

Stakeholders' Perceptions on ABAS Implementation by the Public Sector Entities in Bangladesh

Sharoar Khan^{1*}, Md. Jamil Sharif², Maisha Tasnim¹

¹ Department of Arts and Sciences, Faculty of Engineering, Ahsanullah University of Technology, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka, 1208, Bangladesh

² Department of Accounting, Faculty of Business Studies, University of Dhaka, Nilkhet Rd, Dhaka, 1000, Bangladesh

*Corresponding author email: sharoarkhan.as@aust.edu

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ABSTRACT - This study qualitatively investigates the perceptions of various stakeholders involved in the implementation of accrual-based accounting systems (ABAS) by public sector entities (PSEs) in Bangladesh. It investigates the perceptions of the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), explores the experiences and perceptions of the PSEs, and uncovers the overall challenges by interviewing stakeholder groups knowledgeable in ABAS. Interviews were conducted with the executive director of the FRC, individuals attending training on ABAS, and a group of academicians, practitioners, and professionals. The findings suggest that the FRC allows flexible deadlines, arranges public discussions, provides technical support, and takes initiatives to govern the legal framework in implementing ABAS. Responses from trainees from the PSEs indicate that the training received from the FRC was insufficient, appropriate software is unavailable, and reporting guidelines are inconsistent. Other stakeholder responses include additional challenges, such as inefficient human resources, insufficient technical resources, bureaucracy, and power gaps. Failure to employ accounting graduates in public accounting roles and a misaligned government accounting curriculum are two additional flaws in the system. The respondents suggest enhancing training and learning, improving technical capability, upgrading accounting curricula, and improving recruiting practices as remedies.

INTRODUCTION

The private sector generally uses an accrual basis of accounting to record and report financial transactions. In many countries, public entities often follow the cash basis of accounting for budgeting and financial reporting due to its ease and simplicity. However, the cash basis is inadequate for financial decision-making because it may exclude the recording of valid transactions in non-cash form (Ouda, 2006). There has been a growing trend towards adopting Accounting Based Advisory Services (ABAS) in the public sector in recent years. International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) have been accepted, whether explicitly or implicitly, by more than 80 nations and other global bodies, particularly by the UN System Organizations (Schmidhuber et al., 2020). Implementing ABAS in the government sector can provide benefits such as transparent public spending and accountable decision-making (Ademola et al., 2020; Caiazza et al., 2026).

However, this can come with significant challenges. The country's economic structure, availability of resources, overall educational structure, geopolitical status, and IT infrastructure play substantial roles (Agyemang & Yensu, 2018; Matekele & Komba, 2020; Antwi et al., 2025).

Public entities shall use IPSAS rather than IAS or IFRS for the following reasons. Unless commercially operated, the primary objective of public entities is not profit, but to serve the public through satisfactory services at a low cost and with minimal hassle (Newberry, 2014). Public entities must conform to certain reporting practices due to the difference between their economic substance. For example, public entities cannot use the term 'equity' in their reporting due to the absence of equity holders in their organizational structure. They generally report the amount of net assets and the surplus or deficit of their fund in their financial reports. The IPSAS manages all these reporting issues by providing accounting and reporting solutions for public entities according to the nature of economic transactions.

As noted earlier, while many governments have implemented ABAS in public accounting to reap its advantages, researchers are critically examining its adoption from diverse perspectives. Existing research on ABAS sheds light on determinants of its implementation (Ratifah & Mulyani, 2015; Agyemang & Yensu, 2018; Miraj & Wang, 2019; Muraina & Dandago, 2020; Ademola et al., 2020; Matekele & Komba, 2020), the extent of adoption (Stamatiadis, 2009; Surepno, 2015), and challenges (Ouda 2003; Ouda 2004; Hasan & Yeow, 2012; Adhikari et al., 2013; Alshujairi, 2014; Mahadi et al., 2014; Adhikari et al., 2015; Ahmad et al., 2015; Mahadi et al., 2015; Basnan et al., 2015; Gårseth-Nesbakk, 2016; Elmezughi & Wakil, 2018; Miraj & Wang, 2018; Hazrati et al., 2022; Shehadeh, 2022) in different country contexts.

