

Promotion of Decentralization and Personnel Management in Nepal

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Abstract

This paper reviews the literature regarding the historical background of Nepalese Administration; summarizes about the situation of present public service system, especially in district level. A case study focusing on the decentralization and local governance is presented. The importance of establishing the local public service system cannot be undermined for the reason that public employees being dispatched to districts and villages by the central government have not been able to fulfill the local needs. The lack of comprehensive development policy widens the gap between central and rural areas. To fill up the gap between the regions, administration decentralization is of high import. There are many problems and obstacles in achieving the objective of good governance and participatory democracy. In this connection the role of civil servant becomes important in achieving the goal. How government staffs at the village level view the institutional arrangement of governance; their views on resource management; and their relations with local leaders, social partners, and their operating backgrounds, directly influence the quality of governance. Devolution of political power and development authority already took place. However, one important element of decentralization, which is the human resources, shifted nominally. To realize real devolution, public service system should be first localized and the power of the local authority over it should be decentralized.

Introduction

Nepal became a federal democratic republic country in principle but not quite as a federal state in its truest sense as it remains on the exploring phase in terms of geographic shape, size, and even functioning based on a federal state criteria. In ousting its monarchical form of government, all political parties joined hand and decided to hold an election for a constitutional assembly. An elected constitutional assembly, with 601 members, is working to draft a new constitution. The assembly created 11 thematic committees. Among them is a committee responsible for restructuring the state. The said committee is responsible primarily to address the layers of the government. The committee members agreed to have 3 layers of government, namely, the central government (national), the regional governments (state), and the local governments (village). However, political parties failed to reached decisive consensus on some of the specifics in this matter, thus, they are yet to determine the number and boarder of the regional and local government.

The importance of establishing the local public service system cannot be undermined for the reason that public employees being dispatched to districts and villages by the central government have not been able to fulfill the local needs. In addition, the lack of comprehensive development policy widens the gap between central and

Table 1 Power shift image from Centre to Local governance in 1999

Central Government	Political power →	Local Government
	Development budget and responsibility →	
	Human resource ×	

rural areas. To fill up the gap between the regions, administration decentralization is of high import.

This paper will discuss the issue of decentralization and local governance in terms of local capacity. It is worthy to note that there are undergoing studies with regards to governance relationship and local human resource development in the light of existing institutional arrangement of governance in village level which is the lowest tire of the government. The existing bodies of local governance — the Village Development Committees (VDCs) and the Municipalities and District Development committees (DDC) — were created by parliament in 1992 (Krishna 2004). There are 75 districts in the country and an equal number of District Councils and Committees. DDCs and VDCs are responsible for the development of their areas. The Local Self-Governance Act of 1999 provides a basis for the devolution of political power, development authority, and budgeting responsibilities to the local bodies. However, it fails to decentralize the aspect of human resources.

At present, the main focus of these local bodies is on delivering the goods and services at the local level. They are responsible for gathering information from their respective areas, planning activities, plan implementation, and monitoring the same. It is still debatable whether the existing legal framework is enough for achieving an appropriate balance between the local authorities and central government agencies. The proper balance is essential for utilization of the scarce resources, consolidation of democratization process, and people participation in governance. There are many problems and obstacles in achieving the objective of good governance and participatory democracy. In this connection the role of civil servant becomes important in achieving the goal. How government staffs at the village level view the institutional arrangement of governance; their views on resource management; and their relations with local leaders, social partners, and their operating backgrounds, directly influence the quality of governance. As mentioned earlier, devolution of political power and development authority already took place. However, one important element of decentralization, which is the human resources, shifted nominally.

1. Historical Background of Nepalese Administration

Modern history of Nepalese civil service dates back to 1770 when Nepal was united from smaller princely states. King and the royal palace enjoyed all the rights in appointing civil servants. During these times, the courtiers, their off-springs, and relatives were mainly the beneficiaries of all the important roles of a civil servant. In various branches of civil service like Finance, Foreign Service, Law, and so on, these courtiers were easily appointed to the position because they were the ones

with access to education. However, situation changed a lot after the first revolution in Nepal during 1950. The revolution resulted to Rana oligarchy being overthrown. Since then and after the establishment of the Public Service Commission of Nepal in 1951, common Nepalese, too, gained access and rose as prominent civil servants. Free access to education helped the common Nepalese achieve this feat. To understand the Nepalese public service, one must go over the various administrative changes the former underwent through different period.

Kirata Administrative System

During these times, the central administration consists of the King, Ministers, Council of State, and Central level administrative apparatus. The King runs the entire administration of the country from his Royal palace (D. R. Regmi, 1969). The Royal palace serves as the central secretariat and has influence through the entire territory of the ancient Nepal's Kirata Kingdom. It works as the nerve centre and hub of administrative and political activities. The king is the head of the state as well as the government, exercising all executive, legislative, and judicial powers. In addition, the King controls the entire socio-cultural and religious affairs of the society. Kirata rulers take keen interest in the welfare of the people. The mythological King Sirijang¹ prays to *Ningwaphuma*² to provide him with wisdom and enlightenment in order to work for the welfare and prosperity of the people.

