

Role of the Public Service in Regaining Sri Lanka

The performance of the Sri Lankan economy since the introduction of a market-oriented policy framework in 1977 has been encouraging, although there were temporary setbacks from time to time. The annual average economic growth accelerated to 4.5 percent for the period 1977-2001 from 3.5 percent for 1950-1977. The higher growth rate, coupled with decelerating population growth, raised per capita income from US dollars 106 in 1950 to US dollars 294 in 1977 and further to US dollars 838 in 2001. Thus, annual average per capita income growth rose to 4.3 percent for the period 1977-2001 from 3.7 percent for 1950-1977. Even though some vulnerabilities still seemed to continue, the resilience of the economy has strengthened with a diversification and modernization of production as well as exports, while increasing the link with the global economy. The share of the private sector in economic activity has increased gradually, raising efficiency in the economy. The unemployment rate declined, albeit slowly.

However, despite positive economic achievements on many fronts, Sri Lanka's economic development has been far behind East Asian countries. Furthermore, the country's performance was even overtaken by a number of other Asian developing countries, which started economic reforms much later, largely owing to weak policy adjustments and slow economic reforms. Consequently, major economic problems such as slow growth and low productivity, coupled with inadequate savings and investment, persistent high inflation, unemployment, under-employment and poverty, serious macroeconomic imbalances and vulnerability to external shocks not only still continue to remain, but have been aggravated in some instances, posing greater challenges to macroeconomic management. In this regard selected macro economic indicators are shown in Table below:

In 2001, the national income (GNP) has dropped by 1.3 percent. In real terms, this amounted to decline in per capita national income from US\$ 881 to US\$ 823, or by nearly 7 percent. This clearly demonstrated the vulnerability of the Sri Lankan economy to external shocks and the need for measures to strengthen the resilience of the economy.

There is no doubt that some factors, which are beyond the country's control, may also have

contributed to such developments; but that should not be an excuse for weak performance. In fact, such factors should be taken as challenges for prudent macroeconomic management by pursuing timely and adequate remedial measures to minimize their repercussions. Given the fast changing global events and the potential for rapid growth following peace, managing the inevitable change with least cost to the economy and social life would be an uphill task for policy makers in the short to medium term. This would require changes not only on the economic front but also in cultural, social and attitudinal areas. The above situation in the Sri Lankan economy made clear the urgent need for strong policy adjustments and bold economic reforms in order to ensure an early recovery. Therefore the Government of Sri Lanka has introduced the new concept of regaining Sri Lanka which presents the Government's strategy to meet the economic challenges facing country and to put economy on a path where we can reap benefits of a vibrant economy.

Hon. Minister of Finance in his Budget Speech - 2003 presented to the Parliament, explained the current economic status of the country as follows:

"In 2001, for the first time since independence, a negative growth of 1.4 percent of GDP was re-

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corded. Inflation rode at 14.2 percent. Both industrial and agricultural production had contracted; so also export earnings. The share market was stagnant. The budget deficit rose to 10.9 percent. The public debt stock had spiraled to Rs. 1,450 billion. Every man, woman and child in Sri Lanka carried on his or her shoulder a liability of Rs. 77,500/=, being the pro-rata share of the country's debt burden. The servicing of this debt had crippled growth. Government owned institutions providing mainly utility services, such as electricity, supply of petroleum and public transport, were indebted to the local banking system to the extent of Rs. 41 billion. A severe shortage of power added to the nation's gloom."

(Budget Speech - 2003)

The government in its vision to achieve rapid development has prepared the broad framework as 'The Future - Regaining of Sri Lanka'. In this framework of vision for acquiring rapid economic development following four key challenges have been identified to be overcome.

- i. Increasing Employment creating 2 Million New Jobs.
 - ii. Overcoming the Public Debt Crisis.
 - iii. Resources for Reconstruction.
 - iv. Increasing Income Levels - Higher productivity & increased investment.
- (The Future Regaining Sri Lanka - 2002).