To implement ABAS in the public entities of Bangladesh, the FRC introduced a new Financial Reporting Framework (FRF) on July 1, 2022. As Bangladeshi public entities have started using the FRF, research is necessary to investigate the perceptions of various stakeholders for a swift and sustainable implementation of the new framework. However, empirical research on public sector reporting in Bangladesh remains limited. Existing studies have contributed to the emerging body of literature on public sector accounting and reporting in the country. For instance, Adhikari and Mellempvik (2010) examined whether, when, and how South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, planned to adopt IPSAS. Rajib and Hoque (2016) explored the application of ICT in Bangladesh's public sector, while Miraj and Wang (2018) investigated IPSAS adoption across five South Asian countries, including Bangladesh. Rajib et al. (2019) analysed the institutionalisation of cash-basis IPSAS in the public sector. Sarkar et al. (2019) focused on the reporting practices of public universities in Bangladesh, and Khusru et al. (2021) examined governmental initiatives toward IPSAS implementation. In addition, Saleh et al. (2021) discussed the challenges of IPSAS implementation across multiple countries, including Bangladesh. More recent studies include Akter (2024), who investigated accountants' perceptions of public sector reporting, and Mannan and Noor (2024), who analysed the legal and regulatory framework governing public sector accounting in Bangladesh. However, no study has explored the perceptions of stakeholders involved in ABAS implementation in the Bangladeshi context, especially after the initiation of the FRF. To address this research gap, this study aims to investigate the perceptions of stakeholders involved in ABAS implementation by the PSEs in Bangladesh.

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Investigate the perceptions of the FRC in ABAS implementation
2. Explore the perceptions of the PSEs toward ABAS adoption
3. Explore the overall challenges of implementing ABAS in the PSEs

The authors formulated the following research questions to achieve the objectives mentioned in the previous paragraph:

1. What are the actions, strategies, and challenges of the FRC towards implementing ABAS in the PSEs in Bangladesh?
2. What are the experiences, challenges, and feedback of the PSEs towards their adoption of ABAS?
3. What are the overall challenges that are/will be faced while implementing ABAS, according to other knowledgeable stakeholder groups?

1.1 Background and Design of the FRF

The Financial Reporting Act was passed in 2015 to create a separate body to oversee the financial reporting of the PSEs and establish the FRC as an independent statutory body in Bangladesh (Financial Reporting Act, 2015). The FRC has a chairman and six members appointed for three years (FRC, 2018). It oversees the establishment of reporting frameworks for community interest, enhances the quality of audit experts and accounting standards, assures compliance and monitoring, and verifies the quality performance of such actions (Hossain, 2017).

According to the FRF, PSEs are Public Enterprises (PEs) and Statutory Public Authorities (SPAs) in Bangladesh. PE means a company or firm incorporated, or registered, in which the Government has at least fifty percent share or interest, and SPA means any authority, corporation, or body whose principal activities are authorized by any Act, Ordinance, Order, or instrument having the force of law in Bangladesh. Both PEs and SPAs followed inconsistent and confusing methods for their financial reporting before the FRF. To solve this problem, the FRF is designed with a structure of five levels.

Table 1. Criteria of different levels of financial reporting formats for PSEs

Levels	Basis	Entities that shall use it	Scale of the Entity
1	Accrual Basis IPSASs – published by IPSASB in 2021 and updated continuously	Any entity to manage, evaluate, and control commercial entities of the government and SPAs devoted to generating revenues on a large scale	An entity generating more than 50% of its income from its activities and/or revenue > BDT 1000 million
2	Simplified Accrual Basis IPSASs updated by the FRC as of 2021	Level 2 and Level 3 are suggested for medium-sized and small-sized SPAs, respectively	Revenue > BDT 800 million
3	Simple Accrual Basis – published by the UN in 2009, updated by the FRC as of 2021		Revenue ≤ BDT 500 million
4	Modified Accrual Basis - US Govt. Accounting Standard Board (GASB) issued standards are used	Small entities	BDT 100 million < Revenue ≤ BDT 300 million
5	Cash Basis – Prepared by the FRC, aligning with the IPSAS cash basis standard	Very small SPAs and local government entities	Revenue ≤ BDT 50 million or Gross Assets ≤ BDT 100 million

Among these five levels, all the PEs shall follow the level 1 accrual-based IPSAS or IFRS, depending on their needs. An entity can use IFRS and shall continue using it if 50% or more of its revenue is generated from grants. A PSE can also choose a higher level of reporting than the one it is currently entitled to follow. If it occurs that a PSE is already following the suggested or higher level of reporting practices required by the FRC, this shall be carried on. However, compliance with a lower level of reporting requires an upgrade spending of not more than two years for each of the lower levels (Financial Reporting Council, 2022). If PSEs change organizational structure or financial status, they will need approval from the FRC to use the prescribed level.