Kirata King Patukhad³ undertook several public welfare activities such as construction of roads, temples, rest house, and development of market areas, among others (Tika Ram Sharma, 2031 VS). The Kirata rulers had a Council of State called *Chumlung* that played an important role in the Kirata administrative system. It was composed of the king, ministers, high-level army officers, and two other members elected by the people (Iman Sing Chemjong, 1961). Hence, the council presented a mixed model consisting of politicians, army officers, and people's representatives. Presumably, the king was its chairman. Its major functions were:

- To provide information to the king for making decisions on major state issues;
- To formulate policies on different aspects of national life;
- To enact rules and regulations.

The Kirata administrative system was largely based on the principle of local autonomy. As stated in the Kirata rules, the functional jurisdiction of central administration covered mainly defense and foreign affairs. These state policies were quite comprehensive and they amply testify to the fact that the Kirata rulers took keen interest on administration and social affairs. Under the Kirata administration, military services and local autonomy system existed. However, the available source materials do not throw enough light on whether they were elected, selected or nominated.

Lichhavi Administrative System

The Kirata dynasty in Nepal was followed by the Lichhavis who ruled Nepal from the first century A. D. to 880 A. D. There was the compulsion for the Lichhavis to develop fairly a large administrative infrastructure both at central and local lev-

els. In fact, Lichhavi Nepal had a well-organized administrative system throughout the kingdom (Jagdish Chandra Regmi, 2035 VS). In this era, Nepal was under the dictatorship of the Lichhavi King. The King was a dictator exercising legislative, executive, judicial, and military powers. During his dictatorship, many considered it as a benevolent dictatorship for two reasons: first, the dictatorship was dedicated to the promotion of the welfare of the people and, second, the Lichhavi rulers ruled the country in accordance with the law based on the Hindu religious scriptures. Hence, the rule of law was the cornerstone of the Lichhavi administration. The royal charters, decrees, and laws were highly respected by all, including government servants. The king himself used to warn and punish those government servants who violated them. Lichhavi King had a Principal Officer and his Assistant of Royal Palace. Whenever the king happened to be weak or incapable, they used to exercise real authority in the name of their master and as such only those having the confidence of the king could be appointed in their respective positions. Their appointment also used to be stated in the inscription for public information.

All the high level officials were presumably appointed by the king himself while the lower level government servants were presumably appointed by the officials themselves. The local staffs appointed the Custom Officer and Security officer of Tistung Area⁴. Moreover, the government servants and officials' Term of Office depended at the discretion of the king. No wonder that the government servants were called *Rajapadapajibi*.⁵

Malla Administrative System

By the middle of 8th century A. D., the once renowned and powerful rule of the Lichhavi dynasty, which ushered in the golden period in Nepalese history, started to crumble. The Lichhavi policy of decentralizing considerable powers at the local level gradually made most of the central level offices and army organizations redundant and irrelevant. This led to the reduction of the latter's number, thereby, making the central government militarily weak. In turn, this motivated the feudal lords at the distant parts of the country to rule independently.

When the Malla era⁶ started, some Malla kings exercised their sovereign authority directly by themselves at their own discretion. Such kings were not only the heads of the state but also of government exercising all executive, legislative, judicial and military powers. They were omnipotent in all state affairs. Such style of exercising sovereign authority by the king was called one man's rule. However there was also the system of dual rule. In this form, the king's brothers, sons, nephews, uncles, and even father used to exercise state powers as joint rulers (Dhanabajra Bajracharya and Tek Bahadur Shrestha, 2035 VS).

The Major functional areas of the government during these periods were as follows.

- Maintenance of law and order,
- Defense system
- Collection of revenues
- Construction and maintenance works

- Foreign affairs.

Hence some sort of central level administrative organizations presumably did exist to perform all those functions. Each administrative organization or department must have been under the control of a minister. The Malla administration of medieval Nepal was undoubtedly somewhat simple in form and smaller in size in comparison to those of the Lichhavi administration. Based on largely limited monarchy, the Malla polity had given democratic flavour to administrative set up with people's voice having much weight and importance.

Pre-Rana administrative system

The conquest of Nepal Valley by Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1769 A. D. is the starting point of pre-Rana period (1769–1846 A. D.) in Nepal's history. A prudent ruler of the then tiny state of Gorkha, Prithvi Narayan Shah was able to become the illustrious monarch of 'Greater Nepal' encompassing *tarai*, hills, valleys, and mountains by dint of his sagacity, exceptional courage, and spartan determination. The unification of Nepal was beset with the basic problem of administering the conquered territories due to diversity in language, cultures, traditions, ethnic characteristics, among others. In fact, although Nepal was unified politically, these basic diverse strands had to be woven systematically in a politico-socio-economic national pattern to generate strength and unity.