Public Sector Reform

Improving efficiency in all sectors of the economy requires high priority in the pursuit of such rapid economic growth. Improving the productivity of public sector would become a great challenge in this process. It is therefore, proposed to undertake reforms in the public sector with a view to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

The Government has approved in principle to introduce measures recommended by the Administrative Reform Committee (ARC) appointed by the Hon. Prime Minister. The ARC has recommended an urgent need for a time-bound comprehensive plan to create a public service that is efficient, modernized and responsive to the needs of the people and the government. Some key features of the plan are as follows:

- A re-structured and leaner government through VRS (Voluntary Retirement Scheme) for excess categories;
- Upgrading of the skills of public officers at all levels in line with their present role as catalysts and facilitators of development in a new globalized competitive environment;
- Inculcating a citizen friendly approach among public officers;
- Re-engineering of government processes to make them efficient, transparent and citizen friendly, taking advantage of modern technological developments. Introduction of e-government as in many neighboring countries is a specific need. Overhauling the regulatory framework of government transactions to permit efficient, expeditious

Selected Macro Economic Indicators

Item	1990-1989	1900-1996	2000	2001
GDP	4.2	5.3	6.0	1.4
Unemployment rate, percent	13.4	7.8	7.8	7.8
Gross domestic investment	26.2	24.4	28.0	22.0
Foreign Savings	13.3	9.7	10.6	8.7
Balance of Payment	-8.1	-6.1	-8.4	-2.4
Exchange Rate	-8.1	-4.8	-12.7	-11.3

Source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka

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and transparent conduct of business is another requirement in this connection.

(Administrative Reforms Committee – 2002)

It is very essential to take a serious look at the public service of Sri Lanka and redefine its role to make it enable to face the challenges of the day. Various persons try to define the role of the public service without taking into consideration the total context in which it operates.

Some senior or retired public servants proudly recall their experience four to five decades ago. They sometimes say that they as public servants never bowed down to any pressure including political requests during their time. They think that public servants should be independent and that all required authority should be given to them to enable them to run the affairs in the country. If they are allowed to work independently, they believe, that the country can achieve a higher level of economic development. In contrast, some other people think that the public service today should play an entirely different role. Consecutive governments have recognized the current global trends and accepted that the private sector should play a bigger role in economic development. Private Sector is therefore, recognized as the 'engine of growth'. In this context, some believe that the public servant should play the role of a facilitator, who should extend all possible support to the private sector in their efforts. Can all public servants be facilitators all the time? Or can they be law enforcers all the time? Otherwise what should be the role of the public servants today? A simple answer to all such questions is that the role of the public servant, today is not a linear and simple one. It is a very complicated role, which needs to be played very carefully and diligently.

Today, the public service is facing serious challenges unlike in the past. They have a key role to play in transforming the government's policies into action. Public Officers are expected to produce tangible and positive results within a given time frame. In this context, public officers cannot confine themselves to traditional and orthodox roles and achieve the given targets. In the post independence era, they had to perform some clearly defined functions such as maintenance of law and order, collection of revenue and supply of essential goods and services. Today, public officers have to perform varied functions, according to the situation they face and the type of job they hold. Therefore, they cannot perform some direct functions and maintain the bureaucracy' as was done earlier. They have to play multiple roles to address the new and complex issues and problems they face. They should have a sound knowledge of such issues and skills to analyze and resolve them to the satisfaction of many people. Public Officers should be fully equipped and capable

of handling the varied problems and situations. It is therefore, not easy to clearly define the role of the public service. The role of the public service is therefore, multiple and its approaches should be changed according to the situation it faces and the position its members hold at a given point of time.

What is the Public Service?

For the purpose of this article the public service is defined to include public institutions at national, provincial and other sub-national levels including the local government service. This also includes some types of semi government institutions particularly those involved in providing services for the benefit of the public. The important phenomenon is that the public service is the main "operational arm" of the government. In a democratic polity, the government runs the administrative, economic and social affairs of the country for the benefit of its people. The government is basically comprised of two main groups. One group includes the elected representatives of the people at national and sub-national levels. They are expected to play an important role on behalf of the people in a "representative democracy". The other comprises of appointed public officers who are expected to "operationalize" the government's policies, plans and programmes. The required powers, authority and resources are made available to public officers to perform this function. In some countries, the public service is referred to as "the civil service" to distinguish it from judiciary or armed services.

As Herman Finer said, " the civil service is a professional body of officials, permanent, paid and skilled. It means that it is primarily a body of professional administrators as distinguished from politicians who are elected on party lines." The public or civil service is expected to adhere to certain requirements. As E.N. Gladen points out, "the requirements of the civil service are that it shall be impartially selected, administratively competent, politically neutral and imbued with the spirit of service to the community." It can be observed in many countries that the public service has been actively involved in running national affairs over the last few decades. However, the role of the public service is vastly different today. In England the civil service reforms which were introduced during 1980s have redefined the role of government by introducing a concept of 'new public management' (NPM) in place of the old public administration and redrawing the boundaries of the State. Overman and Boyd consider that this process has resulted in a paradigm shift' in managing of the government.

