

Brief

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Paper 1:

Decentralization and Partnership with the Public sector: Reform Strategy in the Civil Service Sector in Bahrain.....

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Introduction

The Civil Service Bureau was established by an Amiri Decree in 1975, and was given the authority to supervise and administer all staffing and administrative affairs in the civil service sector in Bahrain. The Civil service sector consists of a number of Ministries and government organizations whose control is assigned to appointed Ministers and each of these ministries has its own organizational structure and approved budget to perform its duties and responsibilities according to the purpose and objectives of its establishment.

For nearly 30 years Civil Service Bureau continued to centrally administer the operations of all these ministries based on its rules and regulations and approved standards. Though the policy of central administration was found to be effective in maintaining control and uniformity in the sector, however there has always been this problem of bureaucracy and red tape and the feeling of the need for more autonomy in the decision making process.

In the year 2005 there was a change in the overall strategy of Civil Service Bureau, a courageous decision was taken by top management to introduce the Quality ISO system in Civil Service Bureau. This was the first step towards a new era of change and improvement.

Two committees were established based on this change; the Development committee which is the Decision making committee, and the Quality Committee which is made up from directors and Quality Assurance Specialists to discuss necessary changes in procedures and set up the targets and objectives of CSB in the forthcoming years based on the overall CSB Strategies, mission statement and vision.

By the year 2006 CSB had a comprehensive Quality System supported by the Quality Manual and the Operations Procedures, as well as other ancillary systems to follow-up Non conformities and preventive actions as well as feedback mechanism to monitor customer satisfaction and introduce necessary changes to meet their expectations.

The Quality System was just the beginning of the whole story. In the year 2006 Mr. Ahmad A.latif Al Bahar the President of CSB today; visited with other senior staff who accompanied him on his visit, Singapore; which was deemed to be one of the most successful countries in terms of its profound government and economic structures. The visit was concluded by a major decision to implement a previously proposition to go for decentralization.

CSB Milestones for change:

Change in the Civil Service Bureau was viewed by some as a positive move towards better government operations; on the other hand there were others who were not too optimistic of change because it meant a diversion of the methods which they were used to for decades.. This is not a surprise; it happens with any

change; however there was a great need to break the ice, and make those people objecting this change understand why it was made and what benefit it would make to them personally and to the whole sector in general.

First CSB introduced its mission as follows:

To develop the level of Civil Service, to raise the level of employee productivity and ability, and to ensure justice and equity in the treatment of Employees

The vision of CSB was introduced as follows :

To be a pioneer, excelling in providing services and management consultancy to the civil service.

And the following values were introduced

- **Embracing rules and regulations**
- **Justice fairness and equal opportunities.**
- **Belongingness**
- **Professionalism**
- **Quality and Excellence**
- **Transparency**
- **Integrity, honesty and impartiality**
- **Participation in Decision making**
- **Team work**
- **Initiative and Creativity**
- **Motivation and Protection**

Given the above CSB Strategy was agreed upon as follows:

- ▶ **Seek to minimize the amount of routine administrative work we undertake through the process of Decentralization and automation.**
- ▶ **Refocus our activities on value added consultative services to the government sector, centered on improving government efficiency, effectiveness and quality.**
- ▶ **Adapt a leading role in modeling and promoting strategic management practices within government organizations.**
- ▶ **Promote a human resource development culture within government organizations based upon the twin principles of competence and merit.**
- ▶ **Facilitate and support a culture of quality within government activities.**



Kingdom of Bahrain CIVIL SERVICE BUREAU

OUR MISSION

Is to develop the level of the Civil Service, to raise the levels of employee productivity and ability and to ensure justice and equality in the treatment of employees.

OUR VISION

Is to be a pioneer, excelling in providing services and management consultancy to the Civil Service.

OUR VALUES

Embracing rules and regulations: our rules and regulations are the source and support of our decisions.

Justice, fairness and equal opportunities: we demonstrate the principles of justice and fairness, providing equal opportunity for all.

Belongingness: we develop the feeling of belongingness and commitment to the organization.

Professionalism: we train our employees in the development of their professional skills and encourage them towards self-improvement.

Quality and excellence: we aim to continuously improve the performance of the organization and exceed our customers' expectations.

Transparency: we work honestly, objectively and provide accurate, appropriate information as and when required.

Integrity, honesty and impartiality: we work with integrity, undertaking our responsibilities and executing them honestly and impartially.

Participation in decision-making: we encourage all employees to participate in operational and strategic decision-making and in setting the organization's objectives.

Teamwork: we encourage a one team spirit and work to enhance it.