The FRC has prepared a comprehensive list of PSEs and specified the appropriate level of reporting. The list includes 12 councils, 45 boards, 29 institutes, 12 commissions, 19 trusts, 69 colleges and universities, 26 corporations, 8 foundations, 20 banks and financial institutions, 4 centres, 11 parishads, 2 funds, 13 commercial institutions, 9 academies, and 32 authorities (Financial Reporting Council, 2022). Table 1 represents the criteria for identifying the entities to follow ABAS.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Underpinnings

The new public management theory supports public-sector reform and the use of market-based principles, frameworks, and techniques for managing activities and operations (Barzelay, 2001). The adoption of ABAS aligns with the principles of this theory as it focuses on using a more comprehensive, accurate, and organized approach for the accounting and reporting in PSEs to support better decision-making. Furthermore, new institutional theory is frequently used in scholarly research to examine the impact of institutional reform on societal behavior. This sociological theory explains how organizations construct social interactions and shape behavior and outcomes by internal and external rules, norms, and practices (Tihanyi et al., 2012). It theorizes that institutions are key determinants of economic and social behavior, and they evolve through a process of selection and retention. In the context of the employment of ABAS, this theory is relevant to explain how and why certain accounting standards are adopted and how they may influence the behavior and perceptions of the employees in the PSEs. These two theories will act as the conceptual base of this study.

2.2 Prior Research

Issues relevant to implementing ABAS for the public sector have been an area of research interest for a long time in many countries, especially over the last three decades. The African region had good economic growth in the past decades, and countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, etc., have adopted ABAS in their public sector (Mbelwa et al., 2019). However, countries have faced mixed outcomes from adopting this approach, and their challenges vary. Adamu and Ahmed (2014) concluded that undertaking ABAS is time-consuming, and resources are scarce for first-time adopters. It necessitates harmonizing reporting practices of the public and private sectors for better understandability and comparability. Factors such as accountability, costs, training, technology, and expertise have been identified by Muraina and Dandago (2020) and Ademola et al. (2020) as affecting factors in ABAS adoption in Nigeria. They mentioned that ABAS would positively influence Nigerian society by the fair use of public funds. In the Tanzanian local government, gender, education, and professional qualifications positively influence ABAS implementation, but age and number of years in service as a public accountant influence it negatively. Professional training and the integration of IPSAS into accounting curricula have been suggested as important supporting mechanisms (Agyemang & Yensu, 2018; Matekele & Komba, 2020). The findings of the Edo State study suggest that foundational ICT literacy alone is insufficient for the effective operation of integrated public financial management systems such as ABAS. Successful adoption, therefore, necessitates structured, role-specific, and continuous training programmes to bridge the competency gap and enhance system utilization efficiency (Ediagbonya & Aghatise, 2023).

Gulf and Arab countries implemented ABAS recently. Elmezughi and Wakil (2018) studied the problems faced by the Kingdom of Bahrain. They uncovered the lack of accrual knowledge and the complexities in valuing fixed assets to be two major problems. The authors suggested implementing a more refined and modified cash-based accounting instead of full accrual accounting. Alshujairi (2014) investigated the requirements and challenges faced by the Iraqi central government in ABAS reform, and it was hindered due to insufficient professional accountants and technical resources. In the context of Jordan, Shehadeh (2022) identified untrained accounting practitioners and high implementation costs as major constraints to IPSAS adoption. To address these challenges, the author recommended enhanced professional training, the introduction of incentive mechanisms, and stronger support from senior government executives to facilitate an effective transition. Similarly, Ouda (2003) highlighted several challenges within the Arab world, including political manipulation of government financial records, resistance to change, and a shortage of qualified accounting professionals.

The boom in the Asia-Pacific economies encouraged them to apply ABAS in their government entities. Hasan and Yeow (2012) outlined audit scope, lack of understanding, and insufficient technical structure as challenges in the National Audit Department of the Malaysian government. Additionally, the recognition and measurement of heritage assets in Malaysia will change if the accrual system is followed (Basnan et al., 2015). Mahadi et al. (2014) and Yusof and Jaafar (2018) uncovered challenges, such as the intellectual limitations, technical setup, and policy convergence. Besides, measuring fixed assets and inventory, insufficient laws, lack of commitment, and absence of teamwork are relevant barriers in Malaysia (Ahmad et al., 2015; Mahadi et al., 2015; Hazrati et al., 2022). The public sector's

readiness to implement ABAS in Indonesia is relatively low (Surepno, 2015). Nevertheless, regulatory initiatives, communication development, and professional assistance are emphasized. Major challenges are inadequate training, few professional accountants, a mismatch of ABAS with the current software system, etc. (Suparman et al., 2015). Ratifah and Mulyani (2015) identified cultural dimensions such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and gender as significant determinants influencing public sector accounting practices. Indonesia also depends on the coercive impact of international donors to move to ABAS (Hassan, 2015). The Indonesian government used to use a cash basis before 2013. Afterward, the financial statements were presented using cash towards accrual basis and full accrual basis, and they showed better results for quality, relevance, reliability, and understandability (Karunia, 2019).