As Rosenbloom explains public administration can be defined in many different ways. What is important is to define it in the context of country's socio-economic development at a given point of time. Thus Rosenbloom says that " the process of public administration consists of the actions in-

involved in effecting the intent or desire of a government. It is thus the continuously active, 'business' part of government, concerned with carrying out the law, as made by legislative bodies (or other authoritative agents) and interpreted by the courts, through the processes of organization and management."

(D.H. Rosenbloom – 1998)

In Sri Lanka too, it is therefore, very essential to take a serious and fresh look at the public service and the roles it is expected to play in the context of the changing environment.

Key Roles

There can be various roles that public service is expected to play from time to time. An important feature which requires to be noted is that these roles differ according to the position the respective person holds at a given point of time. A Secretary to a Ministry for example, is required to be answerable for several authorities. He or She is directly responsible to the Minister concerned and at the same time to the Head of the Government and to the Parliament. Therefore, a Secretary plays a complex and multiple role. The Commonwealth Secretariat in a paper published in 1999 had identified three basic roles of a Permanent Secretary (Executive Head of a Ministry).

These three basic roles are as follows:

1. Policy Advisor to the Minister -
The Permanent Secretary is expected to provide objective advice on policy issues, on the government's options in dealing with them and the implications of each option.
2. Head of Ministry -
The Permanent Secretary should direct and manage on the Minister's behalf and within the law, a ministry of government and ensure that the work is carried out efficiently and effectively.
3. Member of the Public Service Top Management Team -
The Permanent Secretary shares a collective responsibility for the management of the public service as a whole and is expected to ensure that initiatives of the ministry are consistent with overall governmental objectives.

(Commonwealth Secretariat – 1999)

These could be considered the basic role of a Secretary. However, there are several other roles that senior public officers at policy level are expected to play. Similarly public officers at middle and first line levels would also play diversified roles at different times.

Some key roles that public officers are expected to play are presented in this article. There can be additions to this list and roles may change according to the changing patterns of social, economic and political trends.

Facilitator

Many persons including top political leaders, private sector executives and senior public servants who are mainly involved in country's development efforts are of the opinion that public officers should play a role of a 'facilitator' in the present context. Public Officers are expected to identify the problems faced by the entrepreneurs and investors of the private sector and deliver the required services in an expeditious manner. It has been reported that several investors including some foreign companies have abandoned their projects due to undue delays in obtaining the necessary approvals from government. These services include permits for land, supply of infrastructure needs (electricity, telecom etc.), environmental clearances, duty waivers and various registrations. It may be useful to study in detail, whether there had actually been undue delays on the part of the public service. However, the lethargic and rigid attitudes of some public servants may have led to shortcomings and delays in some instances. As facilitators, the public servants are not expected to grant approvals blindly but are expected to consider broader national interests. It is necessary to deal with such requests with positive attitudes and extend fullest cooperation to the genuine private investor. Public servants therefore, should think innovatively, analyze all issues and display their rediness to cooperate in the case of genuine proposals for development. Public officers need to be flexible and should look at the issues from the point of view of the developer.

The normal approach of public officers to look at rules and regulations from a rigid point of view should be changed to one of accommodation. They should be open minded in dealing with the investors and consider each case on its merits. Public servants should recognize that capital, technology and management capacities are available with private investors. They should also ensure that proposed projects would not destroy the natural resource based and are in harmony with the socio-cultural norms and the legal framework of the country. A good example for this type of approach can be found in the Malaysian public service which recognizes that a strong private sector would emerge through a public service of high quality. A key feature of the Malaysian Public Service, called the Malaysia Incorporated Policy expects public officers to encourage and promote the private sector in the country's development process. Thus, "The Malaysia Incorporated Policy stresses the importance of cooperation between the public and private sectors in order to ensure rapid economic growth and national development. The success of the private sector leading to its expansion and increased profits will provide more revenue to the nation through the

collection of various government taxes. It is therefore crucial that the public sector ensures the success of the private sector."

This policy is considered as one of the major strategies of national economic growth. "It is based on the underlying philosophy that cooperation and collaboration between government and business is essential for accelerated industrial development. The objective is to harness the inherent potentials of such collaboration in vitalizing the national economy towards rapid industrialization and maintaining international competitiveness in a global economy."