Initiative and creativity: we seek new creative ideas, to improve our methods and procedures of accomplishing work.

Motivation and appreciation: we motivate and appreciate employees and reward them for distinctive achievements.

Strategies

- ▶ Seek to minimize the amount of routine administrative work we undertake through a process of decentralization and automation.
- ▶ Refocus our activities on value added consultative services to the Government sector, centered on improving Government efficiency, effectiveness and quality.
- ▶ Adopt a leading role in modelling and promoting strategic management practices within Government organizations.
- ▶ Promote a human resource development culture within the Government Organizations based upon the twin principles of competence and merit.
- ▶ Facilitate and support a culture of quality within Government activities.

Action Plans

Setting mission, vision, values and CSB strategies was just the first step towards government change; there were a lot of other things that needed to be considered in the whole process; People who constituted the most important element of the whole change process; resources that needed to be enhanced to meet the new requirements; the mentality of customers and their expectations that needed to be involved in the whole process, and the work methods and processes that needed to be reviewed to conform with the new requirements.

In the past all operations including recruitment, promotions, transfers, reassignments, incentives, and other payroll activities were fully performed by CSB staff and very little was assigned to the concerned ministries and government organizations. In 2005 a decision was taken to introduce Oracle new Human Resource Management Information System in CSB; the so called "HOrison". The new system was able to establish a greater link with all ministries and government organizations. Most services are now sent to CSB electronically through the "workflow" process and CSB is now able to review these services and approve them at much less time than previously spent prior to the introduction of the workflow system. In addition there were some services that were fully decentralized and the ministries are now able to perform these services without reference to CSB; based on CSB approved standards and procedures.

This was made easier because of the new flow charts that establish the relationship between the various directorates in CSB and clearly show the processes within each directorate as seen in the attachment No. 1 .

The next stage was to make sure those future activities to be performed by government organizations either fully or partially need to be scrutinized against profound law, regulations, and standards. Should these exist the role of CSB would gradually change from being custodian to being consultative; following two years of ongoing discussions regarding CSB rules and regulations within CSB and outside CSB with the parliament and the other concerned government bodies; the new Civil Service law was passed on 30 July 2006. This together with the explanatory statement will pave the way towards deeper involvement of the ministries in the implementation of Civil service processes and activities. The law covered the necessary framework for allocating responsibilities and obligations amongst all parties; be it the civil service bureau, the ministries and the employees.

As an additional tool necessary for the supervision of these organizations; the financial auditing bureau was established according to a royal decree; one of the main duties of this bureau is to audit the ministries and government organizations and to report on any discrepancies or violations noted against the law, rules and standards. This of course made the role of CSB towards decentralization much easier.

Given all of the above; there is still much to be done to meet future challenges. One of these is to widen the use of electronic systems as opposed to paper work; the other is further reduce the number of days needed to perform the services that were not fully decentralized to government organizations; this is an additional reduction to a previously made reduction by CSB management by more than 25% to the previously approved standard days.

CSB will now go for a new re engineering policy to review all services and cut off all unnecessary steps to enhance such reduction and to support better quality work.

Conclusion and Outcome:

No matter how much change we can make to meet the demands of the forthcoming era of Human resource development; we will still be confronted with more and more obstacles; and the real challenge is to keep ourselves updated with such demand; being able to exchange the experiences of others will be an additional dimension towards more successful movements; as we have seen in the example of Singapore; we can also see similar examples in other countries; Decentralization may not be perceived by all strategic thinkers as a useful tool for success in the private sector; as it all depends on the culture; the nature of services provided by the sector within each country; and the previous successful or unsuccessful experiences of these countries in this area. In the Civil Service sector in Bahrain a distinction was clearly established between the type of services

that could be fully decentralized and the other type of services that can be partially decentralized; the tool and mechanism to follow up post implementation is also necessary; otherwise such decentralization would turn to be a tool for inappropriate and unfair treatment of employees; the transparency of all actions must be a pre requisite prior to decentralization; and the accountability of all regardless of their status or position must also be part of the system to ensure successful movements in this direction. In some countries which I have visited I noted reluctance towards any forms of decentralization. I did not find this surprising because of the infrastructure of the government sector in these countries which did not support the implementation of such policies; in fact some of them outlined that they did try a moderate form of partial decentralization and they turned to be unsuccessful. In Bahrain the will and dedication of the government makes this mission much easier; There is a great focus on efficiency and speed of services; this coupled with the government strategy of E-government will smoothly pave the way towards more partnership within the public sector to meet not only the strategies of the civil service sector but also the overall strategies of the Kingdom of Bahrain.