

Preparing the Brunei Darussalam's Civil Service for the 21st Century

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Introduction

IN VIEW of globalization and the need to equip ourselves for the 21st century, several policies and strategies need to be developed so as to create the desired future of the 21st century for Brunei Darussalam. In facing such challenges and turbulence, changes that evolve in managing the government are necessary to bring about a major shift in the civil service so as to make it more resilient and dynamic. Cognizant of these concerns, the civil service needs to undertake the process of transformation whereby the concept and practicality of continuous improvement is one of the areas that needs to be emphasized.

Since 1990, various administrative and management improvement programs were introduced in the civil service. These endeavors signified the commitment of His Majesty's Government to bring about a paradigm shift and mindset changes in the system of management and work culture towards creating a more transparent, dynamic, responsive, accountable, effective and efficient civil service. Such initiatives which have been put in place are meant to achieve the following goals:

- To inculcate excellent work ethics;
- To enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the administrative and management entity;
- To upgrade the skill and competency of officers and staff; and
- To enhance the quality of service delivery toward customers' satisfaction.

Human Resource Development

It is evident that the development of human resources is very much in the national agenda as it continues to be the main thrust of the Seventh National Development Plan (1996 – 2000). There is a real need to recognize the importance of skilled, well-educated, motivated and versatile civil servants, who can adapt to a changing environment. In recognizing the need to develop professionalism, attitude, knowledge and skills, modernized and upgraded education and training systems will continue to be made available and more responsive to changing environment, as well as fulfilling the requirements for a dynamic, technically competent and enterprising civil servants. Thus, provision of better educational facilities and training programs for the civil service of Brunei Darussalam are being actively pursued.

The requirement for optimum utilization of human resources in both the public and private sectors have led to the formation of the National Committee on Human Resources Development. Nationally, this Committee is to oversee and plan for the future manpower

needs in Brunei Darussalam. This Committee is also responsible for reviewing the present policies on human resource development in both the public and private sectors.

The emphasis to upgrade the quality of the civil service is an unending endeavor whereby the government allocates considerable annual budget for in-service training. Opportunities to pursue academic courses, either locally or overseas, may be given to eligible civil servants. The in-service training can be given on the basis of organizational needs or as a reward for a consistently excellent service.

In its capacity as the central personnel agency, the Public Service Department (PSD) is responsible in ensuring the efficiency, effectiveness and excellence of human resources in the civil service. The PSD manages courses for supervisors, middle and top management, and overseas training exceeding 30 days duration. Specialized overseas training not exceeding 30 days is the responsibility of ministries. The decentralization of training function is further pursued whereby the departments provide in-house training for their professional and support staff.

The administration of in-service training, either local or overseas exceeding 30 days is the responsibility of the Staffing and Training Administration Section of the PSD. The Section vets short-listed applications received from the Ministries' HRD Committees, and makes recommendations to the In-Service Training Committee. Through the annual training quota, each ministry is allocated with a predetermined quota that has to be distributed to eligible officers in the departments under the respective ministries.

On the other hand, the respective ministries are responsible for in-service training not exceeding 30 days. Vetting and approvals are granted by the respective ministries. The PSD organizes regular meetings with the Ministries' HRD Committees aimed at ensuring common interpretations on the provisions of the in-service training regulations.

As the training arm of the PSD, the Civil Service Institute (CSI) offers a wide range of management and skill courses aimed at inspiring corporate culture, entrepreneurial and positive ethical values within the Civil Service. Its main emphasis are management, business administration, human resource management, information technology, management science and work ethics.

For Brunei Darussalam's Civil Service, the Civil Service Institute of the Public Service Department, in collaboration with the ministries, had undertaken and will continue to formulate comprehensive training programs meant for upgrading skills and knowledge of civil servants. For the departmental level, various ministries have also introduced in-house training programs which are meant to improve the quality, performance and productivity of their own staff.

Appropriate technical skills, technological know-how and positive attitudes are required in meeting the demands of the ever-changing environment especially for economic development of Brunei Darussalam. Various technical and vocational training centers are set to cater to future skilled manpower requirements in the technological field such as the Brunei Institute of Technology. The strategy is further pursued through involvement with international bodies such as Regional Centre for Vocational and Technical Education (VOCTECH) and ASEAN-EC Management Centre. Such moves further accelerate the development of the private sector; and it directly encourages citizens to enter the private sector.