The Malaysia Incorporated Policy has been accepted as a new way of approaching the task of national development. "The fundamental basis of approach is that successful national development requires the public and private sectors adhere to the perception of the nation as a corporate or business entity, jointly owned by both sectors and working in tandem in pursuit of shared corporate goals."

It has been recognized that responsibility of the public sector is to create a conducive environment that will provide the right impetus of accelerated economic growth. The role of the public sector in Malaysia is redefined in relation to the changes in the external environment. Therefore, "While the private sector has been entrusted with the lead role in spearheading economic development, the public sector has to play its role as an equal and productive partner in ensuring overall national development. In addition to its traditional role of custodian of the public good and as implementer for socio-economic development programmes, the public sector has expanded the scope of its responsibilities to facilitate and support the private sector's growth and expansion."

(Malaysia Incorporated Policy - 1991)

Similar changes have been introduced in England too. The traditional culture of the civil service has been transformed into a "managerialist" role. It is more compatible with the concept of an "enabling" state rather than a welfare state. As Famham and Horton say, The 'Enabling State' is not the major provider of public services but the facilitator and manager of the use of public resources. The role of senior officials today is to advise government on how best to provide public services, using the criteria of value for money and economy, efficiency and effectiveness. There is a presumption too that competition is productive of all the "Es", including excellence and entrepreneurship, and that the public sector must therefore emulate the market and the private sector to achieve these. This transformation from a Welfare to an Enabling State has required nothing less than a revolution in the culture of the civil service and the introduction of the new public management and managerialism in place of the old traditions of public administration and professionalism."

(Famham and Horton - 1996)

The Public Service of Sri Lanka can certainly learn from the above concepts and experience of other countries and then it will be able to improve its quality to face the challenges of 21st Century in an effective manner. However, it can be observed today, that many public servants are used to looking at the private sector as profiteers and violators of law. They tend to believe that the motive of the private sector is only to make profits at any cost. This notion is not correct. Today, the private sector is also organized and responsive to the public and the needs of the country. They also have realized that there is an important role they are expected to play in the process of the country's development. Public servants should be in a position to take the private sector into the mainstream of national development by providing the required opportunities. Today, it has become fashionable to say that public servants should be facilitators of development and encourage the private sector without considering the complexities of the roles that they are expected to play.

Some have gone to the extent of believing that public servants have no other role than that of a facilitator. This notion is not correct, when one considers the complicated nature of public officer's role. However, it is necessary to recognize that the role of a facilitator is vital and important in the context of present socio-economic development of the country. Therefore, public officers should develop their capabilities and change their attitudes to enable them to play the facilitator's role effectively.

Advisors to the Political Leaders

Political leaders are expected to make the policy decisions with regard to matters related to the major areas of administration. However, it should be noted that political leaders are elected for a specific time period and they may not be knowledgeable in the subject area assigned to them. Public officers on the other hand, are expected to have competence and experience in the subject area. They should be able to develop knowledge and skills in their subject areas. It will not be practicable for public officers to believe that political leaders should accept all their advice, on the grounds that they are 'experts'. Political leaders will not accept the advice of public officers blindly. They are answerable to the public and would consider only what is beneficial to the public. The advice of the public officers should be rational and be based on facts and figures. Public officers should be in a position to analyze the issue and submit a few alternative solutions to the political leaders.

All these alternative solutions should contain the cost and benefit analysis. Then the political leaders will be able to evaluate the alternatives and select the preferred alternative. The senior

public officers at the national or provincial ministries should be able to present the alternatives to their ministers with the necessary data. Vishnoo Bhagwan and Vidya Bhushan in their book titled, "Public Administration", recognize the role of public officers as advisors to be very important. Referring to the functions of the civil service with special reference to the Indian Civil Service, they accept that, one of the primary functions of the civil service is to offer advice to the political executive. "Ministers rely on the advice of their senior officials who are the reservoirs of information and organized knowledge concerning the subject-matters which they administer. The political executive necessarily depends upon the civil personnel for the information that he needs in formulating his own programme. In the course of administration many problems arise which are usually worked out in the first instance by the civil service and then reported to the political overhead, if at all, for approval or merely for information". (Bhagwan and Bhushan - 1998).

The middle level public officers particularly those at district or divisional levels should also be able present alternatives to the local political leaders and clearly understand the nature of their role as an 'advisor' who is expected to give unbiased, positive and analytical data and information to political leaders. It is therefore, necessary that public officers develop their capacities in analytical approaches and presentation skills to perform this role effectively. Even if political leaders do not accept the advice of public officers, it is the responsibility of the officers to present their candid views and suggestions.

