Re-forming Public Administration

The experience of the Palestinian National Authority

eurecna

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Towards the renovation of the Public Administration

The Palestinian National Plan (2011-2013) set six strategic objectives aimed at ensuring a more efficient, effective, transparent, accountable and responsive government.

One of these objectives pursued the streamlining and the modernization of the public administration in order to become more responsive to the growing demands of the people and, at the same time, more open to the overall economic development.

Before 2011, a first wave of renovation in the Palestinian administration took place by involving the improvement of organizational performances, the modernization of **administrative** processes, the strengthening of IT systems and, last but not least, the investment on human capital.

Complementary donor activities boosted a second wave of public administration reform by providing focused support in the modernization of some specific sectors. While this process brought some positive outcomes, it was unable to tackle the renovation of the administrative system from a holistic perspective.

Tackling the organizational grassroots

Indeed, a comprehensive process of renovation could only be accomplished if it started from the organizational and administrative foundations, namely:

- the Legal Framework(Civil Service Law No.4 of 1998, amended in 2005) which identified the categories of jobs and employees and defined civil service management procedures. While Civil Service Law was relatively detailed in some issues, it was not clearly regulating others – as it was not up-to-date.

- the Institutional Setting which was quite centralized. With the creation of the General Personnel Council (GPC) in 1998, a central governmental entity was settled to pursue the strategic objectives of the Palestinian government in the area of civil service development. Through the different core directorates and support units, the GPC coordinates the management of human resources at various levels. So far the Human Resource Management (HRM) policies developed by the GPC have shown to be unable to fully address the development of the civil service in Palestine in short, medium and long term perspectives.

The Project: supporting the Civil Service Reform in the WestBank in Gaza

In September 2013, Eurecna was awarded the EU project "Technical Assistance to support the Civil Service Reform in the West Bank and Gaza" EuropeAid/133978/C/SER/PS. The project was implemented between November 2013 and May 2016 in consortium with British Council (UK) and with the support of Bena (Palestine).

The project aimed at supporting the efforts of Palestinian administration to modernize and streamline its structure and organization. In particular, the project addressed the development of a professional and impartial civil service working within an organizational culture, in which responsiveness to citizens' needs was the beacon principle.

Actions realized

Policy framework document for Human Resource Management in civil service development in Palestine

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The policy framework document presents assessment of the situation, problem analysis and main directions of development in key policy areas for the modernization of civil service:

- Organisation design;
- HR Planning;
- Job classification;
- Recruitment and promotion;
- Performance Appraisal;
- Training system of civil servants;
- Management of civil service.

New Civil Service Law

The new draft of Civil Service Law provides a revised legislative framework for the civil service.

The new norms are on:

- Principles of the civil service;
- Performance appraisal system;
- HR Development system for civil servants;
- Regulation on official missions;
- Disciplinary procedures;
- Consolidation of previous legal acts.

Development of a Performance Appraisal System

The new approach to performance appraisal includes:

- Tasks defined on an annual basis for civil servants;
- Self-evaluation of civil servants;
- Dialogue between employee and direct supervisor;
- Evaluation of achieved results;
- Evaluation of core competences;
- New performance appraisal forms;
- New concept of performance appraisal system, which was developed during a series of workshops and discussions. The new procedures were piloted in several directorates of the GPC.
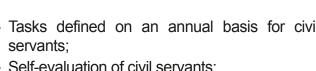
First national training strategy of civil service
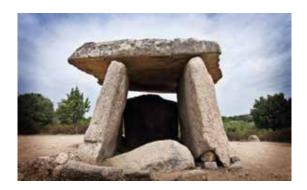
The National Training Strategy includes :

General principles and objectives of the CS training system:

- Responsibilities of the institutions;
- Key stages of the Training Cycle Management;
- Strategic directions for development of training institutions and training programs;
- Priorities of trainings for next 3 years.

The National Training Strategy is based on training needs analysis of different professional groups of the civil service. The training needs were also analyzed in specialized groups of the civil service in sectors of health, education, public works and agriculture.

Reforming the architectural structure of Public Administration in Palestine

Dolmen is the first architectural structure built by mankind during the Neolithic age. It usually consists of two or more vertical megaliths supporting a large flat horizontal capstone. Dolmens are characterized by an essential structure, functional to the purpose of protecting the "sacred" place: the burial chamber.

Machiavelli is one of the first political theorists to conceive an architectural structure for administering public affairs during the Modern Age. That structure consisted of two or more groups of subordinates committed to the national cause of supporting the management of the State. Public administration, in Machiavelli's thought, should have been an essential structure, functional to the purpose of protecting the "sacred" place: state's affairs.

Throughout history, architecture and public administration have sprung from the same human need: organizing physical and social space where mankind lives.

Nowadays, the intervention in the (re)structuring of the organizational backbone of social affairs appears increasingly challenging, given the high level of fragmentation and inter-dependence that complex societies are experiencing.

For this reason, when approaching the (re)forming of a solid Palestinian administrative architecture, we have firstly intervened on the fortification of the structural elements of the system. In other words, we worked on the pillars supporting the capstone: the new draft of civil service law (1st component) as well as the policy development in civil service (2nd component).

The most important novelty for the civil service system in Palestine is a clear regulation on conditions for the training of civil servants and the revision of the performance appraisal procedure. The policy development spanned from gap analysis of the existing civil service system in Palestine, to the identification of the main problem areas and issues in need of conceptual solutions.

Once the pillars were fixed, the reinforcement of the capstone followed straightforwardly: that involved the strengthening of the capacity building of the human resources function in the ministries of the Palestinian Authority and the enhancement of the HRM/HRD policies and practices.

The intervention on the (re)structuring of the Palestinian Administration backbone had a positive impact on the core of State's affairs and in particular in the reinforcement of its efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability and responsiveness.

Going from Human Resources Management to Human Resources Development means shifting the focus of HR Management from mere administration of the employed cadres towards professionalism and personal growth. This has, inter alia, include the following activities:

- the promotion of individual skills development through training (1.474 participants involved);
- keeping a transparent database of jobs and employees across the Civil Service (CS);
- improving ICT supports for HR management and handling vacancies;
- recruiting and retaining the most talented young graduates;
- planning careers within the CS to motivate the best resources;
- promoting individual skills development;
- making available professional training programs;
- introducing an interactive performance appraisal system;
- deciding awards and promotions on the basis of merit and performance, free of political influence;
- ensuring internal coherence and full mobility within the CS;
- spearheading a culture of organisational management and continuous improvement.

Main publications developed througout the project:

1. Draft Law on Civil Service
2. Manual on training needs assessment
3. Administrative Auditor's Procedural Manual
4. Training and development procedures
5. Manual on Performance appraisal procedures
4. GPC&EU Project results
6. "To be honest"- integrity in civil service (HendrickBrunning)
9. Job classification and job descriptions
10. Job Classification manual

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"This project is geared towards preparing the civil service to become one of the key state building forces in Palestine. It is in line with the General Personnel Council's Strategic Plan and the13th Government programme – "Establishing the State: Ending the Occupation". By supporting such initiatives, the EU is manifesting its role in State building in Palestine."

H.E Mousa Abu Zaid
Chairman of the GPC

"The good civil service system is one that allows people to develop and to use their talent, their creativity and knowledge for benefit of whole society. I don't believe in bureaucratic hierarchies taken from military services. Modern administration shall be flexible. There shall be space for freedom and inspiration to open doors for new ideas and development. It is important for new country like Palestine."

Baiba Petersone
Team Leader of the EU project

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