

Pressure Groups in the system of governance: Britain and Bangladesh

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Pressure groups play a significantly important role in a country's system of governance. In many countries, they are now part of the formal institutions that try to influence directly or indirectly government's policy formulation and implementation phases. They are the voluntary bodies and organisations of ordinary citizens that try to force government and civil service to give information. Where democratic system of governance exists, pressure groups seem to be working fine within the institutional arrangements to make sure that individuals do not suffer undeservedly from government rules. Even where democracy does not exist, some form of pressure groups and 'lobbies' or 'interest groups' are always active to provide alternative sources of information and to make sure the voice of professional, trade union, industrial, commercial and financial organisations is heard by the government. In the UK, pressure groups and lobbies or interest groups do not necessarily have the same meaning but of course, they are an increasingly important part of the parliamentary democratic system of governance. Many such groups in Britain today have attracted increasing attention of the ordinary citizens, which is why people are more likely to support pressure groups than join a political party. It is now widely recognised that Britain is rich in pressure groups and many voluntary and community groups under the label of 'not for profit', 'third sector', 'NGOs' and 'social economic' are now providing independent sources of information and ideas and all kinds of help and advice. These organisations are quite independent of the government.

Citizens Advice Bureau, normally called the CAB, is such an organisation that 'provides free, confidential, and impartial advice to everybody regardless of race, sex, disability, sexuality, or nationality.' The CAB is an independent organization committed to ensuring that 'individuals do not suffer through lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities or of the services available to them, or through an inability to express their needs effectively.' Well-trained advisors and volunteers run this independent organisation. Advisors give useful information on what the government policies are, and offer an advice service for all types of personal, monetary, and legal problems. The fact is millions of people are the service users of the CAB.

CAB could be a valuable innovation in Bangladesh to benefit the vast majority who usually suffer due to lack of knowledge and understanding / knowing the law or of the sources of help and information. There are many interest groups in Bangladesh today, and they are normally called professional associations, trade union organisations, social, cultural and sports groups and of course, NGOs. Through professionals and trade union associations and organisations, members articulate their demands. However, the leading professional associations such as Bangladesh Medical Associations (BMA) and PROKRICHE (Engineers, Agriculturalists, and Doctors Association) also monitor their standard of practice. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Bangladesh seems to be unwilling to recognize the demand for an organisation like CAB in Britain. But in a Third World country ordinary citizens still do not have an adequate understanding of their rights, needs, and duties. It is therefore important to deal with their problems effectively and efficiently. We underpin this by studying CAB model, taking positive lessons from it, and providing practical support for the establishment of such organisation that really cares about the ordinary citizens first and connects them to the service providers immediately.