The Instillation of Excellent Work Ethics

Similarly, efforts to inculcate positive attitudes and values among civil servants are meant to complement the effective implementation of administrative and management reforms. Such initiative is essential towards creating a culture of excellence whereby the dissemination of work ethics and values is done through various means such as seminar and training. Apart from this, a blueprint on values and work ethics is essential, and for this purpose, a book entitled, *Moral Pillars and Work Ethics of the Public Service of Brunei Darussalam*, was published.

Launched in October 1996, the book identified eleven values, as an ideal set of core values which are universally accepted and to be upheld by any civil servant in performing their duties and responsibilities. The values and work ethics are as follows:

- Clean, honest and trustworthy;
- Efficient, expeditious and accurate;
- Meticulous and values time;
- Knowledgeable, creative and innovative;
- Committed, open and accountable;
- Tolerant, persevering and courteous;
- Productive and competitive;
- Exemplary;
- Solidarity, consultative and participatory;
- Austere; and
- Caring

The identified values and work ethics above are considered as the essential ingredients for the Civil Service of Brunei Darussalam towards creating an efficient, effective and trustworthy organization, as His Majesty's Government aspires to become. Essentially, every government servant is obliged to observe and practice those values so as to bring about the right mindset that gives much emphasis on teamwork; and harmonious relationships which eventually enhance the quality of services rendered to the public.

The Enhancement of Efficiency and Effectiveness in the Administrative and Management Entity

To further accelerate the achievement of the objective of optimizing the use of manpower, the Civil Service Review (CSR) Program was introduced in 1990. Until at present, the program emphasized in reviewing areas such as organizational structure, systems and procedures, processes' performance and planning. The implementation of the program has resulted in government departments continuing their endeavors in search of improvement and streamlining of various areas.

Through this CSR program, there is a need to place a much greater emphasis on the *bottom-line* so as to ensure the cost-effectivity of the civil service operations, as well as the need to change some of the present procedures which are widely felt to be dysfunctional. Such requirements are essential to bring about a major shift in the civil service, and to make it more dynamic and resilient in a rapidly changing climate.

In line with its main aim to improve efficiency, effectiveness and quality of management of the civil service, the CSR program is used to spearhead continuous administrative and management improvements throughout the civil service. The introduction of this Program is a clear indication that enhancement of quality and productivity remains to be the main agenda of the civil service. The implementation may be seen incremental, but the efforts and initiatives that have been undertaken in recent years had produced some significant developments in the management and administration of the civil service.

In order to formalize and ensure on-going implementation of reform activities, the Civil Service Review Committee was set up with its membership comprising senior level administrators. The roles and responsibilities of this Committee are to hold the civil service accountable in implementing the CSR program in government ministries and departments. With the purpose of improving the quality of the civil service by giving the utmost importance in the provision of good and services to the community and to accommodate the public's grievances and complaints, the Public Relations Committee was established.

One of the reform agenda of the Civil Service Review Committee is the reorganization or restructuring of agencies. Not only it allows for the optimal use of resources, but also for greater adaptability to changing environment. Some key Ministries and Departments are involved in this exercise which led to the revamping of the structure, such as the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources; the Department of Immigration and Registration; and Royal Brunei Police Force. There is also a strong tendency towards the devolution of responsibilities and decentralization which is aimed at enhancing greater accountability within the civil service.

It is also imperative that, a significant number of agencies was successful in introducing quality improvement programs or projects within their respective ministries/departments, such as the formation of Action Teams, Quality Control Circles and various committees which were geared towards better administration and management of the Brunei Darussalam's Civil Service. A mechanism of showcasing successfully-implemented CSR projects was also set up and proved to be beneficial to the identified audiences. The mechanism is intended to promote the sharing of ideas among government agencies and to bring about innovativeness within the Civil Service.

The Enhancement of Quality of Service Delivery

The Government of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam has put greater emphasis on the enhancement of quality of service delivery aimed at increasing customer satisfaction. This initiative focused on client-oriented services meant to fulfill the following objectives :

- Improve delivery of service;
- Improve efficiency and effectiveness of government administration;
- Enhance managerial effectiveness; and
- Increase government revenue.

