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REFORMS IN THE SINGAPORE CIVIL SERVICE : LESSONS FOR BANGLADESH

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of Singapore during last two decades from a relatively poor country to one of the success stories of Southeast Asia is remarkable event in contemporary Asian history. Singapore is a city-state with no natural resources and comprises of a small land area of 224 square miles with an estimated population of 3,044,300 (Singapore, 1997a: 4). Of the total population, the Chinese comprise the majority with 77.3% followed by Malays 14.1% and Indians 7.3% and all other ethnic groups together 1.3% (Singapore, 1997a: 4). Malay, Chinese (Mandarin), Tamil and English are four official languages. While Malay has been designated as the national language, English has been retained as the language of administration. Beside these languages, population of the island speak a variety of languages including a number of Chinese dialects, Tamil, Hindi, Punjabi and Bengali. The religious affiliations of the citizens are diverse as among them Buddhists, Taoists, Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Atheists can be found (Quah, 1996: 61).

In spite of Singapore's multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural heritage, Singapore has achieved notable success in checking its population growth, maintaining communal and racial harmony, sustaining a vibrant economy and excelling in

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human development. The population increase at present is 1.9% (Singapore, 1997a: 4). The literacy rate in 1996 reached little over 92% (Singapore, 1997a: 5). The per capita income is \$25,000 and the GNP is over \$39,000 (Singapore, 1997a: 39). Singapore's continued emphasis on productivity has resulted in a higher standard of living and better quality of life for its population. In the past fifteen years, productivity grew annually by an average of 4.5%, supporting an economic growth of 7.6% a year (Singapore, 1997a: 39). Singapore's foreign reserves are now more than US\$70 billion and per capita GDP is measured to be US\$24,000 (Mauzy, 1997: 271). In terms of human development, Singapore has been ranked 43 among nations of the world.

There can be a number of reasons as to why Singapore has progressed so well and that only in a few decades. But it is evident that Singapore Civil Service (SCS) has played a critical role in shaping the future of the state. Quite appropriately, the leading scholar on Singapore public administration, Quah states that "one of the key factors contributing to Singapore's political stability and economic prosperity is the quality of its public service" (Quah, 1996: 59). But this quality has not been achieved automatically. It is the result of a determined and calculated series of successful policy interventions by a strong-willed and entrenched political leadership constantly pushing to bring about productivity, efficiency and effectiveness in the SCS. The paper is intended to describe and analyze reforms and changes that have been introduced in the SCS over last two decades. To put the discussion within a proper perspective, historical development of the SCS is also highlighted. An attempt is made in the paper to highlight the lessons that SCS offers for the civil service in Bangladesh.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

The origin of the Singapore Civil Service (SCS) can be traced to the creation of two administrative positions in 1819 by Sir Stamford

Raffles (Meow, 1985: 95). The two incumbents were to perform functions pertaining to general administration and regulation and promotion of shipping and trade. This was understandable as Raffles was employed by the East India Company. Singapore's administration at that time was controlled and coordinated from Bengal where the company had a much older and larger establishment. As profit was the sole motive of the company, administration did not figure prominently in its objectives. But with the increase in commerce, trade, population and law and order problems in Straits Settlements in general and Singapore in particular it became apparent that overcentralization of government in Calcutta was not congenial for an efficient administration (Hiok, 1980b: 436). Not surprisingly, the civil service at that time suffered from a number of deficiencies. These included:

overcentralization of power in the hands of Indian government; absence of a specialized service; blending of the judicial with executive functions; lack of proper training; shortage of staff; appointment of young men to responsible posts; and poor prospects for incumbents (Bal, 1960: ii).

The rule of Singapore by the East Indian came to an end in 1867 after the assumption of control of the Straits Settlements passed to the British Crown. This period is important primarily because of two reasons (Quah, 1978a: 17). First, slowly but surely a bureaucratic edifice was being built. As a part of this process eleven departments were established. Second, the entrance to the civil service was not open to all qualified candidates but only to Europeans thereby discriminating against the worthy locals. Locals had to be satisfied with lower ranks, smaller salaries and fewer benefits. This particular situation was due mainly to the absolute domination by the British officials posted in the colony. These officials were given wide range of discretionary powers. In 1930s mostly due to pressure exerted by non-official members of the legislature, subordinate services came into being facilitating entrance of qualified locals in these services

(Meow, 1985: 98). During this period responsibilities of the civil service revolved around "establishing the writ of the colonial regime and creation of an environment favourable to economic modernization" (Meow, 1971: 20).

Japanese invasion and occupation of Singapore during the Second World War provided greater opportunities to local civil servants to prove their mettle. These officers were able to successfully perform enormous duties and responsibilities without direction and guidance of the British superiors who either left the country or remained in prisons (Meow, 1985: 98). Confidence gathered in the process emboldened the local civil servants to begin agitation for achieving parity with British civil servants in three crucial areas, that is, conditions of service, promotion and remuneration (Meow, 1985: 98). The impact of the agitation was felt. Subordinate civil services were abolished. Provisions were made for the appointment of suitably qualified local candidates to administrative and other services. But these steps were not enough to fulfil the aspirations of the local population.

With the reimposition of the British rule in 1945 a number of developments took place that affected the civil service. Singapore was declared a crown colony and made a separate entity different from Malaya facilitating the severance of many pan-Malayan ties and the emergence of a distinct Singapore establishments ten years later (Meow, 1985: 98).

But the major reforms in the civil service had to wait till the implementation of the recommendations of a colonial government-appointed commission, popularly known as the Trusted Commission. The Commission was responsible to scrutinize conditions of service and pay of public servants. One of the upshots of the Commission's work was the establishment of a four-fold classificatory schema in the public service. This classificatory schema is still retained and "provides the basis for determining the various points of entry into the

Singapore Civil Service, the salary scales and fringe benefits (Teo, 1985: 312). The other major reform was the establishment of a Public Service Commission (PSC) in January 1951. But this reform was in the offing for quite sometime since the publication of government White Paper in 1946. The Trusted Commission suggested setting up of a PSC to provide a vehicle for screening local candidates who wanted to enter the public service. The PSC's objective was clear. It wanted "to keep politics out of SCS by rejecting the spoils system and to accelerate the pace of localization in the SCS" (Quah, 1982a: 50). In other words, the PSC was designated from the very outset to act as a gatekeeper of merit in the public service.

Another development that affected the SCS was the recommendations of the Malayanisation Commission. The Commission, popularly know as the Sreenivasan Commission, was appointed in 1955 and submitted its recommendations in 1956. The main thrust of the Commission was to accelerate the pace of localization in various services. It wanted to set deadlines within which localization process should be completed. A number of methods were pursued to facilitate quickening the pace of localization. These included establishment of supernumerary posts, promotion of local officers to senior posts and modification of certain recruitment criteria due to the small size of locally-available qualified candidates (Meow, 1971). These methods were endorsed and supported by local politicians and local bureaucratic associations (Meow, 1975: 6).

The pace of localization of the SCS considerably quickened after the acceptance by the government of the Commission's recommendations. The posts of permanent secretaries were localized within a year of submission of the Commission's report. But the localization process also created a number of problems (Meow, 1985: 100). First, the local civil servants inherited attitudes of their expatriate predecessors. They wanted all the benefits and facilities of

their expatriate superiors. They also believed in bureaucratic neutrality and had an "undisguised disdain" for local politicians. Second, administrative efficiency suffered considerably as many local civil servants of junior ranks were catapulted to higher positions for which they were ill-qualified. The effect of this situation was felt for years. The former Prime Minister made a pertinent comment about the situation in 1965 this way. He said, "my problem then was how to find big men for the big jobs that were vacant" (Meow, 1985: 100). Third, accelerated promotion of locals also contributed to the weakening of the management of the public service. Officers belonging to supportive services were promoted leaving these services of competent officials. In other words, localization exercised "was extremely disruptive of the civil service as an institution" (Meow, 1985, 1985: 101) adversely affecting its efficiency and effectiveness. This was inevitable as localization policy was "an artificial and deliberate attempt to restructure personnel composition in the bureaucracy" (Meow, 1975: 7).

Also the acceptance and implementation of the Rendel Constitutional Commission's recommendations had a major bearing on the civil service. Among other things, the recommendations included introduction of a cabinet government with locally-elected politicians, ministerial responsibility and subordination of civil servants to concerned politicians (Meow, 1985: 103). Creation of the posts of permanent secretaries as heads of ministries directly responsible to political heads was one of the outcomes of the Rendel Commission.

By the time the PAM government assumed the control of the state apparatuses, it inherited a bureaucracy that was at odds with its policies and programmes in spite of the implementation of the localization policy earlier. The weaknesses in the bureaucracy was evident. These have been summed up by Quah (1996: 64-65). First, the SCS was not geared up to accelerate the pace of implementation of various socio-

economic development programmes. Second, corruption was an essential ingredient of the SCS. The Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) due to a number of weaknesses of its own, was unable to effectively check corruption in the public service. Third, most of the civil servants especially at the higher levels, as mentioned earlier, believed in adhering to the norm of bureaucratic neutrality. Also a number of expatriate senior civil servants resigned taking early pension and the vacuum left behind proved difficult to fill.