The government then was run by principal officers that include a Prime Minister, Ministers, and officers appointed in 12 other posts. They were appointed by the king himself performing the role of Chief Executive and were responsible to him. Their tenure of office was obviously at his pleasure and discretion. The red seal (*lalmohar*) introduced by Prithvi Narayan Shah was an instrument to legalize and validate all the decisions of the king including the appointment, confirmation, and dismissal of government officials. However, the lower level officials were appointed by the principal officers of the state. No fixed norms in personnel administration had been developed. Family background, dedication, skill and valor in the battles, political expediency, linkage system, experience, and moral integrity were some of the factors influencing the personnel administration. There was no difference between civil and military services. Just as several higher positions in the civil service were occupied by military personnel, so as the civil service personnel — from ministers to treasurers — had to lead the war in the battles. Corruption was indeed unknown especially at the higher levels of administrative hierarchy (Mahesh Chandra Regmi, 1979).

Rana administrative system

Rana Era started from 1846 to 1951; the first Rana prime minister was Jang Bahadur Rana. He created an unprecedented peculiar polity, suited to his own interest and that of his family. The Rana personnel administration had to manage two types of the personnel: (1) Members of the Rana oligarchy, and (2) ordinary civil servants. The members of the Rana oligarchy were the Rana Family members called 'Rollwalas' who are included in the 'roll of succession', which in turn regulated their

Table 2 personnel administration and their functions

Offices	Functions
Muluki Adda	Looking after the civil service administration.
Kitab khana	Maintenance of the records of all civil and military personnel, Certifying for the payment of salary.
Hajiri Goshwara	Taking note of attendance of government servants, Report prepare about job performance by the government servants and submission to the Maharaja Prime minister.
Drabya Kosh	Dealing with pension and provident fund of military personnel.
Darshanbet	Collection of especial levies from army personnel when appointed.

appointments, promotions, etc. The final authority for the recruitment, transfer, promotion, and dismissal of all government employees was reserved to the Maharaja Prime Minister himself. Reason and logic were not considered at all in the personnel administrative system. During the later phase of the Ranaism, pay scale was determined on the basis of educational qualification of civil servants (Bhim Bahadur Pandey, 2042 VS). During the early period of Ranaism, the government functionaries used to be assigned lands officially called *Jagir* in lieu of their salary. Chandra Shamsher⁷ started paying partly in cash, and Juddha Shamsher⁸ introduced payment of salary in cash. The office hours were fixed for 10 AM to 4 PM during the time of Bhim Shamsher⁹. Similarly, Chandra Shamsher announced every Sunday the government holiday. The personnel administrative system developed by the Ranas was feudalistic in nature and was geared largely to fulfill the interest of the ruling families. The central level offices involved in personnel administration and their functions are listed in Table 2.

In Rana period, only some aristocracies and well-wishers of Rana dynasty could access the public service. Ordinary people were left frustrated. To respond to this, the then government started "Application Bureau" for recruiting capable person by open competition. For the first time, public service system was established for land administration, collection of land revenue, maintenance of law and order, and dispensation of justice.

2. Situation of Present Public Service System

Nepal Public Service Commission (PSC) was established on 15 June 1951. In 1952, an administrative reform commission was constituted to streamline the public service but remained on ad hoc basis. The Public Service was formalized with the passage of the Public Service Act of 1975 and the Public Service Rules of 1975. After the historic popular movement of 1989, an Interim government was formed headed by Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. The Interim Government, in its policy guide-line, stated that pressure from no quarter shall be brought to bear upon the PSC in order to enable it to carry out its task of ensuring equal opportunity for all the Nepalese citizens to enter the public service according to their merits and without any

Table 3 Layers of the government in different period

1951–1990 Royal period	1990–2007 Democratic period	2007–till now Interim period	May 10, 2010 (After new constitution)
His Majesty of the Government	His Majesty of the Government	Government of Nepal	Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal
Zone	↓	↓	State/Province
District	District	District	↓
City/Village	City/Village	City/Village	City/Greater Village
Ward	Ward	Ward	Ward

discrimination. At the same time, steps would be taken to do away with such anomalies like nepotism and favoritism that result in undesirable and irregular appointment, transfer and promotion of the employees (Annual Report PSC).

During the said interim period, the Constitutional Reform Commission drew up the 1990 Constitution of Nepal and was put into effect in November 9, 1990. Part IV, Article 101 of this Constitution set up a PSC consisting of a Chairman and other members as may be required. The interim constitution of Nepal (2007) envisaged the PSC as an independent constitutional body. Because of this, it is expected that the operationalization of the PSC will take place without any political interference. However, given the practices prevalent in Nepal, it is difficult to achieve this by mere mentioning it in the provisions of constitution of Nepal. Almost at all levels of Nepalese public service, favoritism is being practiced based on proximity to political parties. Nepotism and kinship are the other instances that help to provide appointments while sidelining meritorious candidates. PSC has presently five regional and nine zonal offices throughout Nepal. Regional and zonal offices merely functions as regulatory bodies without any say in making decisions. The public service system is broadly classified into technical and non-technical areas. Public servants for Economic Policy, Engineering Service, Agriculture, Health, Legal Service, Foreign Service, General Administration, Forestry, and Education are selected based on these two broad categories. An anomaly in Nepalese public service relates with geographic capital-centric decision-making. For example, public servants appointed in Tarai region are generally selected from Kathmandu and they are unfamiliar with local language and customs. Moreover, they have difficulty in maintaining rapport with representatives elected in local bodies. This led to a demand that public servants in the region must have some kind of proximity or affinity with the region.