The UK government started implementing ABAS in the early 1990s, but the changes at the early stage were not widespread. There was an expectation that the transition of the UK to ABAS would also lead the Republic of Ireland to undertake this method, but it did not (Hyndman & Connolly, 2011). Mangualde (2013) did a cross-sectional analysis of Brazilian and British local government officers and found similar attitudes to ABAS. Becker et al. (2014) investigated the identity transformation of public sector accountants in two German states. A long tradition of cash-based accounting, the Weberian civil servant habitual mindset, constraining set-up with consultants and auditors, and the age and experience of the accountants are the relevant reasons for delays and resistance in Germany. The Greek government introduced ABAS and a double-entry system for recording transactions in hospitals. The rate of ABAS implementation there is satisfactory, but inadequate resources are hindering the process (Stamatiadis, 2009). Both the government and the hospital owners followed hybrid accounting systems instead of full accruals in the Norwegian hospital sector (Pettersen & Nyland, 2011). Ismaili et al. (2021) reported that ABAS adoption has enhanced public financial management in Kosovo, while emphasizing that sustained commitment and support from top-level government leadership are critical for effective implementation. Aggestam (2010) tested the acceptability of a project management approach to implementing ABAS and found it effective because it gets the needed backups from top government officials, well-structured governance, proper communication and training, and well-written accounting policies.

ABAS implementation in the OECD countries has been another major area of research for assessing the experiences of these countries. Based on a survey of finance ministers from 34 OECD countries, Moretti (2016) found that not all ABAS requirements were fully implemented. For instance, the rate of progress in civil service pension reporting and natural resource reporting is different. Adhikari and Gårseth-Nesbakk (2016) outlined the problem of political and technical uncertainty, which is creating doubt among the public accountants at the organizational level in the OECD member states. Additionally, business-style ABAS in the public sector did not meet its supporters' expectations regarding efficiency (Champoux, 2006; Newberry, 2014). As a result, Reichard and van Helden (2016) prefer the combination of accruals both for budgeting and reporting because the quality of accrual information is certainly better than cash-based information. Roje et al. (2010) have focused on some international developments, such as the gradual transition and consistent application of an internationally recognized framework for government reporting.

The South Asian region is slowly implementing ABAS by solving the barriers due to pressures from multilateral institutions (Yapa & Ukwatte, 2015). The scarcity of trained staff, delays in disseminating information, and flexible timelines are some common problems (Miraj & Wang, 2018). Pakistan is suggested to build capability through training and include government accounting in the curriculum by Miraj and Wang (2019). Limited capacity and bureaucratic influence are barriers to Sri Lanka. De Silva Lokuwaduge and De Silva (2020) and Abeyasinghe and Samanthi (2016) suggested significant legal reforms and political stability for Sri Lanka. Adhikari et al. (2013) identified resistance at the lower administrative level of Nepal and Sri Lanka and proposed to evaluate contexts to meet basic preconditions of implementation. In the implementation phase of public sector accounting reforms in Egypt, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, the installation process, pro-innovation prejudices, nepotism connections, and power gaps have negatively affected the adoption (Adhikari et al., 2019). The Bangladesh government, through the FRC, has implemented IPSAS in the public sector, a significant step in the public sector accounting reforms. However, the progress is slow, and the adoption is often rhetorical, not substantive (Rajib et al., 2019; Khusru et al., 2021). For example, the study by Sarker et al. (2019) on the accounting system used by public universities in Bangladesh reveals the use of the cash basis. Although the Integrated Budget and Accounting System (iBAS++) is implemented, integration among public offices remains a challenge (Rajib & Hoque, 2016). So, this study will address the research gap

of the perceptions of various stakeholders in Bangladesh about ABAS implementation in the public sector after the initiation of the FRF.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This research employed a qualitative design by conducting in-depth and semi-structured interviews with purposive samples and analyzing data using narrative and thematic analysis techniques. To achieve the first objective, the authors conducted an in-depth interview with a top-level representative of the FRC involved in accounting standard setting. Data collected by the interview is analyzed using narrative analysis to interpret their position, initiatives, and influence in implementing ABAS. The authors systematically coded the interview transcripts to identify key themes and contextual elements that shaped the interpretation of the participants' responses.

