

# Global & Regional Trends in Civil Service Development



Motivation  
Governance

**Integrity**

Talent Management

Position-based vs. Career-based

Partnership

Strategic Foresight

SDGs

Accountability

**Meritocracy**

Public Values

**Trust**

Ethics

Public Participation

**New Public Passion**

Transparency

Leadership

**Anti-corruption**

Civil Service Excellence

Peer Learning

Agencification

Sustainability





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The remarkable developments – political, social, economic and technological – that have occurred over the past thirty or forty years, have placed immense demands on the State, public administration and civil service structures and systems around the world. Globalisation of markets, scientific and technological advances and increased interdependence among States have created complex new relationships and networks that national systems are forced to recognise, embrace in many cases and manage effectively. Furthermore, the emergence of vibrant civil societies exerts, in many instances, considerable pressures both to reduce corruption, with a view to creating a level playing field for private enterprise and raise ethical standards in the conduct of public affairs.

In growing numbers, governments have responded to these pressures, demands and changes, as they have realised that they cannot afford to stay behind in a world of increasingly dynamic and competitive markets, as well as pluralistic, diversified societies where higher expectations give birth to new and progressively more complex challenges. Governments have responded by bringing new ideas and initiatives to bear on the traditional fields of public administration and the civil service profession aiming at making their structures and systems more citizen-oriented, more flexible, more reflective of the values of society and more focused on performance and results.

The *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals* (SDG), recently adopted by the General Assembly, are generally congruent with the initiatives introduced by governments around the world, particularly with Goal 16. In fact, this Goal recognises and supports the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies providing equal access to justice. It is based on human rights, including the right to development. It also recognises the critical existence of the rule of law and sound governance at all levels and transparent, effective and accountable institutions. Goal 16 also highlights the corrosive effects on societies of such factors and phenomena as exclusion, inequality, corruption, arbitrariness and illicit financial and arms flows. They damage social capital and public trust but also undermine the desired levels of security and justice for citizens and residents throughout.

This volume explores the direction and scope of civil service reform and development over the recent decades around the world. In so doing, it attempts to determine whether any global and/or regional trends can be detected. It also attempts to discern the degree of convergence or divergence in strategies, policies and programmes applied

to civil service reform and development in coping with the new challenges in public administration and civil service systems.

The overall impression confirms that there is no convergence towards a single model of civil service reform. Rather, substantial variations exist not only between continents and geographical regions but also among countries. The pace and comprehensiveness of most government attempts to modernise their public service varies significantly from one country to another. Reform activities embrace a wide spectrum.

Civil service systems possess distinctive country-specific characteristics and institutional features based on their historical, cultural and administrative traditions. These, in turn, determine the structure of those systems and, moreover, their ability to evolve and develop over time. This may also be attributed to the presence of particular vulnerabilities, political circumstances, historical conjunctures and reform opportunities in different countries. This can hardly be surprising as countries begin with different values and norms and face different contexts, risks and challenges in the course of their development (Verheijen, 2000; Toonen, 1993).

What often emerges is a pattern of different motives, constraints and opportunities charting the course of reform, reflective of the country's institutional configurations. Thus, civil service systems should not be regarded as isolated artefacts, independent and variable *sui generis*, but as systems or sub-systems, which move at a variable pace in an effort to reform (Hood & Lodge, 2005). Accordingly, we may argue that national civil service systems cannot be simply viewed as constructs that are likely to respond, in predictable ways, to exogenous or endogenous pressures for change.

As we look around the world, from one country to another, variations on reform or on development policies and practices is *the rule rather than the exception*. Change in civil service systems hardly represents the process of a *tabula rasa* approach with all countries starting the process of administrative reform from the same point of departure or moving one step at a time on a predetermined course. Given their historical roots and linkages to political, economic and social systems, civil service systems experience "*critical junctures*" that influence the pace and comprehensiveness of key reforms (Page & Wright, 1999).