Politically, Nepal is presently divided into fourteen zones. Zonal representatives are appointed politically. Most of the public servants including the Chief District Officer (CDO), Local Development Officer (LDO), and heads of regional and zonal branches of various other services function under the politically appointed zonal officers. This has made the public servants vulnerable to political pressures. Appointment of zonal officers through PSC would have prevented this. As all other officers are appointed through politically neutral PSC, they would have resisted

political pressure under politically neutral administrator.

PSC is itself a constitutional body as the organizational design of the Commission is specified by the constitution. Nepalese constitution does not fix the number of the members. In Article 101 of the Constitution, Nepal shall have a PSC consisting of a Chairman and other members as necessary. At present, under the constitutional provision of Article 101, the Commission is composed of a full time Chairman and five other members. All members of the board including Chairman are full time office holders. All the decisions and policy formulations regarding the Commission are made by the Commission itself. For example, finalization of examination, preparation of questions, selection of examiners, and recommendations of candidates selected through examinations are done by the Commission. The Commission meets frequently and at least twice a week on a regular basis. Each member is assigned with the responsibilities of supervising the functions of one division of the Secretariat of the PSC as a link person between the Commission and its Secretariat. The Secretary, appointed by the Government of Nepal, is the executive head of the Commission. Presently, the Commission is providing the following advice to the Government.

- On matters relating to the laws defining the terms and conditions of the public service.
- On the principles to be observed while appointing or promoting to any public service posts, or while taking departmental action against any of its incumbents.
- On the suitability of the candidate for inter-cadre transfer or for inducement into the public service from non-government services.
- On the permanent transfer or promotion from a post requiring no consultation with the commission to one which does.
- On the matter of taking punitive measures against any public servant.
- Matters relating to the departmental punishment to any public servant.

Later revisions to the initial legislation covered issues as promotion and retirement. In May 1998, the Public Service Act was amended by Parliament as follows.

- Protection of public servants against arbitrary transfer
- Changes in the system of promotion and performance evaluation
- A provision that wage-based and contract based staff are to be eliminated
- A provision that deputation and temporary assignments are not to be more than three months
- Provisions regarding annual salary increment retirement, pensions, life insurance and training for public servants.

The amendment is intended to instill confidence among the public service cadre and to enable them to carry out their duties with greater transparency and without political interference (The Public Service 1998). The present public service in Nepal

is governed by the present Constitution (The Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007). The Nepal interim constitution of 2007 has designated the PSC as an independent constitutional body. The Commission is involved in selecting meritorious candidates required by the government for various vacant posts of the public service. The continuity of PSC has never been hindered since its establishment. As per Article 125 of the Constitution, there shall be a PSC Nepal. The Commission consists of a Chairman and Members as may be required. The Chairman and members of PSC are appointed for 6 years. Although Nepal's public sector is not large in size, its productivity is low. A number of studies describe the public service as being politicized, inefficient, and ineffective.

The Administrative Reform Commission (ARC) report of 1992 noted that "the morale and incentive of the public service is at low ebb". According to the report, the decision making process is "riddled with too many layers," the accountability of the public service "has not yet been determined and established," and authority has not been properly delegated. Any effort at increasing the productivity of Nepal's public service will have to grapple with three fundamental problems: political instability, political interference, and an inadequate remuneration and benefits package. During the past ten years, Nepal has had ten different governments. During this period, hundreds of parliament members were able to become government ministers. This high rate of turnover has profound implications for lower level bureaucracy. The Nepalese public service includes ten services: Administrative Service; Agriculture Service; Economic; Planning and Statistical Service; Education Service; Engineering Service; Forest Service; Health Service; Judicial Service; Miscellaneous Service; and Parliamentary Service. It does not include the military and police forces or public enterprises. The total size of Nepal's public service is 94,105 people, or approximately 0.57 public servants per hundred populations. This is relatively small by developing country standards. In 2005–2006, personnel expenditures comprise approximately 17.71 percent of the total Government budget. Breakdown of the personnel expenditures are as follows: General administration is 13.83 percent; Revenue and Economic Administration is 0.91 percent; Economic Administration and Planning is 0.90 percent; Administration of Justice is at 0.84 percent; and Foreign Services is pegged at 1.23 percent. Therefore, the total public service expenditure can be derived to be as 17.71 percent of the total government expenditure (Economic Survey 2006/07).