To achieve the second objective, individuals from various PSEs who received training from the FRC on implementing ABAS were interviewed in a semi-structured format. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select 63 participants from a list of trainees. The interview responses collected from the trainees were also subject to narrative analysis to capture perceptions and attitudes of the PSEs. Interview transcripts were analyzed multiple times, and narratives were compared to identify key issues they are facing, along with convergences in their perceptions.

The third objective focuses on identifying the overall challenges perceived by other stakeholders, including academicians, practitioners, and professionals, in implementing ABAS. Since public accounting is not the primary area of expertise for many academicians and professionals, the authors again relied on purposive sampling to identify 100 experts in public accounting, ensuring that only participants with sufficient expertise could contribute meaningfully. The data were analyzed thematically by generating codes from the interview transcripts, grouping these codes, and developing themes from their repetition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Roles of the FRC for Implementing the ABAS

To investigate the actions and strategies of the FRC in implementing ABAS, the authors conducted an in-depth interview with the executive director and head of the standard-setting division of the council. As the respondent mentioned, the PSEs are established, operated, and controlled by parliamentary acts or presidential ordinances. These acts and ordinances lack clear and consistent guidelines for financial reporting. In addition, the responsible ministries encounter challenges in formulating comprehensive financial reporting guidelines for PSEs, primarily due to limited professional expertise. In response, the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) was instituted to set reporting standards, monitor public sector accounts, and strengthen audit oversight. The Controller General of Accounts (CGA) office of the Bangladesh government will be able to accurately portray the financial status and performance of PSEs in the government's general accounts if ABAS is implemented across all PSEs. This approach will eventually list all public assets and liabilities of the government of Bangladesh, including roads, highways, dams, bridges, ports, land, railways, etc.

According to the respondent, the council advocates for the gradual adoption of ABAS through the FRF, discerning the scarcity of essential expert personnel required for the immediate implementation. It proposed a five-level framework to accommodate this constraint. The FRC is allowed to develop and issue simplified standards according to section 40 (4) of the Financial Reporting Act 2015. The FRC arranges discussions with various stakeholders and receives their comments. "A rush in it may create a chaotic situation in the reporting of the PSEs" - he added. The modified basis of ABAS is suggested in previous studies as well (Elmezughi & Wakil, 2018). In Norway and Greece, there are examples of hybrid accounting systems used by public and private organizations (Pettersen & Nyland, 2011; Stamatiadis, 2009). The government of the United States is using the modified system in public entities (Financial Reporting Council, 2022). The FRC initiated the implementation from level 4, the modified accrual basis, and allowed all the PSEs two years to transition to the required level. While some PSEs are currently eligible to adopt higher levels of accrual reporting (levels 3, 2, and 1), the FRC does not

insist on complying with their appropriate reporting levels instantly due to limitations discussed later in the study.

Training and workshops are crucial for implementing ABAS. The respondent noted the FRC's initiative to establish a pool of trainers. The council is committed to providing training on ABAS to individuals from PSEs, facilitated by an outsourced pool of academicians, professionals, and practitioners. The council initiated public talks and discussion sessions involving professionals from ICAB and ICMA to promote the mass recognition and acceptance of the FRF among public accountants. It has taken initiatives to incorporate accounting for PSEs into university curricula through the University Grants Commission to equip graduates with relevant public accounting knowledge for the workplace. The initiative to incorporate accounting for Public Sector Entities into university curricula through the University Grants Commission can be viewed as a strategic response to earlier findings that the Business Education curriculum only moderately influenced programme objectives (Segun, Afolabi & Saifi, 2020). Strengthening curricular alignment with public sector digital systems, therefore, becomes essential for the long-term sustainability of ABAS implementation.

Moreover, findings from Segun et al. (2020) suggest that traditional content-based instruction may be insufficient to prepare graduates for technologically integrated public financial systems. This concern aligns with evidence from the Malaysian education industry, which highlights the importance of learning environments that foster higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) for industry readiness (Jamaluddin, Kadir, Alias & Abdullah, 2022). For Bangladesh, future curriculum reform must therefore extend beyond incorporating public sector accounting content to restructuring pedagogical approaches that cultivate analytical, evaluative, and problem-solving competencies necessary for effective ABAS utilization. Such integration ensures both technical proficiency and cognitive adaptability in response to digital governance reforms.