Provider and Developer of Infrastructure

Provision of basic infrastructure is a sine-qua-non for the promotion of investment by the private sector. Essential services such as roads, electricity, telecommunication, transport services, land, water etc. should be made available for industrialists and other investors. Delivery of such services is a key responsibility of the public service. Public Officers should identify the resources available in different areas of the country for various types of development. It may be tourism, agro-based industries, farming, manufacturing industry or any other development activity, the required basic facilities should be provided to the investors. Public officers along with other partners and experts should prepare long term, strategic plans for various development purposes and provide the necessary infrastructure requirements for the developers within the framework of such strategic plans.

In this case, public officers are not always expected to be the direct implementers of infrastructure projects. They can plan and monitor

the implementation of new infrastructure projects and maintain existing projects. They should encourage the private sector to come as developers of major projects such as ports, telecommunication, electricity, roads and highways, irrigation, water supply and other related construction works. Today, many such construction projects are implemented with the assistance of foreign donors. In most cases, such assistance comes in the form of loan to Sri Lanka. Public officers have an important role to play in planning and monitoring such projects. They must follow tender guidelines and ensure that they select the best developer who could provide quality and cost effective services. Public officers should adopt the transparent procedure in the process of selection of contractors. They should also be able to supervise and monitor the work of the contractor to ensure that the quality of work in accordance with specifications and within the given time frame. After the completion of construction, it should be put into immediate use. They should also take action to maintain such construction works with a view to continue the expected services without interruption. It has been observed in many instances that various constructions so completed lie idle without any benefits to the country.

Practitioners of Social Responsibility

There are minimum norms and standards required for the quality of life of the people. Pricing of goods and services is an important element in this regard. If the manufacturers, traders and other service providers are charging exorbitant prices, the cost of living will increase thus effecting the lives of the people. Public officers should intervene and bring about the reasonable changes in such instances. There are some special institutions set up for this purpose such as the Fair Trading Commission, the Standards Institution and the Department of Internal Trade.

In addition to prices, it is important to ensure the quality of goods and services available to the people. It can be observed through newspaper reports that there are many low quality products available in the market. Such reports often refer to food, drugs and other essential items which people need for their day today life.

Several adverse effects on the lives of the people have been caused by low quality products. Health authorities have identified many instances of incidence of diseases such as cancer, heart ailments, stomach disorders due to the toxic material added to various food items. Various chemicals added as preservatives and flavors for the food items also have caused adverse effects. In addition, it has been reported that there are low quality construction materials, motor spare parts, clothes and many other items available in the market. If public officers do not address the issue of quality, the public will suffer on the one hand whilst diverting the country's national income for remedial measures.

Conservators & Protectors of Environment

Many studies carried out by experts have revealed that the environment and the natural resource base is severely threatened today. It can be observed that there are many adverse effects not only on the environment but most severely on the lives of people themselves. As a result of ad hoc and short-sighted practices of the people, the natural resource base is destroyed and pollution levels have rapidly increased. The basic requirements such as air, water and land are polluted and impacts on the health of the people. While valuable soil is being eroded, reservoirs are silted. Unplanned economic development practices in agricultural, industrial and other sectors have caused serious environmental problems. Rectification of these problems will be costly and sometimes unaffordable. It is therefore, necessary that public officers address such issues well in advance, particularly during the planning stage of the development programmes and projects. They should promote the conservation of forests, soil, wildlife and other natural resources. They should on the other hand, take necessary precautionary actions to minimize the damage on environment caused by development projects.

The techniques such as Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Environmental Protection Licensing (EPL) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) can be effectively used by public officers to perform this function. It is important that public officers involve all the stakeholders including the developers and the communities in the processes of environmental assessment and management. Public officers should not go to extremes and consider that conservation and protection of environment should be achieved at any cost. They must plan to minimize damage, ensure the practice of cleaner technologies and mitigate the impacts on environment with a view to achieve sustainable development. Public officers therefore, need to work very closely with developers assist and encourage them to use good practices to protect the environment.

Provider of Essential Goods and Services

There are some good and services, which are basic need for living. Health, education, transport and supply of essential food items as such basic goods and services. Although, there had been some recent efforts to involve the private sector in providing such services, it is not possible to reach the masses, particularly the poor through the private sector. Provision of these services cannot always be performed as profit-oriented business ventures. It should be considered as a basic service that the government is expected to provide. Achievement of a high degree of Human Development Index (HDI)

such as 0.735 (1999) is also mainly due to the free education and health services.