Among the functions of Public Service Commission is to conduct examinations for the selection of suitable candidates to be appointed to various public service posts. Government cannot make decision for permanent appointment to any position in the public service, which carries the benefit of pension, except in consultation with the PSC. The government is required to consult with PSC on matters concerning the laws relating to the conditions of service of the public service personnel; and the general principles to be followed in the course of appointment, promotion and departmental action concerning the public service or positions.

Likewise, matters concerning the suitability of any candidate for appointment to a public service position for a period more than six months; matters concerning

the suitability of any candidate for transfer or promotion from one service to another within the public service or any other government service to the public service; the permanent transfer or promotion of any employee, working in any position of an organization which is not required to consult with the Commission on matters of appointment, to any position for which consultation with the Commission is required; and matters relating to departmental actions against any public servant are within the purview of PSC. According to the regulations, the PSC shall render a report of its accomplishments and performance to the Prime Minister every year. The Prime Minister shall cause such report to be laid before Parliament. The central secretariat of the commission has three divisions and each division consists of three sections. The three divisions are as follows:

- (a) Examination and Recommendation Division
- (b) Policy-Regulation, Complaint-Advice, Administration and Inspection Division
- (c) Testing Methodology, Research, Curriculum and Publication Division

Beside the Central Secretariat, PSC started to decentralize its function through its various Zonal Offices. The Zonal Offices of the Commission were established in 1971. In accordance with the plan for strengthening PSC 1973, regional offices of the Commission were also established in December 1973. There are five regional directorates; Eastern Regional Directorate in *Dhankuta*; Mid-Regional Directorate in *Kathmandu*; Western Regional Directorate in *Pokhara*; Mid-Western Development Region in *Birendranagar*; and Far Western Development Region in *Dipayal*. Among the important functions of PSC are Advertisement of Vacancies; Curriculum Development; Question Moderation; Examination Procedures; Coding; Copy Checking; Result Publication; Interview; and Recommendation; among others. Apart from the constitutional responsibility and following the PSC (Working Procedure) Act of 1991, the Commission frames rules and issues directives; performs such other tasks as may be necessary deciding on complaints of the candidates relating to promotion; offers advice on matters relating to departmental action; supervise the specified working procedure in cases where delegated authority was exercised; and determines educational qualification for different posts.

Existing Legal Arrangements

The PSC is a Constitutional body; hence its establishment, composition, scope, duties, functions and authorities are specified in the Constitution of Nepal. The existing constitutional provisions cover the following arrangements.

- Establishment of the PSC and provisions of Chairman and members.
- Criteria for the appointment, removal and suspension, and terms and conditions of service of chairman and members of the PSC.
- Functions, duties and authorities of the PSC.
- Provision of delegation of authority by PSC to its own official and government organizations.
- Provision of promulgation of laws and by laws for the elaboration of func-

tions, duties and work procedures of the PSC.

Beside the constitution, there are other two main legal provisions regarding the functions of the PSC,

- (a) PSC (Work Procedures) Act of 1991
- (b) PSC (Work Procedures) Rules of 1993.

Process of Selection

The PSC conducts examinations for selection of candidates as per the PSC (Work Procedure) Act of 1991 using one or more methods of selection through open competitive written and practical examination, selection, interview, and any other methods adopted by the Commission (PSC, 2006). Each of the main activities of the PSC is further described in this section in terms of a sequential order so as to illustrate how the work flow of the PSC takes place within the PSC:

Written Examination: This is obviously the main activity of the PSC. There are number of sub activities within it to be performed in a sequential order. It starts from the action for preparation of question paper and ends with the supply of scores of written test to the interview section on the result day. Details are provided in Table 4 (A)

Scoring of objective test component of the written test: The present written test includes a component of multiple-answer question. The scoring of this part of the written test is performed by the PSC officials themselves. The sequential order of sub-activities to be performed under this activity is presented in Table 4 (B)

Interview: Interview is only a part of total examination system. The sequential order of sub-activities to be performed for interview are presented in Table 4 (C)

In order to carry out the selection process, the Commission publishes vacancy announcement for the concerned candidates in its weekly bulletins published every Wednesday as well as in the "Gorkhapatra", a national daily. The Commission has also adopted an annual calendar of operation which incorporates all the phases' details of the selection process. The commission adopts a system of "multi-blindness" in order to maintain fairness and impartiality in the selection. In this system, setting and moderation of questions, checking of answer sheets, conduct of interviews, as well as result of written examinations and interviews are carried out in a manner that officials involved are kept in anonymity to each other. The PSC maintains a pool of experts and specialists for the purpose of selection. They are assigned to the specific selection tasks in a confidential manner. The PSC also initiates the process of screening for certain posts where numbers of candidates are high. The candidates have to get through the preliminary examination in order to appear in the main examination. At present, the commission has a chairman and five members. The Chairman presides over the meetings of the Commission, co-ordinates the activities assigned to its members, and issues policy directives, as it may deem necessary. The Secretary is the Executive head of the Commission Secretariat. In the