However, one may also observe some major common trends. In fact, two main trajectories may be discerned. The first group is depicted by civil services preferring to modernise within state traditions, which are rather closed and resistant to external pressures. The second group is more vulnerable to external pressures and more open to new management and personnel concepts. The first group of countries has roots in the *Rechtsstaat* tradition of continental Europe. It has embedded reform in the framework of a tenured merit-based career structure,

with an all-embracing concept of the State representing an important element of the national culture. The second group is the *Anglo-American public interest system* comprised of the United States of America, the United Kingdom and most of the Commonwealth. The members of this group have attempted to reduce the differences between the public and private sectors concerning terms and conditions of civil service, recruitment and promotion practices and mobility schemes. The ultimate purpose of these several initiatives has been to increase managerial autonomy and flexibility by deregulating human resources management, delegating authority and individualising accountability and performance.

The outcome of reforms in these diverse situations have varied over-time. They provide a fund of experience, both positive and negative. All in all, however, civil service and public administration reforms are still regarded essential as: [i] they seek to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and professionalism in public service delivery and by so doing, better the lives of citizens; and [ii] they respond to local, national, regional and global challenges that may affect the very survival of many societies (Satish, 2004).

Even in technologically and politically advanced countries, pressures to change compel development. Pressures range from protecting the environment to restoring faith in government. Challenges also rise from the globalisation of financial and labour markets and call for accelerated economic growth and sustainable development with equity, as the SDG highlight. Changing demands call for a different type of civil servant. Increasingly, the need is for civil servants able to take initiatives in a variety of policy areas and issues and capable to assume an active role, as opposed to traditional bureaucrats. Moreover, they are required to “do more with less”, due to resource constraints. In all too many countries, the latter is further exacerbated by the exponential growth of public services and their delivery. Furthermore, civil servants are required to function in environments where information technologies have transformed the operational modalities. Regardless of these changes and pressures placed upon them, they continue to operate within a framework of laws, which safeguard the rule of law, due process and public sector values. Throughout, they must preserve a proper balance between legality and efficiency.

In sum, a changing world points to the need for officers, who are competent professionals. Increasingly, societies place emphasis on probity in dealing with public funds, service-orientation, adherence to legality, resistance to corruption and a set of high-level skills well above and beyond those previously required. It also requires civil servants who possess and acquire enhanced capacities to work individually or in teams, under pressure in demanding environments, both national and international, in which they must be expected to serve the public good single-mindedly and unequivocally.

Therefore, civil service reform is conceived both in terms of professional development and in terms of an action intended to improve performance at work, by adopting and deploying the policies and instruments to environmental changes in a sustainable manner. Accordingly, reform is not an isolated task. It must be combined with administrative and governance departures taking place in given countries. These involve institutional changes, often in response to developments, regional or international. Experience demonstrates that reforms cannot succeed in any of the closely interrelated realms of governance – civil service and civil society – without sustained commitment from political and administrative leaders. Absence of such commitment may create unmanageable dislocations. Thus, mobilising political and social support within the system remains a critical requisite for success. Viability of serious civil service reform depends on ability to harness national will, energy and creativity. Accordingly, few countries have undertaken comprehensive reforms and in those that have, results have often been mixed. The main challenge remains to determine a proper sequence of actions, reflecting an adherence to well-thought plans and strategies, as well as proper linkages between the governance and civil service components.

Most contemporary reforms have been the result of convergence of variable political and economic factors in the 1980s and 1990s. They led to widespread questioning of the structures and operational modalities of civil service systems across the world. They also invited scepticism viewing public administration and civil service reform in ideological terms in light of managerial and political doctrines, which emerged during this period. One such doctrine, the *“Managerial State”*, which surfaced in the latter part of the twentieth century challenged the fundamentals of existing civil service systems. Antagonism between the Anglo-Saxon management-driven theories and formal continental European approaches has been emphatic in debates during the past three decades. Some States have shown an interest in the corporatist South East Asian models, as a viable alternative. However, such interest has been confined to Central Asia and to a lesser extent in Russia.

In some parts of the world, reforms have been associated with “structural adjustments” and economic reform efforts, sponsored and introduced by the Bretton Woods institutions and Western donor countries. Austerity considerations and “streamlining” public service have been combined with the drive to modernise, also focused on providing effective responses to needs, demands and circumstances. Management-driven reforms have sometimes introduced new forms of organisation, as well as new systems of management and supervision, motivation and remuneration. These have focused on creating competitive pressures within the civil service, including opening the system up to private sector approaches and lateral recruitment on almost every level.