Seventy percent of the country's population lives in rural areas and larger proportion of them fall into the category of 'poor'. Most of the rural people are engaged in subsistence level agriculture and other casual jobs and therefore, do not have a steady income. Members of poor families cannot afford to pay for basic services like education and health care. It is a prime responsibility of public officers to identify the real needs of such people and ensure that they receive good quality services. It is encouraging to note that field level officers engaged in primary health care, maternity and child care services are rendering a yeoman service by reaching all households scattered in the country particularly in rural areas. Teachers who provide the education through the public school system too are performing a commendable service to educate the rural children.

There is a large number of government hospitals and schools spread throughout the country which provide health and education services free of charge. The government's Annual budget allocations for health and education sectors have been considerable. Total public expenditure on health as a percentage of the GDP has been 1.4 (1998) and expenditure on education as a percentage on total government expenditure has been 8.9 and as a percentage of GDP, 3.4 (1997). The following Table shows the number of government hospitals and schools of different grades established in the country.

(UNDP - 2001)

Some health and education institutions established by the private sector are mainly confined to urban areas and only limited groups of people can afford such services. Transport of people and goods is also an important service. Although, the private sector is involved in the transport sector, the government has continuously provided the rail and road transport since these services cannot be fully privatized. Public officers have a great responsibility to ensure the uninterrupted provision of such services.

Provider of Security and Defence

Security is an important requirement for the people to live a free and happy life. This would include security from external and internal threats. Although, the armed services are not considered as part of public service, there are public officers involved in policy and planning of security and defence services. In addition to the civilian officers police officers also are considered as public officers. Security and Defence services are predominantly provided by the state in any country. It is not possible to

involve the private sector to provide the common security and defence services. Therefore, the public officers have a great responsibility in performing such services.

They should identify the security and defence needs of the country at a given point of time, analyze such needs and the required resources and advise the higher authorities on the policies and strategies to be adopted. They also should coordinate the actions of the armed services and the police and ensure that they are within the policies and programmes of the government. Public officers are also expected to liaise with foreign authorities for possible linkages and assistance in this regard.

Law Enforcers

Enforcement of law in the country is an important function of the public service. This helps to maintain law and order and ensures freedom of the people. When one person violates the law, it can affect many others. The responsibility of law enforcement cannot be transferred to any other sector and therefore, public officers should take special care in exercising authority and ensure justice and impartiality. Public officers working in such institutions as police, customs, immigration, cost conservation, forest and wildlife conservation, labour and other areas need to be mindful about the important nature of this responsibility. However, public officers should bear in mind that law enforcement is not to harass people, but ensure the freedom of the people.

Today, the critical issue is not the inadequacy of law, but its weak, lethargic and biased enforcement. This aspect needs to be rectified to achieve development goals. As Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister of Singapore said that discipline should be established first and then development and democracy would follow. This statement clearly shows that establishing discipline through proper law enforcement is a 'pre-requisite' for sustainable development and the democratic process. The relevant public officers, therefore should master the laws pertaining to their subject areas and ensure that law enforcement is fair and unbiased.

Leaders in Development

Public Officers have a vital role to play in the process of the country's development. They should understand the directions of development trends including the main elements of economic, social and environmental development. Public officers should have the knowledge, capacity and experience in the development process, as they have been involved in the development process. They should therefore, give leadership to development in the country. They should identify the problems and issues, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate development programmes and projects. In this regard, public officers must clearly understand the policies of the government in power and adjust their development related actions accordingly. Public officers should also clearly understand the global economic and political trends, identify the country's needs and use the resources in an optimum manner to achieve the development goals. They have to play a lead role in the process of development with a view to help improve the quality of life of the people.

It is important for public officers to clearly understand the basic principles and strategies of sustainable development. They are responsible for formulating the national policies, coordinating various sectors including agriculture, industry, transport etc. and ensuring the proper implementation of such policies in a cohesive and consistent manner. They should provide leadership in national development, help the private sector and advise political leaders to make suitable decisions.

Policy Analysts

It is important that all senior level public officers be conversant with the process of public policy formation. This is a function, which requires specific skills related to multi-disciplinary policy arenas.

Some of the multi major disciplines are, Energy and Environment, Foreign Affairs, Health, Criminal Justice, Social Welfare, Science & Technology, Education, Urban development,

Transportation, Employment & Labour, Economic & Social Development & Communications.