Table 4 Process of conducting written exam, scoring and interview

Process of Conducting Written Examination (A)	Process of Scoring Objective Test (B)	Process of Conducting Interview (C)
Collection of subject wise number of application forms.	Collection of coded answer sheets from the written examination section of the PSC	Preparation of bio data of candidates to be interviewed
Preparation of question papers	Solving controversies (if any) on the questions or answers	Collect police reports on moral character of the candidates
Moderation of question paper	Preparation of a scoring sheet	Form interview board and invite experts from the approved list (PSC) member + experts + representative from the concerned organization
Determine of exam centre and required manpower for conducting exam	Checking of the answer sheets by the first examiner	Conducting of interview
Conduct of written test	Rechecking of the answer sheets by the second examiner	Collect individual scores from each interview board member and keep them in sealed envelopes
Collection of answer papers	Preparation of a mark sheet and submission to the written examination section in sealed envelope.	Collect scores on written test and prepare total scoring
First coding of the answer papers		Prepare merit list of the candidates and select the number of successful candidates according to merit order
Second coding of the answer papers		
Checking/scoring of the answer papers		Select the successful candidates on merit basis depending upon the number of vacancies
Tabulation of the scores and preparation of merit list		Seek approval of the commission on the merit list
Approval and publication of result of written test		Publish the final result (merit list)
Supply of written test scores to the interview section on the result day.		Recommend successful candidates to the government of Nepal for appointment

Source: PSC, Central Office, Kathmandu, Nepal

Central Secretariat, there are three important divisions through which the entire function of the Commission is carried out. They are: Examination & Recommendation Division; Policy, Regulation, Complaints, Advice and Inspection Division; and Testing Methodology, Curriculum & Publication Division.

3. Administrative Reforms

There were five administrative reform commissions from 1952 to 2008. In that year, the first of a series of administrative reform commissions was constituted to

streamline the Public Service. The passage of a Public Service Act of 1975 and the introduction Public Service Rules in 1975 formalized the Public Service. A revised Public Service Act and Public Service Rules were introduced in 1993 and were further amended by the Parliament in 1993. Over the years, a number of studies described the Public Service as being politicized, inefficient and ineffective. A 1992 Administrative Reform Commission made 116 main recommendations aimed at making the Public Service more efficient, results oriented, accountable, motivated, and capable. Key proposals include the implementation of a 15-year development plan and 5-year rolling plan; reduction in the number of ministers from 21 to 18; downsizing of the bureaucracy; placement of certain functions under autonomous authority; and the devolution of power to local bodies. Most of the recommendations have not been implemented and other several problems have gotten worse. The number of ministries, for example, increased to accommodate and maintain the unity within the party or with coalition partners. The bureaucracy has not been streamlined. While many laws moving towards decentralization have been enacted and elections have been held for local bodies at the village and district levels, not much has been achieved in terms of extending local autonomy as decision making remains very much centralized.

The situation has not improved over the years and in fact several of the problems deepened. In 1998, despite some legislative change, the external funding community expressed its concern about the political nature of the bureaucracy and the lack of action on many of the Reform Commission's recommendations. Many laws including some form of decentralization were proposed in 1998 and elections have been held for local bodies at the village and district levels. However, not much has been achieved in terms of extending local autonomy and decision making remains quite centralized. In 1998, the local self-government bill was finally passed by parliament. By late 1999, the Government indicated its intention to break this cycle of failed initiatives and to pursue a comprehensive reform of the public service. All political parties endorsed the importance of overcoming institutional weaknesses in public sector management as a significant aspect of Nepal's efforts to break out of the poverty trap. To signify top level commitment, the Prime Minister agreed to take an active role in the reform process and to chair the Reform Steering Committee. The extent of decentralization that will result will depend on the Central Government's willingness to delegate authority to a lower level of government. There is substantial scope for devolution of power and authority from the centre, which requires not only new legislation but also effective compliance with legal provisions. At the same time, considerable efforts are needed to strengthen the capacity for policy, program, and project formulation and implementation, at both the central and local levels. Local self-government bill includes political decentralization; however, it failed to include local public service.

The main reasons for the inability to implement the administrative reform commission (ARC) recommendations have been: (a) Lack of political commitment and support to public service reform, (b) Internal resistance to change, (c) Lack of a strong institutional mechanism to initiate and monitor reform measures.

4. Public Service in District Level

There are altogether 75 districts in Nepal. However and due to altitude variations and it being a geographically diverse nation, all districts have their own characteristics. For example; Kathmandu district includes metropolitan city with high population density. In contrast, Manang District in Himalayan region consists only of few villages. Not only the geographical or environmental aspects vary but it also highlights the difference in terms of public service delivery from the government to the local habitants. As previously discussed by this paper, public servants who are responsible to provide service to the people are dispatched from central government. Government of Nepal introduced decentralization through a promulgated act and been revised time and again. It must be noted that all government officials are recruited by PSC. The Ministry of Local Development (MoLD) is responsible for regional development; hence, the ministry dispatches one local development officer (LDO) to every district and one planning and administrative officer if necessary. Both of the above posts are second class officers. Other sections are account, administration, planning, procurement, registration. These dispatch sections are mainly common section in a district development office. All the above post staffs are national public service staffs and maybe transferred in other branches or ministries.