While the full-scale adoption of this managerial doctrine seemed inappropriate in many countries, a more selective approach, with respect to methods and practices or certain categories of jobs has proved a useful strategy with a view to injecting dynamism in public service systems. Such reforms have taken place in Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, as well as in such rapidly modernising nations as Brazil, Chile, India, Malaysia and Singapore. Some changes have been comprehensive, others limited and circumscribed. While aggregate experience has been mixed, most reforms suggest a degree of support for improving service delivery across the board and reducing the tax burden by streamlining administration. Though difficult to implement, such integrated schemes have led to economic growth in some countries, notably Botswana, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico and Singapore (UNPAN, 2000). A focus of reform has been on legal frameworks, norms and innovative political and administrative relations, but also on the introduction of new methods of performance measurement and assessment, as well as the development of new civil service systems. Some of these innovations clearly reflect the dominance of New Public Management (NPM) at a time when new civil service systems needed to be constructed, notably in Central and Eastern Europe (Peters & Pierre, 2003). The outcome, nonetheless, has been a combination of continental European type structures with an added dose of performance management and measurement.

Under the dominant influence of NPM, the notion of distinctiveness of public sector structures and the concept of the State as a “model employer” began to fragment, leading to a general weakening of the conditions of service in many countries. In States throughout the world the status of civil servants has been largely redefined. Civil service institutions have been attacked and civil servants de-privileged, losing security of tenure. Advancement has been reduced, as the public sector turned to private sector enterprises for inspiration and examples of good practices (OECD, 2005a). Similarly, the invasion of private sector management techniques into the public sector has challenged the notions of career service, lifelong employment patterns and other “acquired” rights.

In light of these developments, traditional employment practices including the priority accorded to internal labour markets and the norm of promotion from within have been rapidly eroded, especially where lateral entry is permitted and encouraged. Additionally, in some countries, employees are encouraged to move between sectors of government or between the government and other sectors. Overall, it would appear that the notion of a single or even dual internal labour market in government is in decline. In many countries, mobility or exchange systems promote movement across traditional borders. This happens in the case of the European Union, where administrative partnerships are seen as a key framework for meeting the challenges of managing the European Public Service Space (Argyriades & Timsit, 2013).

Related to the change in public sector labour markets is the notion of “contractualisation” of top civil servants primarily. The scope and content of contracts varies widely among countries. In some countries, civil servants are placed on short-term contracts with no guarantee of further employment in the civil service. Short-term contracts and performance-related pay are more common among senior managers than among other public service personnel (OECD, 2004b). In a number of countries, specific rules guaranteeing lifelong employment patterns have been phased out and civil servants are placed under the general labour laws. Some countries still prefer lifelong employment, but term contracts have been introduced to increase individual responsibility for performance. In this case, civil servants remain in the public service, but their tenure is not guaranteed.

Similarly, the traditional distinction between closed “career-based” – with centralised recruitment, promotion and training – and open “position-based” – with a decentralised management of appointments, promotion and training – civil service systems has lost its former validity. However, this classification has been useful methodologically in analysing the salient features of civil service systems (Baimenov, 2000). Such countries as Belgium, Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the United States have position-based civil service systems, which are open to lateral entry. By contrast, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Portugal and Spain approximate more closely to a closed career-based civil service. Over the past two decades, the United Kingdom has moved from a tightly career-based to a position-based system. Sweden, by contrast, moved from a position-based to a broad-banded system, with no position descriptions (UNPAN, 2000). In 1999, Korea introduced the Open Position System (OPS) aiming at the introduction of an element of competition within the public sector. This intention was to push for efficiency and productivity in public administration. The system was further designed to recruit outstanding talent and expertise from both the public and private sectors, through diversification of the recruiting methods (Kim, 2000; 2001a).

Such developments are the result of pressures for reform. These have stemmed from assumptions that the traditional career-based and the position-based system have both their flaws, as the former lacks the ability to adapt and the latter lacks collectivity (OECD, 2005a). Thus, the current trend is for career-based systems to introduce external competition for open positions and performance management systems; and to, moreover, delegate responsibility for human resources management to lower levels. Conversely, position-based systems have introduced more competitive and transparent procedures.