In trying to achieve such objectives, appropriate mechanisms need to be identified as to bring about positive change in the mindset of the civil servants. Aimed at improving the

quality of service delivery, the Civil Service Excellence Award was introduced whereby the considerable impact is identifiable.

In response to the public's expectation of high quality in the delivery of services, the civil service, where appropriate, pursue a regular review of current operating and administrative systems, procedures and processes towards improvement and modernization. As such, various ministries and departments are working on their own procedures and processes to meet the common goals of improving and upgrading services rendered to customers. For example, the Immigration Department has recently embarked on a Computerised Immigration Control System which would provide on-line networking information between Department headquarters and numerous Immigration Control points at the border. As expected, this system will provide a comprehensive database for effective monitoring and control migrant workers. This system is intended to link up with the Labour Department on the basis of complementary work areas such as in the issuance of labor quota, employment pass, work permits, etc.

One of the obvious impact of introducing the Civil Service Excellence Award is the fostering of culture of innovation. The Government has and will continue to encourage its agencies to introduce and implement new ideas and innovations so as to ensure greater performance of the Civil Service. Through this Award, most innovations did bring about improvement to the Civil Service such as reduction in cost, time savings, increase in output, quality enhancement and increased customer satisfaction. For instance, the project entitled *Strive for excellence*, submitted by the Survey Department of the Ministry of Development received the Silver Award in 1998. Besides improved work procedure, the Survey Department also received an international recognition through the certification of ISO 9001. Such forms of recognition play a significant contribution in the enhancement of performance and productivity in the civil service. Considering that the response from government agencies have been overwhelming, the Award is one of the main events during the Civil Service Day.

Judging from the projects submitted for the Award, it is justifiable to say that there were considerable efforts made by several departments to reduce waiting and processing time. As a result of improved systems and procedures, several government departments such as the Hospital's Outpatient and Pharmacy Section; and the Post Office Department, as well as Land Transport department, opened and maintained their respective service and counters outside of office hours, so as to accommodate the public.

Similarly, with the globalization process and borderless economy, no organization can survive without satisfying customers' needs and expectations. The capability and capacity of the civil service agencies to produce and deliver high quality and efficient service to the general public and customers continues to be an area of concern. Thus, the provision of customer-oriented services by government departments continue to be the main thrust of reform endeavors in the civil service. Hence, there is a conscious move or effort to understand the customers' need and to continuously upgrade service standards towards not only fulfilling customers' expectations, but also beyond such expectations. In other words, there is an obligation to strive towards pleasing the customers.

The need for fundamental shifts in the attitude and behavior of civil servants toward providing customer-care service is one critical feature. However, the launching of nationwide *Courtesy Campaign* in 1990 did promote the trend towards customer-care in the provision of services. Improvements identified include the enhancement of the level of comfort and basic

facilities provided to the customers as exemplified by, among others the Ministry of Health through their Outpatient Section; and the efforts made by the Post Office Department in increasing the number of stamp-sale outlets in several areas which are accessible to customers.

As more government departments become more sensitive to their customers, further initiative to provide customer-oriented services takes the form of a written pledge to the customers known as "*Tekad Pemedulian Orang Ramai*" (TPOR) or client charter. It is intended to provide transparent services to the customers, therefore ensuring government agencies to be more sensitive to, responsive and pro-active in fulfilling customers' needs and expectations. TPOR plays a significant part as Brunei Darussalam is embarking on its vision to develop the country to become a Service Hub for Trade and Tourism (SHuTT) by the year 2003.

Considering its intention, several government ministries and departments have demonstrated a great deal of commitment in introducing their respective TPOR such as the Prime Minister's Office, the Public Service Department, the Management Services Department, the Immigration and Registration Department, the Telecommunication Department and so on. With its printed guidelines, the Management Services Department of the Prime Minister's Office is responsible in assisting ministries and departments in their effort to implement TPOR.

In overseeing the implementation of TPOR or client charter, whereby it stipulates that every government department should provide commendable and efficient service to their clients, whether within Ministries, departments or with the public themselves. Therefore anyone who has experienced (a) service from any government department that does not seem to fulfill the charter set up by His Majesty's Government is welcome to take one's complaints to the Management Services Department. This ensures the smooth running of the machinery of the government departments.

