

Innovations and Efforts in Nepalese Administration

Emergence of New Political Order in Nepal

Nepal is in the verge of new political change. As a consequence, the Government of Nepal (GON) is facing a great challenge of emerging expectations of people in all political, social, and economic fronts. Freedom of choice and right to public goods are voiced by majority of people. How the people in exclusion get “right space” in society is the major concern where government machineries should function promptly and effectively. These all demand formulation of new policies and their implementation. These all require question whether the present government machinery in general and public administration in specific is efficient or not.

Recent Efforts for Governance Reform

Since 2001, GON has initiated Governance Reform Program (GRP), which emphasizes on ownership, participation, capacity building, improved social outcome, and service delivery through increased client participation. It aims at establishing a result and people oriented civil service addressing gender empowerment, economic growth, and poverty reduction. Briefly, it includes civil service reform, capacity building of selected institutions¹, service delivery, liberalization, social inclusion, decentralization, improvement in accountability, and transparency of government processes. The program envisages to: develop an internal capacity within the government to lead and undertake the governance reform agenda; improve the efficiency of the civil service; improve governance and ensure that corruption in government is effectively prosecuted under the law; enhance the competence and motivation of civil servants; and establish the processes for improving performance in key ministries.

In the last five years various efforts have been made. First, a component of ‘reform management and capacity building in change units²’ component aimed at improving management structure and processes at the centre of government for leading, coordinating, and implementing the reforms. Second, emphasis was given to the ‘overall efficiency improvement’ through specific tools like right sizing³, improved personnel record management systems, revised pay policy and decentralization. Third, focus has been given to ‘governance improvement’ mainly through

¹ The program was first implemented in the ministries of Education, Health, and Agriculture.

² At first, three ministries (Education, Health, and Agriculture) and later two other ministries (Land Reform and Local Development) were selected to implement the program.

³ Reduction in the number of personnel and voluntary early retirement systems were the major efforts taken by the government.

curbing corruption. Fourth, 'competence and motivation enhancement' component has emphasized on professionalizing civil service, increasing the level of motivation and enhancing overall skills of the civil servants. Fifth, emphasis has been given to 'performance improvement' to deliver better services to the citizens.

The program expects to achieve institutionalization of reform process and capacity for implementation, establishment of performance based management system in selected ministries, computerized personnel information system (PIS) at the centre linked with other ministries for different purposes including pay scale, developing leadership for undertaking reform agenda and change management effectively, developing more anti-corruption institutions through strengthening legal framework and capacity building, introducing voluntary early retirement system (VERS), and promoting gender sensitive civil service.

Achievements

Various achievements have been made. In the last few years, 6973 positions have been reduced and efforts are continued to meet the target of cutting down 7518 (7400?) positions. The review of VERS has been completed. Policy options have been developed to rightsizing, contracting out, and decentralization. Long-term pay and performance based management policy has been undertaken. Personnel information system (PIS) of around 8,500 employees has been computerized. Teacher personnel information system (TPIS) system of over 100,000 teachers has already been initiated and records of more than 70,000 teachers have been captured. Effort has been made to strengthen CIAA and new 'anti-corruption act' has been enacted. 'National Vigilance Centre' has been established to prevent corruption and to remove delay in service delivery. Initiations and efforts are being made to formulate civil service long-term pay policy, merit based employment policies (recruitment, promotion, transfer etc.) and mainstreaming gender in the civil service.

New Initiations

Until mid-April 2006, prior to restoration of democracy and reinstating of parliament, efforts were not carried out successfully mainly due to political instability. These actions were also suffered from institutional and resource constraints. Many provisions remained un-materialized. Frequent transfers of key personnel working in the 'change management units' of some ministries and departments have created the problem of continuity and commitment in the execution of reforms. Many challenges remain in achieving good governance.

Briefly, the Government of Nepal is engaged in the following innovations and initiations in the civil service and overall governance:

Act and by-laws of civil service: Amendment bill has been approved by the Government and has already been registered in the Parliament.

Citizen charter: All the ministries have developed their citizen charters and tried to carry out their activities accordingly. This effort has been followed by all the departments and district offices of these ministries. At present, effort is being taken to revitalize the charters in lieu of fulfilling people's demand for public services.

Service delivery mechanism: Process for providing fast services to the citizens were developed basically at the district levels. Ministries and departments have formulated guidelines and given instructions to their offices.

Inclusive administration: Reforms are being made to include educated persons in the bureaucracy representing different groups of the society. Forty-five percent of such persons will represent women, ethnic, endogenous and oppressed communities. Such positive discrimination is taken as affirmative effort for social justice.

Time-bound promotion: A system is being initiated to make a time-bound promotion system for the employees having 16 years of continued experience in civil service. It is expected that it will provide social justice to the senior employees and will generate drive to work.

Trade union rights: Policy is being developed for providing trade union rights to the government employees. This initiation will also provide right to the junior officer level staff.

Unified civil service: The Government is committed to formulate policy for unified civil service which basically aims at introducing step-ladder system instead of class-hierarchy system. The step-ladder system would allow the civil-employees to get timely promotion. This system will be brought into effect from mid-April 2007.

Ten-year vision: Recently the government has initiated to formulate ten-year vision of civil service. It is expected that the vision will bring a new drive in the civil service to cope up people's increased expectations emerged from new democratic order of the nation.

Conclusion

At present, the country is in dire needs of good governance to institutionalize legitimate and accountable systems of political management in (a) creating opportunities to make political choices (e.g., through free and fair elections for constitution assembly), (b) building leadership of political institutions in policy formulation, and (c) enhancing public confidence in state institutions. The present government is committed to these directions.