Initial reforms of the PAP mainly reflected its concern with moulding the attitude of the civil servants as well as bringing about certain structural changes in the civil service system. The reforms concentrated on structural reorganization of the SCS in the form of creation of new ministries and rationalization of statutory boards, reduction in the salaries of civil servants by withdrawing their variable allowances and creation of a Political Study Centre to mould the attitudes of civil servants (Quah, 1975 : 345-346). The Political Study Centre, Central Complaints Bureau (CCB) and People's Associations (PAs) were used as mechanisms by the government to reform the SCS. Earlier, PAs, based in community centres, were created to play the role of intermediaries between the government and the people. The CCB was established in 1961 to enable the public to lodge complain about acts of bureaucratic rudeness or misbehaviour (Hoik, 1980a : 105). Four other methods were utilized effectively by the government to transform the attitudes and behavioural patterns of civil servants. These methods included week-end participation of civil servants in mass civic projects; recruitment of non-English educated specially Chinese-educated, graduates to reduce the predominance of the English-educated civil servants in the CSS; tougher disciplinary measures against civil servants found guilty of misbehaviour; and a policy of selective retention of competent civil servants due for retirement and premature retirement of incompetent civil servants (Meow, 1971 : 86-89 as quoted in Quah, 1984a : 304). Another

method sought "to tighten the disciplinary regulations against malpractice and misconduct by civil servants" (Meow, 1971 : 87). The Financial Procedure Ordinance of 1960 compelled civil servants to reimburse the government for mishandling of public funds (Hiok, 1980a : 105). The philosophy behind the reforms was clear. The PAP was determined from the very beginning to build a civil service based on merit and competence as well as loyal and obedient to the political leadership in power. The Prime Minister made it quite clear what he hoped to attain from reforms. He stated that :

I am in favour of an efficient service. The brighter chap goes up and I don't care how many years he's been or he hasn't been in. If he's the best man for the job, put him there (Meow, 1971 : 88).

In reforming the civil service the PAP government, from time to time, borrowed ideas from abroad and implemented them with suitable modifications to be in harmony with local needs (Quah, 1984b : 208). Also the PAP government from early days started to utilize "three basic organizational types: the traditional civil service structure, the statutory boards and government-owned companies" (Hiok, 1980b : 441). By 1970s not only the stage was set for far-reaching reforms in the public service in future but initial reforms facilitated the emergence of a civil service clearly responsive to the political leadership.

CHANGES AND REFORMS IN SINGAPORE CIVIL SERVICE

Profile of Public Service in Singapore

The public service in Singapore comprises of the Singapore Civil Service, the Singapore Armed Forces, the Singapore Legal Service and the Singapore Police Force (Singapore, 1997b : 52). The total strength of Singapore Public Service is 110,000 with 60,000 in 15 ministries with its component departments, and 50,000 in 55 statutory

boards (Guan, 1997 : 169). There were 66,000 officers and employees in the Singapore Civil Service on December 1996 (Singapore, 1997b : 52). About 61,000 are employed in 15 government ministries (Wah, 1996 : 200). Of these, 0.8% are Superscale offices, 19% Division I officers, 33% Division II officers, 33.4% Division III officers and 3.8% Division IV officers (Wah, 1996 : 200). The positions in the public service have been classified relying heavily on the ranking-person concept based on educational, technical and professional qualifications. Positions are classified into 4 divisions i.e., Divisions I, II, III and IV. Division I includes administrative and professional grades, Division II executive and technical grades, Division III clerical and technical grades and Division IV includes manual workers (Meksawan, et. al. 1986 : 158).

The members of the Singapore Civil Service (SCS) can be categorized on the basis of their belonging either to purely departmental services or to general services. The departmental officers work throughout their career in a particular department/ministry while those in general services spend their working lives in a number of departments/ministries. Division I officers are found in both departmental and general services (Tan, 1984). Within the general services, Division I officers constitute the Administrative Service (Quah, 1996 : 67). Division I grades in both the departmental and non-departmental services are divided into superscale and timescale (Quah, 1996 : 77). In the Administrative Service (AS) the timescale officers include those holding such positions as Administrative Assistants, Senior Administrative Assistants, Assistant Secretaries, Principal Assistant Secretaries and the Superscale officers and Deputy Secretaries and Permanent Secretaries. On the other hand, in the case of departmental services, deputy directors and directors are superscale officers (Quah, 1996 : 67). The timescale officers in departmental services comprise of professionals working in departmental divisions or sections.

Graduates form about 40% of the SCS annual intake of about 5,000 (*The Straits Times*, 16 February 1996). Graduates can choose from a wide range of 50 vocations in 14 ministries and 5 organs of the state like the judiciary of the Prime Minister's Office (*The Straits Times*, 16 February 1996). Those graduates having a good honours (second class upper or first class) degree are eligible to apply for the Administrative Service (AS), the elite service within the SCS. The applicants have to go through a stringent recruitment system based on interview. The competition among candidates is keen. Not everyone who applies for the AS with a good honours degree is selected as qualities like good leadership skills, managerial ability and moral character are also sought. There are now about 200 officers in the AS and the annual intake is only 15 (*The Straits Times*, 16 February 1996). The members of the AS occupy key positions in ministries, government departments, statutory boards and government-linked companies. The members of the AS are accepted as leaders in the public sector as they contribute valuable inputs to the development and implementation of policies.

Devolution of Personnel Management

Singapore inherited a highly centralized personnel management system from the British. Over the years significant changes have taken place in the area of personnel management in the SCS in terms of nature and number of central personnel agencies and their functions and responsibilities. The Public Service Commission (PSC) is the oldest and the Personnel Boards (PBs) at various levels located in ministries are the latest key personnel agencies. It needs to be remembered that reforms initiated in personnel management are interlinked with reforms undertaken in other segments of the public service in general.

The legal framework of public personnel management is provided by the Constitution and to a limited extent by the instruction

manuals. The Constitution defines the civil services, establishes various commissions including the PSC and delineates nature of their membership and responsibilities, contains general rules concerning appointment, transfer and protection of officers rights (Meksawan, et. al. 1986 : 155). Two instruction manuals deal with recruitment of staff and terms of service in government departments (Meksawan, et. al. 1986 : 155).

At present there are four commissions. Besides the PSC, the other commissions are the Legal Service Commission (LSC), the Education Service Commission (ESC) and Police and Civil Defence Services Commission (PCDSC). The last two Commissions were established in 1990 after amending the Constitution. The officers under the purview of the ESC and the PCDSC are education officers and officers in the police and civil defence services (Singapore, 1997a : 18). Legal and judicial officers are in similar fashion under the jurisdiction of the LSC. Personnel management functions pertaining to the SCS are now performed by the PSC, the Public Service Division, the ESC, the PCDSC and various Personnel Boards (PBs). The Public Service Commission (PSC) was established way back in 1951 'to recruit and select members of the Colonial Service' (Hiok, 1980b : 447). After independence PSC became a constitutional body and fully independent from the government. The chairman and members of the PSC, whose numbers range between 5 and 14 are appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Prime Minister for a fixed term. The chairman and members of the PSC are chosen on the basis of their distinguished service to the nation and integrity. The PSC's programmes are geared to meeting staff requirements of the government in accordance with the merit principle (Quah, 1986 : 69). The principal functions of the PSC remained same for a long time. These included : appointment, confirmation, emplacement on the permanent and pensionable establishment, promotion, transfer and exercise of disciplinary control over public officers (Public Service Commission Annual

Report, 1968 : 1 as quoted in Hiok, 1980b : 448). The PSC was organized in the '80s into four sections : appointments and administrative, scholarship, discipline, statistics and information (Meksawan, et. al. 1986 : 157). But with the introduction of changes in the '90s, things have changed including organizational set-ups. In 1994 the PSC Secretariat was integrated with the Public Service Division (PSD) and the PSD continues to provide secretariat service to the ESC, the PCDSC and the LSC beside the PSC (Singapore, 1997b : 52).