The respondent added that infrastructure challenges prevail. In certain cases, IT software provided by development partners to the PSEs proved ineffective in Bangladesh's socio-cultural and organizational context. The FRC offers integrated accounts management software customized to Bangladesh's socioeconomic conditions, as specified in the Financial Reporting Act 2015. A key limitation of iBAS++, the accounting software employed in government offices, is its inability to manage fixed assets. To address this gap, the FRC introduced Fixed Asset Register software to systematically record, track, evaluate, and depreciate these assets. This software will manage information about its price, vendor, model, useful life, current operating status, and location. It will eliminate the asset management challenge the PSEs face.

The FRC is facilitating the progressive integration of ABAS within the FRF by attentively considering the specific needs and feedback of PSEs. "Additionally, amending recruitment policies to recruit staff with relevant expertise could enhance transparent financial reporting and communication with foreign development partners"- he noted. The PSEs established before the introduction of the FRF lack obligations to adhere to it, as their founding acts do not specifically mention or require this compliance. Efforts are underway to amend relevant accounting and reporting sections of the PSE's acts to assert the FRC's jurisdiction over financial and reporting activities.

4.2 The Attitudes of the PSEs towards Adopting the ABAS

Executives of PSEs underwent a two-day training program for 16 hours in total, organized by the FRC. Respondents deem the allocated 16 hours insufficient for mastering the FRF and preparing reports under the modified accrual standard, suggesting a longer duration for training. The authors received varied responses regarding ABAS understanding among trainees, noting that accounting graduates exhibit greater comprehension, likely due to their academic exposure. In contrast, respondents from non-accounting backgrounds encounter challenges in grasping accrual concepts.

As the establishment acts of the PSEs lack reporting instructions, the respondents mentioned the complexities a public accountant faces while reporting for the PSEs. The PSEs work as executing agencies of development projects for the central government and hand them over. There is no conceptual guideline on projects to be capitalized as assets. As a result, the development expenditure allotted from the government offices to accomplish projects is considered operating expenditures, not capital expenditures. Since the costs are not capitalized, the PSEs did not save information about their assets and liabilities from the commencement of their operation. Guidelines are unavailable for the

valuation and depreciation of their fixed assets. The absence of asset management software further complicates the complexity of this substantial task. As a result, they are facing increasing difficulties in accumulating existing and prospective assets and preparing balance sheets combining the FRF and existing practices. An Assistant Director of the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) states:

“The BWDB constructs dams and dredges rivers and canals, but due to natural events, these projects are often damaged and repaired or rebuilt using capital grants. However, these funds may not be capitalized as fixed assets if the economic benefits cannot be reliably measured, as per the definition of an asset.”

Respondents observed that the government ministries and departments responsible for funding and oversight do not utilize ABAS. PSEs receive funds based on predetermined economic transaction codes, spend the funds accordingly, and return any surplus. This creates potential reporting conflicts upon adopting ABAS.

Respondents highlighted that the FRC lacks adequate staff to manage its extensive tasks and suggested employing additional manpower. They also criticized the FRC for slow responsiveness to feedback from the PSEs on accrual adoption, resulting in unresolved organizational issues and delays. They suggested involving experts to offer customized solutions to the barriers and emphasized the need for harmonization to ensure reporting comparability. Furthermore, they advocated for conducting organization-specific research on their accounting and reporting practices before arranging training to enhance its effectiveness.

4.3 Challenges of Implementing ABAS

Changes in government accounting standards shall be facilitated by improving human resource competencies (Miraj & Wang, 2019). According to the respondents, human resources in Bangladeshi PSEs lack the necessary skills to support ABAS adoption, with 78% of respondents citing a shortage of skilled individuals. Insufficient professional training is a primary factor contributing to inefficiencies in human resources within Bangladeshi PSEs. Additionally, 64% of respondents mentioned resistance to change stemming from the complexity of new concepts and fear of leaving their comfort zones, which hinders their professional development. A Professor of Accounting at the University of Dhaka states:

“In many cases, older individuals nearing retirement are often reluctant to adopt a new system without substantial motivational incentives.”

Respondents advocate for reassigning the roles of senior employees who are resistant to change to foster enthusiasm for ABAS adoption. Younger individuals are adaptable, tech-savvy, and open to using ERP systems essential for ABAS implementation. However, involving elders could leverage their extensive experience in government accounting processes, potentially expediting implementation in Bangladesh.

68% of the respondents find the IT infrastructure in PSEs barely adequate for supporting ABAS and necessitates the use of sophisticated software. While government offices use iBAS++ software and the FRC provides fixed asset management software, they are deemed insufficient. Respondents suggest that while IT infrastructure shall be enhanced, a shortage of skilled staff may hinder leveraging financial and infrastructural investments. A Director of Deloitte Bangladesh added:

“Substantial improvement is required in IT infrastructure, but that can certainly wait till HR are trained adequately and processes are developed.”