People's participation in development planning process is very nominal because the term for all committee members of local governments has been already considered expired since 2002 but no local election has been held yet for reasons of security and political instability. The most recent local election was held in 1997 and the next one is supposed to be held last 2002. However, the government failed to organize the election and at present, the head of the local administration office is a LDO who is public servant. More recently and after the establishment of new regime, all party members are taking part in various discussions for local development. Political consensus by all party meeting is considered to be important but they are not elected people's representative. The basic local government body is the village, which is directly in contact with the people. Notwithstanding, only one staff from district works for a village and he/she may not be a local habitant, thus, it is very difficult to provide service. The administrative systems still seems to be centric. In a democratic and social-centric era, public service in the district level, as well as village level, should be modern and people centered.

5. A Case Study

This writer did one case study focusing on the decentralization and local governance. There is a need for more conceptual clarity by using common phrases and languages, as people approach it from different perspectives. The distribution of power, authority and resources between citizens and different tiers of government are the focal points in such studies. So, devolution of power, delegation of authority, and distribution of resources are fundamental in understanding the issues of local

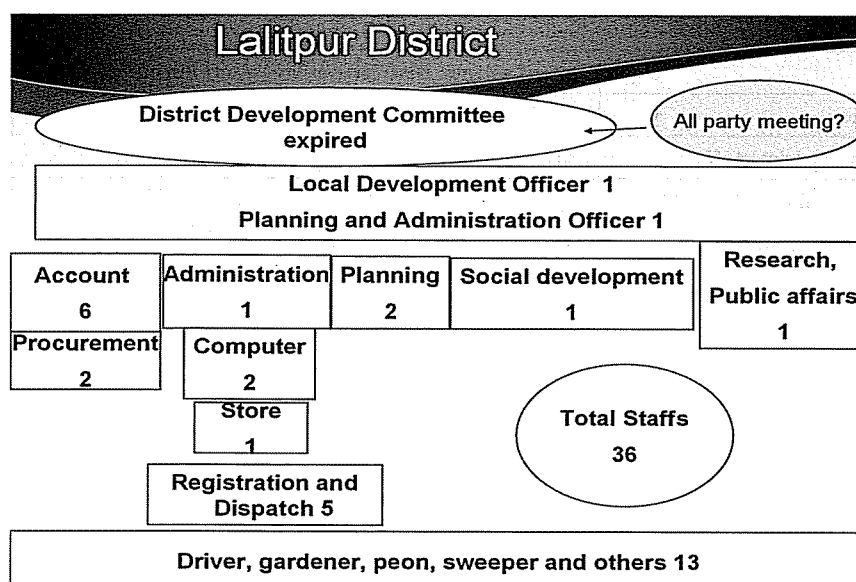
Table 5 Some Facts of Lalitpur District and Parbat District

	Lalitpur District	Parbat District
Region	Capital City	Hilly region
No of District staffs	36	26
No of Villages	41	55
No of VDC staffs	38	50
Villages without staff	3	5
Total population	337785	208209
Health posts	9	10
Sub health posts	29	42
Ayurveda health posts	2	4
Hydropower resource	Central Line distribution	14 megawatt
Tuberculosis	1	—
Collages	29	19
Private Nursing homes	150	—
High Schools	220	62
Junior High Schools	65	34
Primary Schools	180	218

governance. Democratic decentralization may be promoted for a number of reasons. Administrative, fiscal, and political reasons are some of the examples. However, the most often given reason is to bring the government closer to people while enhancing their participation and interaction with local government officer in local affairs. It evokes a new form of relationship between civil society and the local government.

Lalitpur District is located inside the Kathmandu valley and the district head-quarter Patan is situated just 5 kilometers from the capital city, Kathmandu. On the other hand, Parbat District is located in the western region of Nepal. It is a hilly area and a part of Dhawalagiri Zone. The district headquarters of Parbat District is Kusma.

The District Development Committee is headed by a Local Development Officer (LDO) and the Village Development Committee (VDC) has a village secretary. Like LDO, the Village Secretary is also a government employee. Other members in the Village Development Committees are representatives of people elected through a democratic election. Logically, elected representatives should hold more clout in the official structure of Village Development Committees yet the Village Secretary is more instrumental in providing governmental approval to developmental projects in the villages. Similarly, maintaining data, records and managing administrative works are also facilitated by the Village Secretary. In such a condition, the paucity of Village Secretaries in the VDCs is certain to affect various essential developmen-



Source: Author prepared based on the brief introduction of Lalitpur 2007

Figure 1 Organizational Chart of Lalitpur District

tal projects and activities in the areas of education, health, water supply, sanitation and other sectors. Parbat District, located in a hilly region, requires more developmental activities in the sectors of health, water supply, sanitation and so on. Lalitpur District, which is adjacent to the capital city, does not need as much developmental efforts. Even the peripheral villages of Lalitpur District can avail themselves of the health, educational and other facilities present in the district city and the capital city. From this viewpoint, presence of Village Secretary is more essential in the Parbat District than in the Lalitpur District.