Before 1972 personnel management functions were shared by the PSC and the Establishment Division (ED) of the Ministry of Finance. The 1980 saw further division of personnel management responsibilities between three agencies, i.e., the PSC, the Establishment Unit (EU) in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and Personnel Administration Branch (PAB) of the Budget Division in the Ministry of Finance. While the PSC had jurisdiction over recruitment, selection, promotion, training, transfer, discipline and dismissal, the EU looked after career development of Division I officers and PAB dealt with classification and terms and conditions of service. But this arrangement was not ideal. The government felt that it was time to bring about changes in the then personnel management system to make it more employee-centred to harness the potential of public servants as well as to inculcate in them a sense of commitment. With this end in view, a Personnel Management Steering Committee (PMSC) was constituted in early 1982 under the headship of the chairman of the PSC. The PMSC utilized the services of the Management Services Division (MSD) to diagnose deficiencies prevalent in the existing system. The key problems included : divided policy direction and responsibilities; ambiguous definition of two of the agencies (PSC and PAB) roles, functions and authority; duplication of work; inadequate coordination and inefficient use of manpower (Quah 1996 : 74). In January 1983 the Public Service Division (PSD) came into being as a result of the government's

acceptance of the recommendations of the PMSC. The PSD was conceived as a broad-based central personnel agency. Its functions included : formulation and reviewing of personnel policies, appraisal, posting, training, schemes of service, service conditions, welfare and pay research (Quah, 1996 : 74). The PSD was accordingly organized into three branches and one unit, i.e., Personnel Development Branch, Service Conditions Branch, Research and Information Branch and Social Development Unit (Meksawan, et. al. 1986 : 157).

But the major breakthrough in devolution of personnel management functions and responsibilities came only in 1995 when ministries were delegated power to hire and promote civil servants. This was done by amending the Constitution to devolve powers of the PSC and other service commissions like the ESC and the PCDCS to a three-tier hierarchy of personnel boards. This was done to enable permanent secretaries and line managers authority to recruit and promote deserving candidates. Certain principles have been spelled out to guide senior officers undertaking personnel management responsibilities. These include : retaining merit as the basis for promotion and advancement; authority to be exercised fairly and consistently; careful selection of the members of different personnel boards to ensure rigour and fairness to all; and provision of recourse to appeal to the PSC, the ESC and the PCDCS by the aggrieved civil servants.

In mid-1994 government set up an eight-member team of top civil servants to oversee changes in personnel management of the civil service (*The Straits Times*, 25 August 1994). The three-tier Personnel Boards (PBs) became operational from 1 January 1995 as a major policy initiative of the government to reform the civil service. At the bottom lies the Personnel Boards (PBs) and at the top stands a Special Personnel Board (SPB) and in between there are Senior Personnel Boards (SPBs). Most of the civil servants, i.e., those belonging to Divisions II, III and IV are managed by twenty-four Personnel Boards (PBs) located in ministries. The PBs are headed by

superscale officers and include among members Division I officers from the concerned ministry. All Division I officers are supervised by six Senior Personnel Boards (SPBs). Each SPB is chaired by a permanent secretary and includes permanent secretaries of concerned ministries. Each Board covers three to four ministries. The Special Personnel Board's (SPB) jurisdiction includes superscale officers upto Superscale E1 and Administrative Service officers in the timescale. The SPB is chaired by the head of the civil service and its members include permanent secretary, PMO and two other permanent secretaries. Chairmen and members of both SPBs and SPB are appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Prime Minister. On the other hand, the chairmen and members of Personnel Boards (PBs) are appointed by the permanent secretary in PMO.

After the implementation of latest reforms the PSC is now responsible for the following : recruitment into the Administrative Service, the Parliamentary Service, and the Audit Service; promotion of officers to Superscale D and above; dismissal and disciplinary control act as the final appellate board to hear appeals against promotion decisions of personnel boards; planning and administration of undergraduate and graduate local and foreign scholarships and bursaries offered by the Singapore government (Singapore, 1997b : 52).

The PSD, on the other hand, located in the PMO is performing the following functions : personnel board policies and coordination, schemes, terms and conditions of service; coordination of graduate mass recruitment exercise involving all ministries in November every year; personnel development and training; pay research and related studies; professional information and programmes service and service quality in the public sector (Singapore, 1997b : 52-53; *The Straits Times*, 10 November 1997).

The Deputy Prime Minister Brigadier-General Lee explained the rationale behind the reforms that took place in personnel management

in 1995. These changes were essential to free up an overcentralized and rigid personnel management system, bring civil service practices up-to date and look forward to the challenges of the 21st century (Singapore Government Press Release, 5 April 1995). He went on to add further that "the present system was good at making sure that poor officers were not promoted but it was extremely doubtful if capable officers would be guaranteed the promotions they deserved" (*The Straits Times*, 26 August 1994).

Autonomy to Government Agencies

In March 1996 government implemented a policy for granting greater autonomy to government departments, agencies and statutory boards. In the first phase, fourteen government agencies were declared autonomous agencies (AAs). These AAs included : Immigration Department, Registry of Marriages, Accountant-General's Office, Public Service Division, Budget Division and Revenue Division (*The Straits Times*, 16 March 1996). In April 1997 remaining ninety-nine government agencies were also commissioned as AAs. With this all the ministries and departments, excepting the Ministry of Defence and Internal Security Department, have now been transformed into AAs. Of the 99 AAs, 73 are civil service departments ranging from the Supreme Court to the Hawker's Department as well 26 government-funded statutory boards like National Arts Council and National Computer Board (*The Straits Times*, 9 April 1997). The total number of AAs now stand at 113.

The changing of government agencies into AAs is expected to bring about major alteration in the way they are being managed. The AAs have to draw up a plan of services they intend to offer and will receive funding based on how well they meet a set of performance criteria as well as demand for their services. Several steps are involved in the way the new system works. First, each AA sets up clearly defined output and performance targets which are also agreed upon by its parent ministry and the Budget Division of the Ministry

of Finance (MOF) every year. Second, then the MOF will give the AA a budget on the estimated cost of meeting those agreed upon targets. But the amount of money the AA will receive depend upon how it meets its targets and demands of service. The MOF will scrutinize the request of the concerned AA on the basis of its performance during annual budget exercise. Third, then the particular AA is free to manage the budget in whatever way it chooses as long as it meets the set targets. Fourth, many departments with diverse, non-quantifiable outputs are unable to derive this output-linked funding formulae yet funding for these AAs would then be based on a broad factor known as Macro Incremental Factor (MIF) to provide for overall output growth and inflation (*The Business Times*, 2 April 1996). The MIF ensures that total public sector expenditure will not grow faster than the national economy as a whole.

The AAs are to enjoy considerable freedom in deciding on recruitment (below superscale level) and deployment and flexibility in utilizing financial resources at their disposal compared to the situation in the past. They can now approve tenders and carry forward part of their savings to spend in the following year. In future, to instill a customer service mindset, AAs will be allowed to charge for their services and they have to pay rentals at the market rate for use of government premises. But at the same time, the AAs will not be allowed to raise fees for the basic services provided.

To ensure accountability of AAs to the public they have to publish key points of their output plans in the budget book every year and produce an annual report containing their performance and achievement in relation to targets and output projected (*The Straits Times*, 9 April 1997). The ministers will also grade their performance relative to agreed goals (*The Straits Times*, 9 April 1997) as well as quality of services.

The operational framework of AAs is derived from a budgeting method known as Budgeting for Results (BFR). Reforms based on

BFR have been introduced in civil services in such countries as Britain, New Zealand and the United States. In BFR the focus is on results rather than on rules and budgeting techniques are more geared to performance. Under the BFR framework allocation of operation budget is based on the growth of Gross Domestic Product or total goods and services produced (*The Straits Times*, 15 March 1996). It may be mentioned here that the government over the years has experimented with a number of methods of budgeting and accounting starting from Line to Programme and Performance to Singapore Government Management Accounting System to Budgeting for Results in its continued pursuit to bring about efficiency and economy.

It is gathered that AAs have already made good use of their autonomy. The first 14 AAs, made operational in 1996, have utilized flexibility to extend operating hours, hired temporary staff during pick periods and widened their range of services (*The Straits Times*, 9 April 1997).

It is expected that there will be a number of gains in near future as a result of full-fledged functioning of AAs. First, the activities of government agencies will become more transparent. Second, consumers will be benefitted from higher quality service at lower cost through the utilization of better management practices. Third, managerial autonomy will enable civil servants to be more adaptive and innovative and respond quickly and effectively to complex and changing circumstances.

Increasing Productivity

Enhancing productivity in the SCS has been a long-standing commitment of the government. The National Productivity Board (NPB) was established in 1972 to improve productivity in all enterprises in Singapore (Teo, 1985 : 315). During first ten years of its existence, the NPB focused only on consultancy and training needs

of small and medium firms. In April 1981 a significant development occurred with the appointment of a Committee on Productivity (COP) by NPB. The COP was given the responsibility to recommend measures to improve work attitudes, productivity and labour-management relations in Singapore (Leng, 1987 : 3). In June 1981 COP submitted its report and recommendations contained therein were accepted by the government. The COP members felt that in improving teamwork, productivity, work attitudes and people management, the public sector had to provide leadership. Only procedural changes were not enough. Rather attitudinal changes had to occur over a period of time. Existing government policies and practices needed to be replaced to foster an environment where right approach to productivity could be adopted. These could be done by a number of ways including educating the public, dissemination of information and training and promotion of joint consultation between labour and management. The COPs recommendations included :

establishment of a productivity working committee to launch and oversee implementation of good management practices in the civil service : productivity campaign to increase awareness of concepts and importance of productivity in the civil service; review of staff appraisal in the civil service to emphasize such factors as teamwork, concern for others and innovativeness; all ministries support in setting up of Work Improvement Teams (WITs) in the civil service (Teo, 1985 : 316).