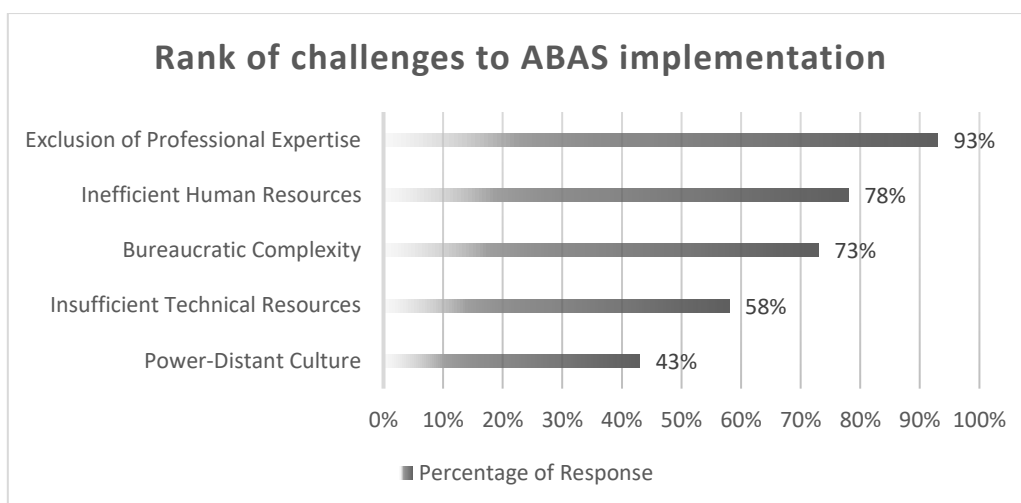


Figure 1. Rank of challenges to ABAS implementation

Respondents identify the appointment of non-accounting graduates as accountants in PSEs as a significant problem contributing to a pile of inefficient personnel and excluding professional expertise from these organizations. This study revealed that few accountants in Bangladeshi PSEs possess a diploma in accounting or professional certification, despite a strong demand for integrating professional accountants by 93% of the respondents in ABAS implementation. Neither the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) nor the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) offices have staff with professional accounting qualifications, which hampers accrual enforcement. Recruitment practices in PSEs are criticized for nepotism, politicization, and excluding qualified accounting graduates, raising concerns about recruits' knowledge and commitment to ABAS. A Manager of KPMG Bangladesh shared his observations as follows:

“As far as I have observed, public accountants have little knowledge base on accrual basis IPSAS, many of them are not even familiar with the term yet.”

A bureaucratic system comprises intricate organizational networks with multifaceted processes that impede swift decision-making, often viewed as a hindrance to national progress (Weimer et al., 1994). Bangladesh's bureaucracy is tarnished by corruption, patronage, incompetence, and a lack of accountability and transparency, hindering the adoption of new systems (Zafarullah & Siddiquee, 2001). Change-resistant public sector employees contribute to bureaucratic hurdles, and 73% of respondents fear that it will impede the ABAS adoption progress. An Assistant Manager of Biman Bangladesh Airlines highlighted this bureaucratic problem through his following statement:

“Implementing ABAS is a complex endeavor requiring years of effort, involving tasks like process development, module design, journal creation, report structuring, and implementing controls. Success hinges on genuine interest and commitment from employees across all organizational levels.”

Power distance in Bangladesh reflects a high score (80), indicating societal and organizational acceptance of hierarchical power inequality. This culture often leads subordinates to refrain from freely seeking solutions or suggestions from their superiors (Dutta and Islam, 2016). 43% of respondents identified power distance as a potential barrier, as senior executives resistant to change may make decisions without considering subordinates' input, leading to a reluctance among subordinates to share ideas (Adhikari et al., 2019). In this regard, an Assistant Professor of Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) mentioned:

“Top-tier authorities from diverse disciplines lack sufficient knowledge of iBAS++ and accounting systems, potentially causing delays in ABAS adoption.”

4.4 Recommendations to Overcome the Challenges

Respondents necessitated ongoing learning, advocated for participating in training and debates, and suggested using demo software by public accountants to understand ABAS. They recommend utilizing textbooks, handbooks, and online materials from professional accounting bodies for deeper insight. Extending training programs on the regulatory frameworks is crucial for addressing these educational needs effectively. Evidence from Tijani and Etejere (2021) suggests study on training and supervision as predictors of Business Teachers' job performance and indicates that structured professional development and continuous oversight significantly enhance workplace effectiveness. This insight is directly applicable to ABAS implementation, where system adoption alone does not guarantee improved financial management outcomes. Effective utilization of ABAS requires systematic training to develop user competence, alongside supervisory mechanisms to ensure compliance, accuracy, and accountability. Thus, training enhances technical capability, while supervision reinforces performance sustainability in digital public financial systems. A manager of Grant Thornton Bangladesh responded:

"I recommend government accountants engage in continuous professional development, staying updated through ongoing activities, seeking guidance from professionals, and utilizing additional resources like textbooks and online training materials to enhance their expertise."