As Professor William Dunn says, Policy analysis is the activity of creating knowledge of policy-making processes policy analysts investigate the causes, consequences and performance of public policies and programs. Such knowledge remains incomplete, however, unless it is made available to policymakers and the public they are obligated to serve. Problems solving is a key element of the policy analysis methodology. For-

Hospitals		Schools	
Type	Number	Type	Number
Teaching Hospitals	18	1 AB (Schools with Advanced Level Science)	584
Provincial Hospitals	6	1 C (Schools with Advanced Level Commerce & Arts)	1,844
Base Hospitals	36		
District Hospitals	159	Year One to Eleven	4,030
Peripheral Hospitals	103	Year One to Eight	3,429
Rural Hospitals	158	National Schools	317
Prison Hospitals	8		
Special Groups	5		
Central Dispensary & Maternity Homes	75		
Central Dispensaries	389		
Estate Hospitals	9		
Total	864	Total	10,204

Source: Ministry of Health

Source: Ministry of Education

mulating problems as part of a search for solution is also an important part of the methodology. Policy analysis also helps to improve efficiency of choices among alternative policies.

As William Dunn points out policy analysis provides information that is useful in answering five questions. What is the nature of the problem? What present and past policies have been established to address the problem, and what are their outcomes? How valuable are these outcomes in solving the problem? What policy alternatives are available to address the problem, and what are their likely future outcomes? What alternatives should be acted on to solve the problem? Answers to these questions yield information about policy problems, policy futures, policy actions, policy outcomes, and policy performance.

(William N. Dunn – 1994)

It is essential to expose senior level public officers to short term and long term training on policy analysis. If they acquire the knowledge and skills in this field they will be in a better position to plan work and guide their agencies and the officers under them. Political executives also will be benefited from such analyses of public policies when deciding national, policy.

Practitioner of Good Governance

It is an accepted fact that all public officers should be efficient and effective in performing their functions. Today, an additional quality is required of public officers, namely the practice of the principles of good governance. Many think that the term governance refers only to the functions of the state sector.

The term "governance" refers to the administrative mechanism available to manage the economic, social and political affairs of a country. There are elected as well as appointed members of the government and public officers are considered as the appointed members of the government. "Governance includes the state, but transcends it by taking in the private sector and civil society." (UNDP) This clearly spells out that there are two other key players (Private Sector and Civil Society) in addition to the state sector in the practice of governance. If public officers need to be good practitioners of governance, they must first of all recognize the private sector and civil society as equal partners. They must also be conversant about the basic principles of governance and try to put them into practice. The main principles of governance are characterized by participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and strategic vision.

(UNDP – 2002)

The scope of this article does not provide opportunity to go into details of good governance. However, it is important that all public officers be conversant in good "governance" and its principles and practice. In line with the meaning of the term governance, the public officers should build partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations. The primary role of the public service is to promote, encourage and build such partnerships with a view to develop the other two players as equal partners.

Organizational Managers

All public officers work in organizations. It may be a ministry, department, statutory body, provincial agency, district or divisional level agency. All these agencies can be called organizations because they have the three characteristics of an organization such as goals, resources (Human, financial, material) and systems/procedures to work. Public Officers may work at senior, middle or junior levels in an organization. Some may be the heads of organizations, other may be members at other levels. They must ensure that resources are utilized in an optimum manner according to laid down systems to achieve goals of the organization.

They must direct and lead the organizations as teams to provide services efficiently and effectively. It is important to motivate and lead human resources while practicing the rules and guidelines in managing financial resources.

How to play the Roles Effectively ?

Although, some key roles of the public service have been specifically identified in this article, there may be other roles, which can be added to the list. The important feature is that public officers are expected to play multiple roles depending on the situation. Sometimes, a public officer can be a facilitator in promoting the private sector for development. In addition the same public officer may have to play other roles of protector of the environment, provider of quality services or act as a law enforcer.

Training

As described in early sections, the multiple roles that public officers are expected to play require 'multiple' qualities and skills to make them effective. They need to acquire relevant knowledge and skills and improve their capacities in a plethora of subject areas. They should be conversant with policy analysis, management principles and practice, monitoring and evaluation, planning, communication, law and other related general subject areas. In addition, they should acquire basic knowledge in various specific subjects assigned to them such as agriculture, environment, industrial development, transport, education, infrastructure development etc. It is therefore, necessary that or-

ganized training opportunities be extensively provided for public officers. These training programmes should be specific to different seniority levels and the responsibilities entrusted the officers. Some public officers believe that they do not need any organized training because they have the required knowledge and skills to perform the job assigned to them. Many senior level public officers do not possess the skills required for policy level jobs which is a specialized subject area requiring special skills. Same principle can be applied to other subject areas as well.