One of the key outcomes of COPs recommendations was the formation of a National Productivity Council (NPC). The NPC was chaired by a minister and its members included representatives from ministries, statutory boards, employer groups and national trade union. The NPC was asked to implement the recommendations of the COP, review and analyze productivity efforts, suggest policies and strategies to improve productivity and promote productivity among the population (Teo, 1985 : 317).

Another significant result of the COPs report was the setting up of the Central Productivity Steering Committee (CPSC) in September 1981. The CPSC was composed of top civil servants. Chaired by the permanent secretary Budget Division of MOF and other members included permanent secretaries of the Ministries of Communication and Information, Environment, Health, Labour and National Development as well as representatives of larger civil service unions (Teo, 1985 : 317). The Committee also received inputs from representatives of Auditor-General's Department, the PSC, the Civil Service Institute (CSI) and the MSD. It was to be the focal point for all productivity-related activities in the civil service.

The importance of the CPSC can be gauged from its terms of reference :

- identify and change procedures and practices which impede teamwork, productivity and quality of work in the civil service;

- initiate, examine and recommend measures which will promote teamwork, pride in work, morale and productivity in the civil service;

- discuss and monitor implementation of schemes which have a bearing on the promotion of productivity, morale and teamwork in the civil service;

- discuss ways of measuring productivity, morale and teamwork;
- determine and provide central support services which ministries and departments need to carry out their productivity programmes;
- and

- act as a clearing house for ministries and departments specially in disseminating ideas and feedback on productivity measures and programmes (Teo, 1985 : 317).

With the setting up of the CPSC the Civil Service Productivity Movement had also begun. There seems to be differences of opinion as to the exact date of the inception of the productivity movement in the civil service. While Leng (1987 : 1) considers it 7 October 1981 but Wah (1996 : 205) states that 28 September 1981 to be the date as

it coincided with the holding of the first meeting of the CPSC. Whatever may be the case a significant beginning was made. The CPSC in its very first meeting took a number of importance decisions. Quality Control Circles (QCC) were introduced in the civil service with a more acceptable title Work Improvement Teams (WITs). The Committee in its meeting made lot of deliberations about rechristening QCCs as WITs to make them more acceptable to the rank and file in the civil service. Directives were given to set up Productivity Steering Committees (PSCs) in ministries, departments and statutory boards so that these committees at their respective jurisdictions could encourage managers and supervisors active involvement in WITs activities.

The core component in productivity enhancement in the civil service centres around WITs. WITs programmes amalgamates QCC principles with motivational knowledge and realities of work improvement keeping in mind needs of the public sector. A WIT is a group of public servants from the same work unit, irrespective of job status, who meet regularly to identify, discuss and analyze problems, work out solutions to the problems and then implement solutions (Wah, 1996 : 206).

The aims of WITs are to improve quality of performance, productivity, teamwork; inculcate motivation and improvement-seeking attitudes; and enhance problem-ownership at the small group level and job development among public sector employees (Wah, 1986 : 207; Teo, 1985 : 318). To spread and operationalize the WIT concept, a WITs Development Unit was set up at the Civil Service Institute in 1982. The responsibilities of this Unit included :

promoting the WITs concept; training WITs Facilitators and Leaders; devising and reviewing training programmes; supporting Facilitators and providing guidance where necessary; organizing conventions and workshops; sourcing materials; and obtaining feedback from Facilitators and Team Leaders (Wah, 1996 : 207).

During last two years, the government has moved forward to integrate WITs with the Suggestion Scheme. In 1995 a set of rules were incorporated in the civil service instruction manual which public officials are to follow (*The Straits Times*, 14 July 1995). First, government officials are now entitled to make suggestions for improvement in their work areas. Individuals with a meritorious suggestion that spins productivity gains can get \$3,000 while groups stand to win up to \$4,500 (*The Straits Times*, 14 July 1995). Second, a WIT member with a quick fix to a particular problem discussed with team members is now given credit for that under the suggestion scheme. Third, the supervisors are now bound to allow WITs under them four hours during office time each month to meet and deliberate. Fourth, an officer's involvement in promoting the suggestion scheme and devising suggestions from his department are now part of his annual performance appraisal.

Beside WITs the other critical component of productivity drive is productivity campaign. The guidelines for this campaign was provided by the COP. Initially starting in 1982 the productivity campaign was an annual affair. Since 1984 it has become a year-long part and parcel of civil servants daily activities (Leng, 1987 : 3). The productivity campaign included a number of activities :

poster and slogan competition; distribution of publicity materials and a pamphlet entitled "Productivity in the Public Sector" for all civil servants; production of a film and a slide show on productivity for loan to all ministries; an exhibition on office automation by the Management Services Department and a special issue of *Management Development* devoted to the WITs in the civil service by the Civil Service Institute and the Management Services Department; and a productivity month ceremony during which prizes were awarded to participants in poster and slogan competition (*Management Development*, No. 37, October-December 1982 as quoted in Quah, 1996 : 157; Quah, 1994 : 157).

As to the impact, the chairman of the Civil Service Productivity Campaign Working Committee claimed in 1986 that civil service had

major strides in improving productivity since the beginning of the campaign in 1981 (Quah, 1994 : 158). In terms of numbers, projects completed and trained facilitators and leaders WITs achievements have been impressive. Between September 1981 to July 1991, a total of 7,800 WITs were formed, 23,000 WITs projects were completed, 23,000 WITs facilitators and 1,700 WITs leaders were trained (Quah, 1994 : 173). Also the rate of participation in WITs in the civil service is found to be much higher compared to QCCs in the private sector (Quah, 1994 : 173). The rather rapid developments of WITs have been attributed to two factors. A WIT as a natural work group addresses tasks as a team effort and strong and consistent support provided to it by middle and top management (Quah, 1994 : 173).

But there is no denying of the fact that WITs face a number of problems. These are mostly operational problems and include the following :

inability of a WIT to solve a problem after many attempts; some managers feel threatened by WITs; a WIT can turn into a grievance-gathering unit; a facilitator under pressure from management may form more WITs than he can cope with; WITs face difficulties when managers are critical; disruption occurs when WITs facilitator and leader are transferred to another branch; some managers place too much emphasis on cost saving; and hindsight devaluation of WITs activities by managers discourages and eventually kills initiatives (Ng, 1990 : 186 as quoted in Quah 1994 : 174-175).

But it is now widely accepted that in spite of the problems, the WITs have been generally successful in accomplishing their tasks. Therefore, "ingredients for the success of WITs are careful planning, preparation and implementation in a supportive and committed organization" (Ewing-Chow, 1982 : 4-5 quoted in Quah, 1994 : 174).

In a major move of organizational realignment, the government established Productivity Standards Board (PSB) in April 1996 by merging the National Productivity Board (NPB) and Singapore

Institute of Standards and Industrial Research (SISIR) by a legislation (Singapore, 1997a : 40). The PSB is run by a Board of Directors in which there are representatives from the government, employer groups, trade unions and academia. The mission of the PSB is to raise productivity, enhance Singapore's competitiveness and economic growth for better quality of life for citizens. The PSB's major thrusts are in six areas. These include productivity promotion, manpower development, technology application, industry development, standards and quality development and incentive management.

Institutionalizing and Integrating Change

Launched in May 1995 the Public Service for 21st Century or PS 21 initiative culminates an important and crucial stage in institutionalizing change as well as integrating other important related yet less comprehensive programmes within its fold. The PS 21 contains the lessons learnt from the experiences of other public sector service improvement initiatives like Public Contact Improvement Programme (PCIP), WITs and the Service Improvement Unit (SIU). But at the same time, it goes much beyond than the three in terms of its objectives, focus and coverage.

A brief mention about SIU here is in order. The SIU established in 1991 and located in the PMO has been acting as a watchdog over ministries and statutory boards (The Straits Times, 6 May 1995). The SIU operates under the supervision of two committees — a management and a supervisory. The Management Committee headed by the permanent secretary, PMO and includes five other senior officials is responsible for SIUs day-to-day operations. The Supervisory Committee led by and composed of politicians receives reports from the Management Committee about performance of SIU. The SIU has the authority to monitor, audit and assess quality of services provided by the government agencies including departments

and statutory boards. Each government agency is to form a SIU under the leadership of a superscale officer. These SIUs are to receive inputs from the main SIU and their clients and are empowered to investigate complaints and approve appropriate mechanisms to handle grievances and appeals (The Straits Times, 19 March 1991).

The underlying theme that is intertwined with the PS 21 is how to effectively manage change. Its objectives clearly manifest this :

To nurture an attitude of service excellence in meeting the needs of the public with high standards of quality and courtesy; and to foster an environment that induces and welcomes continuous change for greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness by employing modern management tools and techniques, while paying attention to the morale and welfare of public servants (Guan, 1997: 171).

