft skills
Instructional Methods	Mostly lecture-based; limited use of case studies & simulations	Case studies, projects, field visits, experiential learning, mentoring	Participatory, modular, with group work and field exposure
Assessment	Exams, individual & group assignments, presentation	Continuous assessment and final grading (certificate issued)	Module-based evaluation leading to a Diploma in Public Administration
Field Attachments	Limited field tours or attachments	Bharat Darshan (India tour), village study, sectoral attachments	Local field visits and study tours within administrative regions
ICT and e-Governance	Minimal ICT modules	Comprehensive ICT and e-governance training	Moderate ICT component & e-governance module
Feedback, Evaluation System	Not systematically used for course redesign	Strong feedback system for iterative improvement	Periodic evaluation by SLIDA and participants

Note: IAS: Indian Administrative Service; SLAS: Sri Lanka Administrative Service (SLAS)

Sources: BCSAA, 2025; DOPT, 2019, SLIDA (n.d.), Yadov (2020)

Conclusion and Recommendations

This article aims to address critical issues concerning the relevance and application of training for entry-level officers, particularly within the context of the BCS (Administration) Cadre. Given the diverse and extensive responsibilities these officers hold across various administrative levels, it is inherently challenging to design a universal training approach that meets their

needs. Nonetheless, to enhance the training's meaningfulness and engagement, the study proposes that incorporating a "learning by doing" approach into the LAC for ELOs holds substantial potential. Additionally, the integration of mandatory on-the-job training within the LAC, coupled with comprehensive evaluation, would significantly improve the practical applicability and overall effectiveness of the program.

Drawing on the study, the following recommendations are made:

The adoption of a contextual pedagogical framework in the Law and Administration Course (LAC) for ELOs at the Bangladesh Civil Service Administration Academy (BCSAA).

The design of the modules' content, number of topics, session hours, delivery style, training approaches, and evaluation processes should be based on their applicability, immediate needs, as well as medium- and long-term requirements and implications.

The introduction of operational modules that focus on e-file management, e-land management services, functional digital literacy, problem-solving cases, and the charters of duties of BCS (Administration) Cadre officers across all administrative setups.

The integration of diverse learning contexts within the LAC, with a stronger emphasis on experiential learning through "learning by doing," rather than relying solely on the traditional lecture-based approach.

Trainee officers should be assigned to upazilas, districts, and ministries for extended periods, enabling them to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during off-the-job training at the Bangladesh Civil Service Academy.

The engagement of supervising or senior officers to mentor trainees by assigning prototype tasks, thereby fostering learning through practice and allowing trainees to connect their knowledge and skills to real-world applications directly. Effective coordination among relevant offices and training institutes is essential.

A comprehensive study should be conducted on how to effectively integrate a contextualized pedagogical approach with off-the-job training for newly recruited ELOs, ensuring that the training program remains aligned with contemporary best practices.

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