Increasingly, in our days, both external and internal recruitment strategies are applied interchangeably with an emphasis on merit and anticipated performance. A movement towards more temporary em-

ployment has also been observed. Fixed-term contracts are often supplemented with detailed individual performance or appraisal contracts. Hence, recruitment and mobility of civil servants have been subject to change due to challenges to tenure. It is becoming normal for top officials to serve on short-term performance-related contracts. However, this trend is stronger in countries like the United Kingdom, than such other as Germany.

In their quest for change and reform some governments around the world have introduced a service “elite” or senior civil service, within their civil service. The majority of countries have either of two groups of senior civil servants. In position-based systems, top managers, together with an identified pool of potential top managers, are given special attention. By contrast in career-based systems a broader senior management pool exists reaching down to lower management levels. Examples of this abound: The Senior Executive Service (SES) in the United States; the Senior Civil Service (SCS) in the United Kingdom; and Corps “A” Civil Service in Kazakhstan. Germany is an example of a country with no separate or distinct senior civil service.

Different forms of senior civil service systems are found in such countries as Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). By contrast, such others as Belgium, Ireland, and the Netherlands have taken steps to limit terms of office for senior civil servants (Bekke & Van der Meer, 2000). In some cases, a senior executive service has been successful in showcasing internal mobility, external recruitment, use of performance appraisals and identity building. Australia is an example. In other countries with limited success or failure, it has been more of a failure and it has been terminated, e.g. New Zealand (Halligan, 2003). In Korea, the Senior Civil Service plays a key role in setting and determining the main policies for the Korean government. It is managed separately from the core of general government officials (Kim, 2001a). Recruitment criteria for the senior civil service vary greatly from country to country. It depends on role and scope. Countries, which have a functional definition of senior management, emphasising the management responsibilities of the posts, have an appointment process that increasingly aims at recruiting executives with management and leadership capabilities.

More often than not, members of the senior civil service are required to go through a competency assessment process and compete for vacant positions. In this manner, it is hoped that mobility may increase over time. Moreover, greater emphasis on performance and responsibility has become a major factor in performance agreements. While in years past, pay was determined by the rank and length in service, it is now increasingly pegged to the difficulty and importance of the job performed, as well as to performance in executing responsibilities assigned to the job (Kim, 2010).



Consequently, as most countries are trying to make the civil service more responsive both to policy decisions and to the needs of citizens, they emphasise “performance” rather than process compliance. This has resulted in some decentralisation of management decisions and more emphasis on individual responsibility and performance of top managers. This is operationalised through the introduction of objectives-setting and accountability mechanisms, as well as individually-based rewards or sanctions. However, the extent and effectiveness of implementation of “performance-based” management for senior civil servants vary significantly. This is, to some degree, related to the nature of the system; whether the system is career- or position-based. But, while performance management is more or less the norm, the focus increasingly turns in the direction of leadership and change management, as well as more effective human resources management.

Promotion of senior civil servants is generally based on performance assessment and individual competencies. Different promotion systems are observable. They tend to be closely related to the type of system in place. Countries with primarily career-based systems have a good degree of mobility and sophisticated promotion mechanisms. Their systems reflect definitions of senior civil servants, which frequently reach low in the official hierarchy. A drawback of these systems is the difficulty of maintaining a satisfactory level of competition for senior positions, resulting, in various degrees, to weaker performance criteria for promotion.

Countries with position-based systems experience difficulties in encouraging mobility among senior managers across departments or keeping senior managers over time, creating a so-called “whole-of-government coherence problem”. Turnover may be high. Thus, they have established central databases of senior cadres and potential future senior civil servants with full information on their career. The Netherlands is an example. Some others maintain pools of future candidates, either formal and centralised, as in the United Kingdom or informal and decentralised, as in the United States of America. Candidates are identified at an early stage in their career. They are given special attention in terms of career development, while remaining in competition with potential future staff from outside this group.

Most countries place an emphasis on training and lifelong learning. Still, two categories emerge. Countries with an open position-based system tend to put more emphasis on specific and specialised training. This is hardly surprising, given the greater diversity of candidates with a weaker common culture, who may also need training in government affairs and administrative procedures. Conversely, countries that select potential future leaders soon after university or early in their careers, tend to put a lot of emphasis on pre-entry training. However, a general trend shows an increase in training courses with a focus on development of leadership potential and management skills. Increasingly the

focus is on capacity-building with an emphasis on skills to work and negotiate in a complex international political environment.