It appears that the objectives are ambitious, broad and oriented towards future. The thrust of the PS 21 is to see change as a superior and necessary way of life, an instrument for improvement and advancement (*The Straits Times*, 28 May 1997). In the PS 21 three dimensions of change are valued, i.e, welcome change, anticipate change and execute change (Guan, 1997: 171). Certain attitudes and values are cherished under the PS 21 (*The Straits Times*, 6 May 1995). These attitudes are: to be the best and to do the best; to be active as an agent for change and continuous improvement and to be a team player. The values include: serve the public with courtesy, efficiency and integrity; consider as members of a forward looking, innovative and resourceful organization; and care for staff, value their contributions and seek to develop them to their fullest potential.

The focus of the PS 21 is on four areas: staff well-being, quality service, work improvement teams(WITs) and staff suggestions and organizational review (*The Business Times*, 6-7 May 1995). Each area is under a committee and is chaired by a permanent secretary. Each ministry or statutory board has its own PS 21 committee. A

central committee of permanent secretaries led by the head civil service oversees PS 21's implementation at all levels in the public sector.

In the area of staff well being, the intention is to create a loyal, cohesive and integrated workforce with competitive employment terms. In quality service, the focus is on the customer soliciting feedback from citizens for improvements and making necessary changes within agencies to further improve counter and other services. In the WITs and suggestions areas, the emphasis is to turn employees into creative individuals by providing greater opportunities for them to give ideas and suggestions for change and improvement. In organizational review, the objective is to remove procedural bottlenecks and red tape and make fundamental and strategic improvement plans and initiate government-wide improvements.

As emphasized by Guan (1997: 171), the PS 21 is premised on a comprehensive approach to prepare a civil servant to be receptive to and able to change by utilizing his appropriate knowledge. So critical issues here are an official's attitude towards regular and continuous improvements, his well being, his desire to offer quality service and his willingness to adapt to new ways of doing things (Guan, 1997: 171-172).

There have been a number of developments, since the inauguration of the public service drive for excellence through the PS 21 initiative. To raise awareness among the people about the role of public service in nation-building and the new vision of PS 21, a one-minute film was prepared and screened. A number of other initiatives have been developed for the PS 21 drive (*The Straits Times*, 15 May 1996). A directory of public service has been compiled and published in alphabetical order so that people know which government department to consult for a particular service. The introduction of a counter allowance scheme which gives an \$80 monthly allowance to

frontline officers and employees who work at counters. A personal training road map is being developed containing training needs and courses an officer need to attend. A "new" term has been coined CARE to put emphasis that officers at all levels must be courteous, accessible, responsive and effective. In terms of other concrete achievements, a number of government agencies including Works Permit and Customs and Excise Departments have set and published service standards to be maintained in dealing with the public. The National Registration Department has committed itself to a number of service pledges. The Singapore Police Force has also made a number of pledges to meet the needs of the people.

Broadening and Enhancing Quality of AS

The Administrative Service (AS), the elite among all the services in the public sector, enjoys prestige and enormous power. The top echelon of the public service is dominated by members of the AS including 16 permanent secretaries heading ministries and 14 chiefs of statutory boards (*The Straits times*, 2 March 1996). Key contributions are provided by its members in most major policy initiatives beside regularly actively participating in policy implementation.

A number of initiatives have been undertaken by the government in the last few years to broaden the base and enhancing further quality of the AS. These include: a Corps of Senior Administrators (CSA), sweeping changes in personnel management relating to the AS, dual career scheme, opening its doors to the private sector, delinking of grade and office of the permanent secretary, increasing its annual intake, competitive pay and attachment of young AOs to grassroots bodies.

A Corps of Senior Administrators (CSA) was created in 1990 to harness best talent in the public sector (*The Straits Times*, 6 July 1991). The scheme includes not only officers of the AS and Singapore

Armed Force (SAF) scholars but also officers from other services. CSA is overseen by a Supervisory Committee and headed by the chairman of Public Service Commission (PSC). The other members of the Committee include two deputy chairmen of PSC, two permanent secretaries and two chiefs of statutory boards. The Committee membership is being dominated by senior members of the AS. Naturally, majority of the members of CSA come from the AS. Entrance to the Corps is dependent of an officer's career record and recommendations of his superior.

A number of sweeping changes in personnel management were introduced in 1994 affecting the AS (*The Straits Times*, 21 November 1994). These changes are significant in terms of recruitment, pay and promotion of the AS personnel. Minimum criteria were set for recruitment and retention in the service. Only those able to reach at least superscale D are eligible to join the AS. If a serving officer is not expected to reach grade E or higher deputy secretary, he would be asked to consider career options outside the elite service. In fact, 30 AS officers in 1994 were told exactly that. They could also altogether leave the civil service with superannuation if they qualify. The rationale behind this action was to ensure constant flow of talents into the service and discard those to be overtaken by their subordinates. At the same time, those who meet the requirements for continued membership in the AS through their performance are entitled to a special allowance once every year equivalent to one month's pay. Pace of promotions for worthy officers of the AS has also been quickened.

A Dual Career Scheme was put into effect in January 1995. Through this scheme capable individuals from other services are chosen for the AS through a long process including scrutinizing candidates appraisal reports, interviews by the permanent secretary, PMO and members of the PSC Board. Twenty-six officers have already been selected from various services including six from the Ministry of Education, six from the Police Force, three from the

Ministry of Defence, one each from the Ministries of Information and the Arts, Environment and Health and one each from the Monetary Authority of Singapore, the National Computer Board and the Singapore Armed Forces (The Straits Times, 9 March 1995). Of the candidates 7 are women, 6 have less than one year's experience and 13 officers have 10 to 19 years experience. The officers chosen for the dual scheme will continue to work in their respective fields but are kept within AS fold through courses and training seminars for wider exposure. One of the advantages of this is that as potential administrative officers (ASs), they are entitled to special allowance of one month's pay and having a permanent secretary as their mentor (The Straits Times, 9 March 1995). The officials under this scheme will be assigned to take up AS posts when there is a felt need. This scheme will also free senior officials in the AS to take up top posts in ministries, statutory boards and governments-linked companies.

In another significant policy shift, the Administrative Service opened its doors to the private sector in 1996. The rationale of this policy was expressed by the Deputy Prime Minister Brigadier Lee in this way. "Such an inward flow will help the civil service stay continuously attuned to outside trends and private sector needs" (*The Straits Times*, 1 April 1997). Out of 700 mid-career private sector executives who applied for admission into the AS, only 2 were finally selected in 1997. Though the number of new entrants from the private sector into the elite service is pitifully small, the significance of this act cannot be overemphasized. The very fact that hitherto closed AS has opened its doors to the private sector is significant in itself.

In another related development, the government plans to attach officers from the AS to private sector companies to enable them gain first-hand experience of working conditions in the private sector (*The Straits Times*, 29 March 1996). As the Deputy Prime Minister Tony Tan explained that "private sector postings would enable the officers to experience the effects of government rules and regulations on the

private sector" (The Straits Times, 29 March 1996). Under this plan, officers will be more frequently posted abroad as part of an overall plan to give them a good feel of Singapore society, the private sector and the international environment (The Straits Times, 29 March 1996).

To further quicken the promotion process of deserving civil servants belonging to the AS, the government took a number of steps. The grade and office of permanent secretary has been delinked and the benchmark grade for the post raised from Superscale C to B by amending the Constitution for more flexible promotion and deployment within the civil service (The Business Times, 22 March 1994). This action of raising benchmark grades for top civil service jobs is a move not only to promote AS officers fast but to be at par with private sector pay. This act will allow officers to be promoted to the superscale C without their having to be appointed permanent secretaries first and is also to benefit deputy secretaries in larger ministries as well (The Straits Times, 22 March 1994). After the most recent revision the pay for an AS officer who performs well enough to reach the benchmark superscale grade G at age 32 is \$12,400 a month (The Straits Times, 2 March 1996). To attract and retain top calibre people in AS, its pay is pegged to the average pay of the top 15th earner of six professions (The Straits Times, 2 March 1996). Add to all these, the AS civil servants bonus has ranged from two to three months in recent years; a special allowance of one month's pay given to deserving officers; and a performance bonus of upto four months is paid to a superscale G officer (The Straits Times, 2 March 1996). The Deputy Prime Minister Brigadier General Lee observed that such a pay hike was necessary in view of large numbers of capable AS officers leaving the civil service and joining the private sector (The Straits Times, 22 March 1994). The number of annual intake into AS has been raised from about 12 to 30 including 15 from dual service scheme (The Straits Times, 21 November 1994).

Another scheme, a pilot one, Community Immersion Scheme (CIS) organized jointly by the Public Service Department (PSD) and the People's Association (PA), has enabled officers of the AS with four to five years working experience, to gain a first-hand experience of grassroots work (The Straits Times, 9 May 1996). The scheme exposes young AS recruits to the needs and problems of ordinary citizens. They observe grassroots bodies in action. They also attend meetings of Resident's Committees, Citizens Cooperative Committees and Community Centre's Management Committees. They also join MPs to house-to-house visits and block parties. The grassroots level leaders also join ordinary citizens to express their grievances and the young AS officers indicate rationale behind government policies in such meetings.