The data shows that Parbat District comprises more number of villages (55) than Lalitpur District (41). Similarly, it indicates that more villages in the Parbat District are without VDC staffs or Village Secretaries. This data clearly shows that, presently, more number of staffs is allocated to the urban districts than the rural and hilly districts like Parbat. This is why the districts like Parbat have been very slow in showing marked improvements in the sectors like health, education, energy, sanitation and other areas. Given the more number of villages, the Parbat District requires more health post and sub-health post. Similarly, this district requires more high schools and junior high schools. Nevertheless and because of lack of essential manpower like VDC staffs, Parbat District has less number of health posts and schools. Energy sector is another area that is crucial for economic upliftment of the villages. The data indicates that Parbat District is not connected to central distribution line and is generating 14 megawatt of hydropower locally. For storage and marketing of the agricultural produce, cold storage facilities are essential feature of the villages. However, lack of energy prevents setting up of such cold storages facilities. This, in turn, adversely affects the local and district economy. Most of the

plants generating 14 megawatt are examples of local and governmental joint efforts. With more VDC staffs, it is evident that more such projects can become feasible in the Parbat District.

Present local development policy of the Government of Nepal is lopsided. The government has not been deputizing more staffs/officials to the regions where they are much required. This is because of current policy of appointing centrally. Moreover, geographic capital-centric attitude of the staffs and officials is also somewhat responsible as they want to work in areas/regions with better infrastructure. But, this can be done away with if the government of Nepal locally appoints the village development secretaries rather than selecting them from the central pool. For this, there should be a change in existing policies of Public Service Commission (PSC). Zonal offices of PSC must be empowered to select, appoint, and delegate VDC staffs or Villages Secretaries to the villages. From 1951 when public service system was started in Nepal, various problems already plagued the existing public service system. During this more than half a decade, many researches and studies were held to reform the public service in Nepal including some policy recommendation by foreign aid agency and academic institutions. However, the situation has not improved over the years and, in fact, several of the problems worsened. Legislative changes happened time and again but the political biases, inefficiency, and ineffectiveness still persist. The recommendation states that PSC should be more efficient, results-oriented, accountable, motivated, and capable. In addition, PSC should be non-partisan and fair for all. The change ushered legislatively is equally important but at the same time, PSC should also be systematic, dynamic, and relevant.

Conclusion

Nepal became a federal democratic republican country in May 28, 2008. Notwithstanding, the new government is yet to decide what kind of federalism it will introduce to the nation. Previously under the Royal regime, the government crafts policy and development plan for every five-year. In its' 10th five-year plan, the then government clearly stated that it will promote decentralization for the national development as well as introduce local public service. In the course of implementation of this plan and the onset of the subsequent political administrative instability, Nepal failed to realize many of its visions and goals as set in its plan. The present Constituent Assembly (CA) recently decided that Nepal should be a federal state. So far, various political parties exhibited their own ideas, thus, fails to reach consensus on what model of federalism should be implemented. In the course of the dialogues at CA regarding federalism, the CA has to decide the responsibilities and duties of various government levels. The CA has to set the other levels of government such as state or zone, districts, and village. After which, the CA will fix the range of authority, fiscal resources, and responsibilities of the different levels of government. With these developments, the environment surrounding the public service system in Nepal is changing remarkably. There are several issues that need to be addressed in the Public Service. One of these is the asymmetry between positions and competi-

tions. Also, applicants are required to take pre-test for eligibility check. This discourages potential candidates or students who are studying abroad to show interest in public service. Moreover, Nepal public service is very much centrally-oriented defeating the very core agenda of decentralization. To realize real devolution, public service system should be first localized and the power of the local authority over it should be decentralized.

Notes

- 1 Sirijang was the head of the state and controlling the entire socio cultural and religious affairs of the Kirata Society.
- 2 Supreme and almighty god of Kirata people. King was considered as the representative of God on Earth. King Sirijang is said to have expressed his gratefulness to the Kirata God Ningwhapuma, for making him King.
- 3 Nepal was ruled by 29 Kirata Kings for about 800 years. Patukhad was 28th Kirata King.
- 4 Tistung Deurali is a village development committee in Makwanpur District in the Narayani Zone of southern Nepal, which is the gateway of Kathmandu Valley.
- 5 Those who depended upon the king for their livelihood.
- 6 The Malla Dynasty was the ruling dynasty of Kathmandu Valley in Nepal, from the 1201 to 1769.
- 7 5th Prime Minister of Nepal from the Rana dynasty. He served in this capacity from 27 June 1901 to 26 November 1929.
- 8 7th Prime Minister of Nepal from the Rana dynasty. He served in this capacity from 1 September 1932 to 19 November 1945.
- 9 6th Prime Minister of Nepal from the Rana dynasty. He served in this capacity from 26 November 1929 to 1 September 1932.

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