Governments have established a variety of talent management schemes in order to attract gifted individuals into their organisations. Examples of these abound: the Senior Executive Service in the United States of America; the Fast Stream Scheme in the United Kingdom; the Senior Civil Service in Korea; the Administrative Services of Singapore; the High Potential Performers in Thailand; and the Administrative and Diplomatic Scheme in Malaysia, to mention just a few.

With varying forms and names, they all have congruent goals, namely how to attract and retain talent and thus cope with adjustments at times of rapid change. The tendency overall is to focus on development of management capacities. Performance management practices, leadership development and change management are integral components of talent management schemes. This tendency is apparent in both the “career-based” and “position-based” civil service systems. Such schemes have been successful in some contexts but less so in some others. Many have been criticised as being inequitable, despite their stated good intentions. They are generally considered as ways out in dealing with an observable shortage of skilled personnel. Two requisites are salient in matters of talent management: **leadership** and **integration**. Do leaders of organizations understand the “Business of Talent; are organizations sufficiently integrated to take a holistic view of talent?”

A competencies-based approach to personnel recruitment and assessment has become widely accepted in developed countries especially. First, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States of America introduced this competencies approach, as far back as the late 1980s. By now, most of the OECD countries have implemented competencies-based systems as part of their reforms. During the 1990s, competencies management in the public sector gained a lot of traction. It was prominently featured in the Civil Service Act of 1999 in Australia, in the Belgian Copernicus plan and in Korea. More recently, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Estonia also implemented competencies models. In France and Germany, by contrast, these models still remain at an experimental phase.

Competencies Management is usually implemented as part of a broader institutional reform strategy aimed at creating a flexible and efficient work force. *Competencies management systems have been designed to smooth and facilitate a gradual transition from traditional personnel management to the strategic management of human resources in the civil service.* It may be safely assumed that the competencies-based approach will continue to be utilised in the public sector, for it contributes to ensuring its efficient operation.

An example of this tendency can be found in the Dutch Administration. There, introduction of competencies management was intended to transform the bureaucratic culture into a more entrepreneurial one. In the Belgian Federal Administration, competencies management was introduced with the aim of catalysing the broader organisational change and mitigating a strong symbolic break with the bureaucratic past. In both cases, competencies management has been used as a tool to introduce a new customer-oriented, adaptive culture into the public sector. It has also helped prepare leaders for the reform process.

Experience in applying competencies-based approaches to human resources management has grown in developed countries primarily. The process of refining such approaches indicates that a variety of models has been adopted. Nonetheless, common trends may be detected. Thus, in some countries, notably in Western Europe, the competencies management focuses on key requirements of the position and functional responsibilities, rather than on the background of the individual candidates. The presence of some basic characteristic features is normally taken for granted. In other countries, personal qualities play a central role. Evidence would suggest that the focus, in the European Union, tends to be on management competencies. All in all, irrespective of tradition, all countries in recent years, place emphasis on skills; especially “management” skills.

Today, national governments tend to delegate implementation and regulatory activities mainly to national level agencies often completely privatised, at least with respect to managerial affairs, although in name they remain the direct responsibility of a minister. This tendency in the direction of “agencification” is also a shorthand for a process of delegation and devolution of authority, as more autonomy – particularly in personnel and financial issues – is granted to public bodies, which either remain legally part of the State or acquire their own legal personality (Beblavy, 2002b). Within the OECD, the common rationale for setting up agencies is to improve performance or make decision-making more credible by separating it from direct political involvement. Governments give their agencies *management autonomy*, namely, the freedom to allocate resources, to achieve stated political objectives or *policy autonomy*, to interpret or decide in policy specific sectors or cases. Even though the situation differs from country to country, agencification has been the dominant feature of change in central government structures in the past twenty years.

In some South-East Asian countries, the government has delegated macro-economic and strategic policy-making to such powerful elite agencies as the Economic Planning Board of Korea; and, in Thailand, to the Ministry of Finance, the Budget Bureau, the Central Bank and the National Economic and Social Development Board. Staffed by professionals, these agencies, have relative autonomy. Their deliberations are embedded in processes that provide substantial inputs and over-

sight from private sector firms through public / private councils and other fora. Such councils, which exist in Japan, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Singapore, scrutinise costly programmes rigorously (Kaul, 1997).