As required, each government department has to set up notices of TPOR or the charter and ensure it is easily accessible to the public, so they are well informed of the department's services required by the public. Acts of alleged rudeness and substandard services from the staff could also be taken up with the Management Services Department. However, the Management Services Department has also advised those who have filed complaints to try to settle them first with the departments concerned before submitting them to the Department.

Wider Applications of Information Technology

The accelerating expansion of computer technology and the increasing demand for information have triggered the rapid diffusion of infocommunication. With the eyes on electronic government and electronic commercial services within Brunei Darussalam and to the rest of the world, the Government of His Majesty, the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam will continue to provide significant commitment on the development of telecommunications infrastructure.

With such scenario, the development of information technology in the public service has been more apparent and ministries/departments appreciate and employ IT applications for improved performance, productivity and efficiency. The government plan to draw a major IT development program for public and private sectors which is purportedly to prepare Brunei Darussalam towards the 21st century.

Our national vision of developing and realizing Brunei Darussalam as a service hub for trade and tourism requires our infrastructure to have global interconnectivity by bringing the country into a new and exciting era of infocommunication. Our ability to interconnect to the global trading community and to all the major ports and airports will help Brunei Darussalam to realize its vision as a service hub for trade and tourism especially in the context of the BIMP-EAGA community.

Upon the completion of RAGAM 21 (Rangkaian Global Aliran Multi Media) by September 1999, it will ensure the continuation of the development of BICIIG (Brunei Info-Communication Infrastructure Interacting Globally) telecommunication infrastructure. With this in mind, Brunei Darussalam will have a high performance network infrastructure that will be able to meet the demand of multimedia services, electronic government and electronic commercial services within Brunei Darussalam and to the rest of the world, thereby boosting and securing Brunei's role and place in the competitive global economy in the 21st century. The Brunei Telecommunications Department of the Ministry of Communication shares the responsibility for turning the vision into reality.

The concept of government on-line is now a reality in Brunei Darussalam where many government agencies are now providing information on home pages on the Internet through the BruNet. The BruNet service which provides access to the Internet will continue to be upgraded. Through the BruNet, information on BruNet Darussalam is made available. Through this advance of telecommunications technologies, Brunei Darussalam is able to bridge the limitation of time and distance, thus will have fast and direct access to the major trading centers and the means of doing business is evolving at a very rapid rate.

In turning the vision into reality, besides the development of the Brunei Information Infrastructure, the government also needs to pursue some of the strategies focused on macro impact such as:

- (a) IT courses/subjects may complement the educational system whereby it can generate better employment opportunities for the children of the future. Followed by a well-coordinated training programs, trained people, both in the public and private sectors, can contribute to improve efficiency and productivity in the country.
- (b) The enhancement of productivity and effectiveness of government operations as well as to improve the level and range of government services to the public may justify the needs to have a Civil Service Networking (CISNet) program within the government sector.

Public Service Towards 21st Century

As the main thrust of the Brunei Darussalam's Civil Service towards the 21st century, the establishment of a well-defined vision is essential, especially in providing focus and direction. For this purpose, a vision entitled Civil Service Towards the 21st Century was formulated. It essentially focuses on policy, organizational structures and organizational behavior. The vision, aimed at enhancing quality and excellence in the civil service, gives much emphasis on commitment, quality, effectiveness, excellence and ethics.

In formulating the vision into a reality, and to ensure commitment as well as active participation of all civil servants, a steering committee comprising of Permanent Secretaries was formed. The responsibility of this Committee is to identify, discuss issues and develop further strategies in revitalizing the civil service of Brunei Darussalam.

Conclusion

In addressing the needs for the development programs and anticipating the challenges arising from globalization and the wider application of information technology, the government is committed to bring about a paradigm shift and mindset changes in the system of management and work culture in the civil service. Greater emphasis is given towards enhancing performance, productivity and quality of the civil service so as to adequately accommodate the public and the private sectors' requirement. Hence, continuous improvement and modernization in the civil service is inevitable, so as to respond positively to changing environment, and importantly, to prepare Brunei Darussalam's Civil Service for the 21st Century.