The training required by different grades of public officers should be planned carefully and be offered on a regular and mandatory basis. The officers should be asked to follow the appropriate training programme, before they are promoted to the next grade. In South Korea the public officers who belong to a unified service are required complete the designated training programme relevant to their grade before promotion.

In England, the training of public officers was given priority both to provide them with relevant skills and to act as a vehicle for transmitting the new managerialist culture. Different types of training programmes have been designed for three key levels of the civil service "Top Management Programme, involving managers from both the public and private sectors, was introduced as a prerequisite for all grade three civil servants involved in strategic management. A Senior Management Development Programme was launched for principal officers and above and a Management Development Programme for junior staff was designed to identify managerial talent and introduce a management succession programme."

The main government training institutions such as Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA) and National Institute of Business Management (NIBM) need to be strengthened to undertake this important responsibility. In addition, selected Universities and other relevant institutions may be invited to plan and offer short term and long-term study programmes for identified groups of public officers. Training should be properly linked to the career development of public officers and completion of the required training should be made mandatory.

Job Specific Skills

It is observed that many public officers apply the practices familiar to them irrespective of the position they hold. A public officer may have obtained his or her academic qualifications in a specific subject area such as engineering, economics, social sciences, natural sciences or humanities. Some officers attempt to use their subject specific knowledge and skills on the

job. Although, such specific subject knowledge may be useful, the officer requires many other skills. For example, when an officer is appointed as a Project Director of a foreign funded project, such officer needs to acquire knowledge and skills, in planning techniques, project management techniques, monitoring and evaluation techniques etc. Today, many foreign funded projects have not performed successfully because the officers concerned do not have the special skills.

A similar situation can be observed with regard to the experience of the officer. For example, if the officer has worked as a Divisional Secretary for long time, he/she tries to play very much the same role when the officer concerned is appointed to a senior position of a Ministry. The officers should understand the different roles that they are expected to perform according to the job.

Is the Role Changing?

Some people talk about the changing role of the public service. But if trends have been carefully analyzed, one cannot see any significant change in the role of the public service over the last few decades. Some policy makers believe that the role of the public service will automatically change according to the global and socio-economic changes. It has been observed that some senior policy makers request the public officers to change their attitudes and adjust their roles according to the current development trends. However, the role of the public officer will not change automatically as expected. It is necessary to introduce and induce the changes through legal and administrative means. The public service of Malaysia has

been modernized and reformed through introducing necessary legal framework, directives of the chief executive (Prime Minister) and through various administrative guidelines, instructions and circulars issued by the Chief Secretary to the government and other relevant executives. Therefore, they believe that they would achieve the establishment of professional, high quality and meritorious public service in Malaysia.

Conclusion

As was mentioned earlier, the public service is the main planning and implementing arm of the government. It is difficult to achieve the desired development without a 'strong' and quality public service. This is important for countries like Sri Lanka, since there is no other mechanism available for this purposes, Malaysia, Singapore and India are good examples where a strong public service has been able to contribute positively towards the economic development, political stability and sustainability of the administration.

It is essential to introduce necessary reforms in the public service with a view to achieving the development goals and objectives of the government. Since the public service is the key system available to transform government policies and programmes into action, the public service reforms should be considered as a priority. When market oriented economic reforms were introduced in England in 1980s, the government realized the need to reform its civil service "Businessmen were co-opted or recruited to introduce managerialist ideas and legitimize value for money and its concomitant emphasis on the 3 'E' s, economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The political drive during 1990s turned to a fourth 'E', excellence aimed

at improving the quality and choice of public service. Subsequently the fifth 'E', entrepreneurship was introduced and the public sector was expected to emulate the market and the private sector to achieve the objectives.

In many countries, policy makers have realized the importance of establishing a quality public service to effectively carry out the programmes of the government.

It is therefore, unnecessary to stress the importance of introducing administrative reforms with a view to rapidly changing the culture, capacity and approach of the public service to achieve the development goals of the government. The present public service should be transformed into a more professional, high quality and competitive body to enable it to face the enormous challenges of the 21st Century.

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