Utilization of Information Technology

In 1981 two developments occurred that ushered in systematic utilization of information technology in the Singapore Civil Service (SCS). The first was the setting up of the National Computer Board (NCB) in August 1981. The NCB was to promote, implement and guide the development of information systems in the SCS (Quah, 1995: 151). The Civil Service Computerization Programme (CSCP) came into being in September 1981 under the auspices of the NCB with the objective to enhance efficiency and productivity in the SCS by facilitating wider use of computers by members of the civil service. The CSCP also wanted to decentralize computing facilities to government ministries to make computer facilities readily available in the civil service with the objective to enable the civil servants to provide better service to the people through the use of computers (Leng, 1987: 6).

By 1987, 200 computer applications were identified for development by the NCB with a staff of 400 computer professionals, majority of whom were working in the ministries and these staff, in

turn, implemented 60 computerized application systems with 49 other systems in various stages of development (Leng, 1987: 6). By 1990 the computerization of SCS was complete with 107 mainframes and minicomputers, 10,000 personal computers and terminals, 293 operational application systems and 606 computer professionals (Quah, 1995: 151).

A User Education Programme (UEP) was started by NCB in 1984 to familiarize users with computer technology, systems development methodologies and user roles and responsibilities. This initiative received good response in the civil service.

By 1987 it was clear to the government that full use had to be made of information technology (IT). Beside computer, telecommunication and office system technologies needed to be developed. As a result of this, a number of actions followed between 1983 and 1985 including installation of new Civil Service Telephone Network System (CSTNS), implementation of a programme for the extensive use of communicating word processors through the Telecom Telexbox Services (TTS) and introduction of facsimile machines. All these measures have considerably reduced costs of services and quickened the pace of service delivery.

So far the government has already invested more than \$1 billion on computer based system since 1981 and continues to spend \$200 million a year on computer related upgrades and new purchases (*The Business Times*, 29-30 June 1996). In two years, i.e., 1997-1999, 8,000 new desk top computers and 4,000 computer notebooks for civil servants are to be procured to save taxpayers \$5 million a year (*The Straits Times*, 19 January 1997). The government formally set up shop on the Internet in 1996. In the process, new services on the Internet are now available. This has been made possible with the launching of the Singapore Government Internet Website. Work Permit Application for maids can be made either from office or home at one's own time and results can be obtained in only 3 days instead

of usual 7 days. Child care registration has been made easier with citizens access to comprehensive data base of licensed child care centres. Now parents can choose centre, register child and make enquiries online. A directory of government services exists that list 500 plus services and contact number of departments. A government electronic mailbox is available to enable people to contact any ministry or department by e-mail.

A number of other IT projects will be introduced in the civil service in near future (*The Straits Times*, 4 December 1996). An electronic card for internet transactions with government agencies; a new smart card for 2,000 civil servants to function as an electronic purse and key to their offices and computers; call centres to enable citizens to enquire about government policies and procedures; online registries for businessmen seeking quick information; and encoded cards with travellers fingerprints for quick checks at immigration counters are some of the computerbased facilities in the offing.

The government internet now links 16,000 computers of civil servants. Each Division I officer will be given an Internet account. Information now available include: reference materials on parliamentary proceedings, civil service instruction manual, newsletters, interactive statistical data base and government directory (*The Straits Time*, 29 June 1996). Also the pilot Singapore one network, which will deliver a range of multimedia services to people at home, will be ready by the end of 1997 (*The Straits Times*, 4 September 1996).

Huge investment on IT has brought considerable improvements in efficiency and enhanced productivity in the civil service. Even a few years back many taxpayers had to wait up to one-and-a-half years to find out how much they owed the government. Now 95% of Singapore's 1.25 million taxpayers get their assessment by September from Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore (IRAS) only five months after the April 15 deadline for filing tax returns due to

smooth workflow and better use of information technology (The Straits Times 5 October 1996).

The advantages of computerization of the SCS is clearly noticeable. Manpower savings has resulted. Timely and accurate information to support policy decisions can be obtained. It can be justifiably claimed that much of SCS's efficiency is the result of smart use of IT. The civil servants have mostly been successful in quickly adapting to and utilizing IT applications facilitating quick and responsive service thereby improving efficiency and maintaining high standard of service.

Realizing Importance of Training

One of the deficiencies of SCS for a long time had been in the area of formal off-the-job training programmes (Quah, 1996: 79). This was the result of the continuation of the British colonial legacy. With the establishment of the Staff Training Institute (STI) under the Budget Division of the Ministry of Finance in March 1971, an important breakthrough was made to institutionalize training for civil servants belonging to Division I level. The purpose of the STI was to train new officers in the Administrative Service in modern management concepts and techniques. Within a span of three years training covered officers in other services and its scope expanded to include language and supervisory skills. The STI was renamed Civil Service Staff Development Institute (CSSDI) in June 1975. But this changed name lasted only four years. In May 1979 it was renamed as Civil Service Institute (CSI). The Institute's name was again changed in April 1996. The change of names also coincided with the Institute's shifting controlling authority. In April 1981 the Institute was put under the charge of the Public Service Commission (PSC) with the intention to centralize training of senior civil servants along with recruitment, promotion, posting and other facets of their career development. The power and importance of the newly-formed Public

Service Division (PSD) under the Ministry of Finance was evident with the shifting of the Institute under its purview in January 1983. The Institute came under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in June 1994 with the transfer of PSD to PMO.

In April 1993 a Civil Service College (CSC) was established to train officers of Administrative Service as well as senior officers of Departmental Services. On 1 April 1996 the erstwhile Civil Service Institute (CSI) and the CSC were merged to create one central training institution for the Singapore Civil Service (SCS). At present the revitalized CSC has three key components. These are: the Institute of Policy Development (IPD), the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) and the Civil Service Consulting Group (CSCG). The purpose of the merger is to achieve stronger direction and better coordination in the training and development of public officers as part of the PS 21 programme, at the same time the CSC will be in a better position to help the SCS achieve its training target of 12.5 or 100 hours per person per year by 2000 (Ethos, 1996: 14).

The Institute of Policy Development (IPD) is responsible to nurture and develop leadership in the public sector. Officers from the Administrative Service, private sector and government-linked companies (GLCs) are trained at IPD. The specific objectives of IPD include:

Develop senior civil servants to anticipate, welcome and create change; inculcate in senior civil servants the core values, attitudes and traditions; nurture a scenario-based mentality; and create a shared vision and foster networking among senior public sector officers and their private sector equivalents (Public Service Division, 1997: 24).

Training programmes at IPD includes both long-term and short-term courses as well as seminars and forums. Three milestone programmes are offered for civil servants at different stages in their careers. The three-and-a-half month Foundation Course (FC), an

annual affair, is for new entrants to be Administrative Service. This course is intended to familiarize the trainees with structures and fundamentals of governments. The Senior Management Programme (SMP), a five week course, is for mid-career officers at the level of director. The participants learn here about principles of governance and implementation of policies. The Leaders in Administration Programme (LAP) is designated for senior officers holding positions of deputy secretaries and chief executive officers. The goal is to encourage participants to critically question and re-examine past policies of the government and ponder viability of such policies in the future.

Beside training, IPD conducts seminars, workshops and special courses. Of these Public Policy Perspectives Seminar (PPPS), Scenario Planning Workshops (SPWs) and Managing PS 21 Organizations Course deserve special mention. The IPD also conducts joint programmes with selected overseas organisations in order to familiarize senior civil servants with common issues of governance confronted by their counterparts in other countries. Also forums and talks are organized from time to time targeting Division I officers in an effort to reach out to a wider population within the civil service

The Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) offers two hundred different types of courses covering 40,000 civil servants of different categories each year (Interview David Ma, Director, IPAM 14 October 1997). The IPAM has adopted a five-level training framework in designing its programmes.

Induction training introduces individuals to the civil service, his organization, and his job when he first joins the service or the organization. Basic training equips the individual with the skills and knowledge he needs to do his current job effectively. Advanced training enables the individual to do a superior job. Extended training enables the individual to do work related to his current job on an incidental basis, or to undertake higher level jobs in due

course. Continuing training keeps the individual up-to-date and helps to enhance his employability in the long run (IPAM, n.D.: IV).

Courses offered by the IPAM have been grouped under five generic areas of competence. These include:

Managing service excellence to help the individual understand the importance of quality management and service excellence and equip him with the tools and techniques to do an excellent job. Managing change and equip him with the skills to manage it. Managing/working with people develops the individual's ability to better gain the cooperation and commitment of his colleagues. Managing operations and resources provide the individual with the necessary tools and techniques to manage his work unit effectively and efficiently. Managing self helps build the individual's confidence in himself and increase his effectiveness (IPAM, n.d.: IV).