Significant focus should be directed towards enhancing the IT infrastructure in public sector organizations. While some already possess the necessary systems, others require investment in new or upgraded technical capabilities for tasks like revenue collection, accounting, asset and inventory management, data handling, and integrating personal bank accounts with tax submissions to the National Board of Revenue. A Deputy General Manager of ICT of Dhaka Power Distribution Company Limited (DPDC) stated his suggestions as:

"Substantial investment in IT infrastructure and software development is essential, alongside efforts to cultivate expertise through need-based training programs and workshops."

The authors observed that undergraduate accounting programs in Bangladesh predominantly focus on foreign government accounting systems, neglecting local context and practical applications for government accounting practices. The courses' synopses do not focus on the context of government accounting practices in Bangladesh. Many of the undergraduate programs in accounting do not offer any courses on this. They advocate for integrating courses on 'Government Accounting' into business school curricula to better serve the PSEs and government offices, emphasizing the need for accounting graduates to fill these roles to effect substantial change. An Associate Professor at Jahangirnagar University remarked:

"We rely exclusively on Indian or US-based textbooks that teach idealized accounting principles. Local teachers and practitioners should develop texts that reflect the realities of our market and economy."

Incorporating professional accountants into government accounting roles will expedite implementation, as emphasized by 86% of respondents. Qualified accountants possess the expertise to interpret and apply the latest standards effectively within organizational frameworks. Therefore, recruiting practices should prioritize individuals with specialized accounting skills and professional certifications rather than solely relying on the general skills of bureaucratic appointments.

CONCLUSIONS

Implementation of ABAS is pivotal for reforming the public sector to enhance efficiency and accountability in managing public resources in Bangladesh. The FRC is adopting a flexible approach to ease the transition from cash to ABAS by formulating reporting guidelines, arranging training, and providing technical and infrastructural facilities to support the transition. PSEs in Bangladesh encounter significant challenges in their accounting and reporting. They have inefficiencies in asset management and reporting inconsistencies, which are critical areas to improve. Besides, a limited understanding of

ABAS, unskilled manpower, inadequate technical resources, bureaucratic complexities, and change aversion are some noteworthy challenges found by this study in the context of ABAS implementation. Interview findings of Gårseth-Nesbakk et al. (2025) with the preparers reveal that entrenched reporting practices and preparers' perceptions limit accrual reform unless it is accompanied by sustainable change management. Hence, recommendations to cross these hurdles include increasing the number of FRC staff to handle the reporting issues of the PSEs and integrating professional accountants to address PSE-specific snags effectively. Besides, technical resources should be upgraded to align with the requirements for managing grants, expenditures, assets, and liabilities. Expert assistance should be sought to eliminate conceptual confusion. Additionally, priority should be given to hiring accounting graduates and professionals with competitive compensation for government accounting roles. Furthermore, ministries and public departments are urged to adopt ABAS to bridge reporting gaps with funded PSEs.

Findings of this study offer insights to academics, legislators, regulators, and public officials in Bangladesh, aiding their understanding of current challenges and barriers to adopting ABAS. Another significant contribution of this study is in the field of business education. It identified the outdated government accounting curricula in Bangladesh and suggested improvements to enhance the conceptual and technical understanding of the graduates who will work as public accountants. This will make the government accounting and reporting practices efficient in Bangladesh eventually.

This study has some potential limitations. Expanding the respondent pool for interviews could have introduced new insights, which are restricted by participants' limited understanding of the FRF. Additionally, the lack of empirical evidence on the impact of accrual accounting on PSEs complicates accurate effectiveness assessment. Future empirical studies can investigate the financial and performance implications of ABAS in PSEs, while PSE-specific case studies can outline entity-specific challenges and implementation strategies.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

Sharoar Khan.: Conceptualization, Investigation, Formal Analysis, Methodology, Writing – original draft. **Maisha Tasnim.:** Investigation, Formal Analysis, Writing – original draft. **Md. Jamil Sharif.:** Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing – review and editing.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

Data available on request from the authors.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT Plus to enhance the clarity of the writing. After using ChatGPT Plus, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

ETHIC STATEMENTS

Not applicable

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