In the core public sector, governments continue to rely on traditional bureaucratic structures but are gradually placing emphasis on the use of objective criteria in recruitment and promotion. They also offer incentives to encourage greater commitment and better performance. Still, the process in adopting new methods of recruitment and promotion continues to hinge on imponderables. Such are informal networks, patronage versus merit issues and the relative importance accorded, in some countries, to ethnic, religious and regional preferences. Even though some of the countries have adopted a merit-based system, practice often militates in favour of these biases.

Several governments in Central Asia and the Caucasus region utilise such technical tools as job descriptions, competencies and work-related skills. They also tend to develop new and more competitive compensation schemes, by taking into account private sector standards and practices. In general, there is growing recognition of the importance of human resources management and development. This is especially true of States with an environment of declining resources and revenues, as well as increasing demands for state-provided services (quantitatively and qualitatively). Thus, the region's governments begin to focus on training needs and dispensing training courses calculated to satisfy such needs as they gradually realise the importance of building capacity in their human resources and capital. Still, training in the region needs to be planned strategically based on a sound needs assessment system – currently in place only in Azerbaijan and Moldova. It needs to be systematic throughout.

Recently, regional governments have also been taking steps to improve public service ethics, because pervasive corruption has resulted in lowering standards. Most have introduced "*compliance-based ethics management*", or "*integrity-based ethics management*" systems. They focus on compliance, which entails detailed application of descriptive / administrative procedures, control mechanisms, and rules about what officers should avoid, what they should do and how they should do it. Systems are implemented through administrative law and rules of procedure and they are supervised by the Administration. They need to be supplemented by integrity-based ethics promoting objectives and principles, as well as due professional socialisation, reinforced by incentives that encourage good behaviour. Needless to emphasise that the cultural, political and administrative traditions should be considered to ensure that ethics management systems are congruent with such traditions.

Likewise, the civil service systems of the South Eastern, Central and Eastern Europe have been undergoing change during the past decades. Thus, all have been subjected to reforms, but substantial variations are observed from country to country. Some have chosen to be aligned with formal – legal rules, rather than the newer trend in European standards in personnel policies and practices. In some others, the European Union common administrative space principles and practices have played a pivotal role in civil service reform. Overall, it may be argued that domestic conditions have been more influential in shaping reform policies than any other factors. However, further analysis may be needed to identify the factors that have shaped the diverse reform pathways of South Eastern and Central and Eastern European countries, over the past three decades. There is still little hard evidence pointing to the success of these reforms. The jury is still out.

In South-East Asia, implementing the reforms was not devoid of challenges. Most countries have been facing significant obstacles in evaluating the outcomes and impact of reforms. A very common challenge has been the size of the government. Downsizing and improving the public service are issues that most reforms have neglected. Furthermore, lack of adequate capacity to implement reforms, inadequate infrastructure, corruption and low level of professionalisation in the public service are some of the commonest challenges that these countries have to face in the attainment of goals proclaimed in their reform agendas.

There have been additional obstacles and limitations. One of the most important is political interference, mostly in the form of intrusion in matters of appointment and promotion. This has been reported with regard to Indonesia. Other factors adversely affecting reform programmes are lack of political will to support reforms and political instability, e.g. in Myanmar and in Thailand. Similarly, ambitious reforms with limited resources, incapable personnel and inadequate technical advice have negatively impacted reform results, e.g. in Cambodia. Another limitation is lack of follow up and accountability mechanisms to ensure the implementation of reforms, e.g. in Brunei-Darussalam. Poor record keeping, internal bureaucratic resistance, risk-averse attitudes and lack of motivation among civil servants have also adversely affected reform implementation in several countries. Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam are cases in point.

Despite such limitations, the ASEAN regional countries have shown praiseworthy performance in terms of both economic development and systems change in governance. This was brought about through the introduction of different reform programmes and governments' commitment to achieving a better living standard for citizens at large. Most of the ASEAN countries are currently planning to reinforce good governance into their civil service systems and to introduce new laws or civil service codes, as well as develop their human capital.