Under managing service excellence area 15 PS 21, 14 information technology and 14 language courses are offered. Twelve courses are offered under managing change. Under managing people fifty-three courses are included. Nineteen courses comprise managing operations and resources stream. The managing self-stream contains forty courses. Modular training programmes are offered regularly in three areas: financial management, human resource management and information management.

The courses offered at IPAM are attended to by officers belonging to Divisions I, II, III and IV. In fact, specific courses have been devised for officers and employees of four categories. The details of courses given to different divisions can be shown (IPAM, n.d.: VII-XI).

In the area of managing service excellence, 32 courses are offered to Division I officers, 21 to Division II officers, 21 to Division III officers and none to Division IV employees. Ten courses are available

to those in Division 1,2 to Division II, 3 to Division III and none to Division IV in managing change area. In managing people stream the courses available for Divisions I to IV are 36, 18, 10 and 1 respectively. Fourteen Division I level courses, 3 each for Divisions II and III are offered in managing operations and resources area. The number of courses designed for Divisions I to IV in managing self are 23, 20, 11 and nil respectively Under core skills for effectiveness and change (COSEC), five courses are offered to employees at division III level. A one year graduate diploma in training and development is available to those Division I officers who possess a degree from a recognized university of institution of higher learning and have two years experience.

The IPAM's future plans include massive expansion in next few years for providing seven training hours per civil servant in 1996 to 100 hours per civil servant in 1999. The goal is to build a first class civil service that is capable, innovative and future-oriented under the guiding framework of the PS 21.

The Civil Service Consulting Group (CSCG) is a rather new unit established to provide consultancy and advice on training policy and on implementing systems, concepts and programmes taught in IPD and IPAM (Ethos, 1996: 14). It is also expected to act as the central contact point for other countries and international organizations on instruction and advice on public sector reform methods and procedures (Ethos, 1996: 14).

The specific objectives of CSCG include helping organizations to :

review organization issues and systems; improve quality and customer service; analyze training needs and set training policies and increase communication effectiveness (Civil Service College, n.d.: 4).

The services offered by CSCG are on a cost recovery basis and its clients include ministries, statutory boards and other bodies.

It is now apparent that the government is keen on training and indoctrinating civil servants to the ethos and values pertaining to change. All the key institutes within the Civil Service College (CSC) are oriented to inculcate norms and values among civil servants which are conducive to accept and cope with constant change. The focus and locus of the component units of CSC are geared to face the challenges of a complex and competitive world and demanding public. But it appears that there are possibilities of overlapping of functions between three institutions operating under the ambit of the CSC. There are commonalities in functions among IPD and IPAM. Both train Division I officers including members of the AS. Also it is not certain as to how coordination is maintained among the component units of the CSC. Compared to Divisions I and II officers, the training hours and courses of the employees at Divisions III and IV is much less.

Curbing Corruption

Corruption was quite common in colonial civil service that PAP inherited after Singapore's independence from the British rule. From the very beginning, the PAP government under the leadership of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew was bent on curbing curbing corruption in public life. In fact, many attribute PAP's first electoral victory to its firm stand against widespread corruption (Root, 1996: 46). The anti-corruption agency and legislation that Singapore found at independence was not at all adequate to effectively tackle corruption. The PAP leaders' anti-corruption strategy was premised on certain logic of corruption control:

Since corruption is caused by both the incentives and opportunities to be corrupt, attempts to eradicate corruption must be designed to minimize or remove the conditions of both the incentives and opportunities that make individual corrupt behaviour irresistible (Quah, 1996: 71; Quah, 1989: 842).

The PAP leaders' major weapons against bureaucratic corruption rests on a piece of legislation, the Prevention of Corruption Act (POCA) and a powerful agency Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) (Quah, 1978b: 6). The genesis of POCA can be attributed to Prevention of Corruption Ordinance (POCO). The POCO, as a bill, passed on 10 December 1937 intended to effectively prevent corruption. But with the passage of time POCO had to be amended a number of times to increase its scope and powers (Quah, 1982b: 166). The Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB), located in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is an independent body which investigates and aims to prevent corruption in public as well as private sectors. The CPIB was established in 1952. The head of the body is directly accountable to the Prime Minister. The powers and functions of CPIB has been increased over the years keeping in view the constant need to effectively counter corrupt practices.

In fact the CPIB enjoys wide-range of powers and responsibilities unmatched by any other similar agency anywhere in the world. The responsibilities of the CPIB include:

safeguarding the integrity of the public service, encouraging corruption-free transactions in the private sector, responsible for checking and investigating malpractice by public officials and reporting such cases to appropriate departments and bodies for disciplinary action, reviewing work methods and procedures of corruption-prone departments and bodies, identifying administrative weaknesses in the existing system which could facilitate corruption and recommending remedial and preventive measures to heads of concerned departments (Singapore, 1997b: 53-54).

It is no wonder that the impact of such wide-ranging powers exercised regularly and judiciously by the CPIB has been a more or less corruption-free civil service in Singapore. As one of observer noted sometime ago quite appropriately:

In Singapore bureaucracy, the CPIB is feared as the PAP leadership's all seeing eye, and respected for its near-clockwork efficiency and its sophisticated operational methods (Tien, 1973: 17 as quoted in Quah, 1978b: 14).

Singapore's success in combatting corruption — public and private — can be attributed to a number of factors. First, the unwavering support and commitment of the political leadership to eradicate corruption have been the right medicine for a menacing disease. In 1996 elaborate rules were formulated to guide property purchase by ministers, PAP members in parliament and senior civil servants (The Business Times, 24 March 1996). This was done so that each and every purchase of property could stand upto public scrutiny and thereby ensuring transparency in public dealing. Second, the symbiotic nature of relationship between CPIB and POCA was understood by political leadership. The CPIB is powerless without the POCA and the POCA cannot be implemented without the CPIB (Quah, 1982b: 166). Third, increasing awareness of people of the pitfalls of corruption in public dealings has added further strength to anti-corruption measures. The CPIB plays a crucial role by regularly holding lectures and seminars to educate public officials of the grave consequences of corruption.

LESSONS FOR CIVIL SERVICE IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is a new state but an old nation. The country gained independence from Pakistan on 16 December 1971 after a nine-month long bloody war of liberation. Bangladesh shares a common border with India to the west, north and northeast, with Myanmar to the southeast and Bay of Bengal forms a natural southern boundary (Bangladesh, 1997: 15). Population of the country is racially mixed of austic, dravidian, monogolian, aryaans and others (Bangladesh News,

October 1997). The total land area is 147,570 square kilometre. The population size is 120 million with 80% of live in the rural areas. Population density per square kilometre is 755. The adult literacy rate is 37%. Bangla is both the national and official language as it is the mother tongue of about 98% of the population. In administration and many educational and commercial institutions, English is used along with Bangla. Overwhelming majority (87%) of the population are Muslims while Hindus, Buddhists and Christians comprise the minority. Religious harmony exists among adherents of different religious faiths. Bangladesh's national character and the traits of its people result from its past—the land, the language and religions. The economy of the country is improving slowly after the downward trend earlier. The per capita income is US\$284 and GDP growth rate stands at 4.6% (Bangladesh, 1997: 14). A parliamentary democratic systems of governance is in place. But the increasing bickering and disagreement among two major political parties in recent years, i.e., the ruling Awami League (AL) and the principal opposition party, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), on major domestic and foreign policy issues threaten to paralyze administration of the polity and cripple the economy. A lack of national consensus on major issues and personalities seem to divide the nation down the middle.

The civil service in Bangladesh has inherited many of the characteristics of the colonial bureaucracies of British India and Pakistan. The bureaucratic culture is in many respects alien and not suited to the needs and aspirations of citizens. The bureaucratic culture in Bangladesh has been influenced to a considerable extent both by the structural rigidities of an inherited colonial system of administration and the consequent behavioral patterns of bureaucrats (Khan, 1998). Some have looked at bureaucratic culture from the dysfunctional aspects of bureaucratic behavior. These are: centralization of authority, multiple layers of decisionmaking, a regulatory modus operandi, systemic lack of trust, lack of adequate

public accountability, lack of commitment, and lack of an incentive structure to encourage initiative and reward excellence (Bretts, et. al., 1988: 97-98). Others have examined bureaucratic culture in terms of both systemic rigidities and behavioural dysfunction of bureaucrats. These are: excessive reliance on hierarchy, elaborate formal rules and regulations, excessive control, lack of trust in subordinates, diffusion of accountability through overlapping checks and balances, and a loss of accountability and control (Khan, et. al., 1989: 9).

Almost one million people work for public sector in Bangladesh. Of these 300,000 are employed in various public enterprises and projects while about 700,000 work in various ministries, departments and other bodies (Asian Development Bank, 1997: 1). Member of 29 Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) cadres whose number together stands at 34,898 are usually considered elites within the public service (Khan, 1998). Among the cadres at least three major types of services are noticed. These are: (1) generalist-administrative services which include BCS (Administration) and BCS (Food); functional services which include BCS (Audit and Accounts); BCS (Customs and Excise) and BCS (Taxation); and specialist services which include BCS (Fisheries); BCS (Public Works) and BCS (Technical Education) (Khan, 1991). They are considered elites because of their small size, rapid prospects of promotion, better training and other benefits compared to noncadre class I officers. The structure of civil service points out to a rigid pattern of rank which corresponds to occupational type and hence the horizontal four-fold classificatory schema of classes I, II, III and IV is based on a number of factors including levels of responsibility, educational qualifications and pay range.