It is obvious that ethics, integrity and professionalism are core issues in civil service development, as they contribute to fighting against public sector corruption. This cannot be accomplished by merely prosecuting corrupt officials. Diverse measures known as “*preventive anti-corruption measures*” or “*good governance*” or “*integrity enhancement*” may also be deployed in order to establish and support a completely different culture in the civil service of every country. Such is a civil service characterised by high levels of performance, integrity and professionalism; not by clientelism, nepotism and partisanship. In this vein, such measures as prevention of conflict of interests, incompatible activities, rules on acceptance of gifts and monitoring of public officials’ assets and systems for assessing and managing corruption risks in public entities have helped to improve the quality and integrity of the civil service. These measures can be accompanied by such mechanisms as anti-corruption strategies, codes of conduct, whistle-blowers’ protection schemes and organisational integrity units to strengthen integrity frameworks further.

By way of concluding remarks, there is clearly no convergence in most areas of civil service reform. However, some salient common trends have emerged. For example, a clear trend is a reduction of the differences between the private and public sectors. There has also been a tendency to increase managerial autonomy, discretion and flexibility by deregulating human resources management, delegating authority and individualising accountability and performance, especially among OECD Member States (OECD, 2005a). Lastly, there is a tendency to focus on the quality and efficiency of civil servants’ performance. Thus, worldwide, priority has been attached to the issues of effectiveness, transparency, accountability, client orientation, integrity and responsiveness.

It should be pointed out, however, that demands for greater flexibility and managerial discretion in hiring and promotion may conflict with such norms as fairness, equity, predictability and impartiality, as they limit flexibility and discretion in appointments. These tensions will be greater in the cases of public managers who must choose between appointing career civil servants or hiring contingent or contractual staff. The extent to which reform in the recruitment, promotion and mobility of civil servants may bring about the erosion of traditional values of equity, objectivity, merit and impartiality remains to be seen. What one should not forget is that, in the final analysis, the fundamental purpose of the public service is government and governance; not management (OECD, 2005a). This implies that it is still essential to address the issue of values that create and strengthen confidence and trust in public sector organisations (Newland, 2015).

It is clearly far too early to conclude that, in this day and age, merit-based bureaucracy is unsustainable, for its adaptive capacity is high and it should not be underestimated (Christensen, 2003). In fact, the

traditional system of centrally controlled bureaucracy has proved to be more enduring, particularly where the existence of a strong and all-encompassing concept of the State remains an important and integral part of the national culture.

A lesson from reviews of human resources management practices is that there is no ideal type of public employment system. There is instead a difficult trade-off between individualisation and delegation of human resources management to improve the adaptability and flexibility of the civil service, on the one hand and the sense of collectivity, shared values and mutual trust relations among civil servants, on the other (OECD, 2005a). How to balance fragmentation and integration, individualisation, common identities and market pressures with cultural cohesion and a sense of common purpose is a very major challenge in human resources management reform throughout the public sector.

In sum, over the recent decades, despite commonalities inherent to many reform processes, it is possible to distinguish two important trends in public management reform, at least in the industrially developed countries. Borrowing the phraseology and rationale provided by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2002), we can refer to the **New Public Management** and the **New Weberian State** as major reform trends (Argyriades & Timsit, 2013). According to these authors, adherents of the New Weberian Model give priority to the modernisation of the Weberian tradition, while New Public Management proponents largely reject this tradition and promote approaches used in the private sector.

Worldwide, experience also demonstrates that reform of civil service systems is a complex task and process involving competing interests. It is subject to a multitude of factors both exogenous and endogenous. An observation made by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004: 39) aptly sums it all up: *"We are convinced that a conceptually identical, or at least very similar, reform develops differently in one national context as compared with another"*.



## Global & Regional Trends in Civil Service Development

*This volume – an initiative of the Regional Hub of Civil Service in Astana in close cooperation with the UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence in Singapore – aims at identifying global and regional trends in civil service development. It examines strategies, policies, programmes and other measures deployed across numerous civil service systems around the world in an attempt to identify whether common trends exist. Its focus is on substance of development and change in civil service reform, without, however overlooking the influence of the processes affecting the type, degree and pace of change; taking into consideration the historical context of each system, at the same time. This paper aspires to become a resource guide to policy makers and practitioners – in the participating countries of the Regional Hub (ACSH) and beyond – on contemporary developments and future trends in civil service transformation efforts, in their quest to make their administration more responsive, transparent accountable, more proactive and professional, in interactions with citizens, while dispensing public services. It also provides examples of initiatives taking place around the world, which may help in illuminating the way forward.*