The Ministry of Establishment (MOE) acts as the central personnel agency of the government of Bangladesh. It lays down the broad policies, principles and regulations for managing the civil service and initiates measures for employee welfare and for improvement of procedures and techniques pertaining to personnel

administration (Ahmed and Khan, 1990: 28). It is also responsible for initial recruitment to all the cadre services and for disciplinary action and welfare of all senior officials in the ministries and outside (Ahmed, 1985: 47-48). The other agency which performs significant personnel functions concerning the civil service is the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC). The BPSC is a constitutional body and its chairman and members are appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister. Its functions are:

to conduct tests and examinations for the selection of suitable persons for appointment to the civil service in Bangladesh; to advise the President on any service matter on which PSC is consulted or any matter connected with its functions which is referred to the PSC by the President; and to perform such other functions as prescribed by law (Ahmed, 1990: 197).

Major administrative reform efforts in Bangladesh Civil Service have failed. As a consequence of this, the entire public service is in a state of crisis. It is characterized by a rigid structure, low productivity, overreaching reach, lack of delegation of authority, recruitment-not-totally based on merit, inappropriate training and not need-based, promotion not linked with performance, irrational transfer, constant inter-cadre feud, pay not-linked to performance and productivity and low morale (Khan, 1998).

The remainder of this section concentrates on what lessons the public service in Bangladesh can learn from the success of Singapore Civil Service in introducing, sustaining and institutionalizing major reforms and changes.

Political commitment is a critical variable in implementing major administrative reforms. Singapore's case demonstrates that political leadership was determined to do whatever necessary to do away with the negative aspects of the colonial bureaucracy. The PAP under the leadership of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew had a clear vision about the role of the civil service in an independent country. Difficult

decisions were taken and the process of recasting the civil service to suit the geniuses of Singaporeans had begun early. The structure had to be remodelled. The behavioural orientation of the civil servants long accustomed to serve the colonial masters had to be changed. Nothing was taken for granted. Elaborate plans and systematic actions resulted at the behest of the political leadership to change the institutionalized bureaucracy.

Merit is the cornerstone on which the edifice of the Singapore Civil Service (SCS) has been built. Recruitment and promotion in the SCS are based on merit. No compromise has been made in this respect. The obvious result is a competent and effective civil service. An officer's promotion and placement are determined by his ability to adequately and appropriately perform on the job.

Excellence in the SCS is sustained by a number of interrelated actions beside retaining merit as the core guiding principle. Personnel management functions have been devolved from the Public Service Commission and other service commissions to ministries. Personnel Boards at different levels can and do hire and promote civil servants within the framework of certain principles. This policy initiative has resulted in the decentralization of personnel powers at the ministry level and enabled the PSC to concentrate on selection of entrants to AS and higher levels and act as an appellate body for the personnel decisions of ministries.

The Singapore government's continuous effort to upgrade service delivery has resulted in the introduction of the autonomous agencies (AA) concept. Under this concept government agencies are given considerable freedom of operation. The funding of AA agencies is dependent on meeting their defined output and performance targets. The basic premise here is unless an agency performs satisfactorily it should not expect funding automatically.

Another key factor that has contributed to the present stature of the SCS has been the constant emphasis on enhancing its

productivity. Mechanisms have been set up to guide and encourage productivity. The rank-and-file in the SCS directly participate in teams that are intended to bring about improvement in the methods of work and the surrounding environment. Individual employees are financially rewarded for ideas which would lead to better performance and enhanced productivity.

Retaining highly capable and qualified personnel in the civil service is not easy. One of the ways that the SCS has tackled it is by periodically adjusting the pay of civil servants. A number of methods have been utilized like bonus, performance bonus and special allowance to continuously motivate civil servants. Top level civil servants and those belong to the Administrative Service (AS) are paid salary that correspond roughly to their equivalents in the private sector.

Bureaucratic corruption is absent in Singapore. This is one of the major strengths of the SCS. It performs above board. Constant vigil by the political leadership, existence of a strong anti-corruption agency armed with extensive legal powers and an informed citizenry have contributed to a situation where it is accepted that the civil servants are honest, transparent and accountable. The culture of honesty in public dealing has also contributed enormously to the effectiveness of the SCS.

Renewed emphasis on public sector training with international focus and integration of consultancy and policy-oriented research have added a significant dimension to civil service training in Singapore. What needs to be understood here is that conceptualization of training from a holistic perspective has become a reality. This, in turn, makes training useful for the civil servants not only to do their jobs at hand better but at the same time focus on accomplishing future assignments credibly.

Increasing use of information technology in the SCS has already positively impacted on the efficiency of the SCS. It has enabled the

SCS to cut staff and provide quicker information and efficient service to the customers.

The launching of Public Service for 21st Century (PS 21) can be considered the culmination of the efforts by the government to prepare the SCS to face the challenges of the 21st Century. The theme that runs through the PS 21 is how to effectively manage change. This means that civil servants need to possess certain key attitudes and values to enable them to effectively cope with change and benefit from that experience. The PS 21 initiative with emphasis on staff well-being and citizen participation and quality services to the public is believed to be an appropriate response to an uncertain, complex and demanding next century.

CONCLUSION

Singapore's success in initiating and implementing major administrative reforms on a continuous basis is reflected by the performance of its civil servants and perceptions people have about their impact on society at-large. As one scholar notes, "public bureaucracy played a positive role in initiating social change in Singapore" (Quah, 1983: 216). *The Economist* observed that:

Bureaucrats in Singapore are surely the envy of their counterparts elsewhere. Their meticulously planned city boasts high employment, safe streets, minimal congestion, cleanliness, helpful media and citizens who are usually well-behaved (*The Economist*, 11-17 October 1997).

It has also been argued that civil servants clearly perceived their role in national development and became more focused in terms of what they had to do (Sebastian, 1997: 286-287). But obviously this was possible due to reforms that transformed the civil service.

Singapore's administrative reforms bear in many cases striking similarities with reforms undertaken by the United Nations and many Commonwealth countries. The reforms, characterized as most

extensive and far-reaching in the history of the UN, was initiated in mid-July 1997. The reform package has already brought a quiet revolution in the way the UN operates. The reforms focus on six aspects: setting clear goals, involving concerned people, examining processes, measuring performance, using technology and emphasizing results (Vera, 1997: 4). The outcome of the reform initiatives has been a thorough review of operating costs and complex processes, implementing cost-control and efficiency measures and radical re-engineering of work processes and consequent simplification of rules and regulations.

Many Commonwealth countries, irrespective of population size, resource-base and geographical location, have had to face the difficult tasks of initiating, managing and implementing reforms in the public sector (Khan, 1998). They still adopted similar reform strategies by re-defining the relationship between policy-making and administration; introducing greater accountability, tasks definition, performance measurement and delegation of the control over resources; the need for closer collaboration with organizational review; and the importance of the equality of service (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1995: V).

Experiences of Commonwealth countries demonstrate that a number of variables need to be present for successful implementation of major administrative reforms. In the UK, Canada, the New Zealand, Jamaica and Malaysia, high-level political support given by politicians in power and senior civil servants occupying key positions turned out to be critical and decisive factor in the successful implementation of reforms in the civil service. Credibility of a reform programme to three key actors in the process — politicians, civil servants and people — to a large extent, determines its success as indicated by the experiences of the New Zealand and Mauritius. Establishment and sustenance of a strategically placed central unit designed to monitor and guide reform process is significant as shown by Uganda and Zambia. Ownership of reforms by civil servants at

various levels influences the success of major reforms and is seen in the New Zealand and Trinidad and Tobago. It is now apparent that in almost all countries, citizens are vocal as customers demanding quality goods and better services provided by civil servants. They are not satisfied easily and hence the need to enhance quality of service and raising standards of performance evaluation and accountability mechanisms in the civil service. In a number of countries including the UK, measures have been initiated to increase managerial expectation in line with high level of customer expectation. Citizen's Charter in the UK is one such attempt to create further awareness among citizens as to the standards to be expected from the civil service. Some Commonwealth countries including the UK and Zambia are institutionalizing feedback systems in the civil service to ensure improvements in performance. In Ghana through an innovative programme public sector institutions are strengthened and improved by forming networks with civil society organizations and interest groups. This initiative is intended to build support for civil service reform outside.

It is apparent from the above discussion that civil servants must understand and appreciate the need for change and the impetus for change and appropriately respond to cope with and welcome change. Only then enhanced productivity and improved quality service will result which still remain the cherished goals of major administrative reforms in any country.

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