

Gross National Happiness and Good Governance: Civil Service Reform towards achieving Gross National Happiness

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Abstract:

The Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) has initiated a major Civil Service Reform prior to the establishment of a new constitutional democratic government.

It is the government's mandate to achieve Bhutan's national vision of Gross National Happiness (GNH); that is to ensure the well being and happiness of the people at individual, community, organisational, sectoral and national level.

The Civil Service Reform process aims at maintaining a small, compact and efficient Government to lay a strong foundation for a successful constitutional democracy and to facilitate the development of a strong economy.

The challenge is to design and implement the reform process in such a way that the changes taking place in the government explicitly indicate how they contribute to achieving the well being of the people. The focus is on the quality of service delivery that is to assure optimum utilization of limited resources to provide the highest quality of services to the public.

Part of the reform process is the introduction of the Position Classification System (PCS) with a strong focus on Performance Management. Systems and capacities are being put in place to introduce and manage performance of civil servants in a more comprehensive and consistent way.

Being initiated to form the foundation of Major Civil Service Reform the PCS relates to key aspects of human resource management: Performance Management, Recruitment, Selection and Promotion, Human Resource Development and Remuneration and Benefits. It is based on the performance and professionalism in the Civil Service that is capable of delivering effective services to the people and in meeting the needs of the public administration.

Following, organisational reviews of the government agencies were being carried out to provide an organisational answer to improvement of quality of services.

In these organisational assessments the government agencies were asked to indicate their specific contribution to Gross National Happiness and how they could strengthen their capacities to improve the services they deliver to the public, thus enhancing satisfaction and well being or happiness of the people.

This paper describes how Organisational Development (OD) approach can operationalise Gross National Happiness at organisational level as introduced in the Royal Government of Bhutan.

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Introduction

Till date the Government of Bhutan has been the largest sector in society. The private sector is fairly small and civil society is in its infant stage. Bhutan stands at the threshold of transformational change. It is moving towards a constitutional Monarchy for which the first elections will be held in 2008. The focus of the 10th Five Year Plan, to be adopted by the new government, will be on economic development. The Civil Society Organisations Act is being endorsed by the National Assembly which will allow civil society to grow. The strengthening of the private sector and emergence of civil society sector will further shape and influence the public sector.

In the changing political scenario, a separation between administration and politics has to take place; the reform process in the government aims to strengthen the civil service as an apolitical body that is capable of effectively dealing with the new political set up. To strengthen the democratic process, and ensure good governance, a major task of the government will be to establish sound policies, regulations and systems so that an efficient bureaucracy can complement the new form of government.

As part of ongoing Civil Service reform the Royal Government of Bhutan introduced Organisational Development (OD) as a strategy to strengthen the bureaucracy. OD refers to an organisation's efforts to regularly assess its capacities so that it can take the right decisions and measures to continuously improve performance and service delivery.

The purpose of the OD exercise is to maintain a 'small, compact and efficient' civil service that is able to efficiently deliver the desired quality of services to the public; services that satisfy the needs of the people and contribute to their well being, thus contributing to GNH.

To enhance the quality of services, the OD exercise looks into streamlining mandates and procedures of agencies. Which agency delivers what products and services? Do the agencies deliver the right services? How do agencies and sectors collaborate and coordinate for efficient service delivery? What are the products and services that the government should retain and what to forfeit to the private sector? How can procedures and systems be simplified or streamlined for the public's convenience? And what are the implications for the size and the profile of the civil service to assure quality efficiency? The OD exercise intends to provide answer to these questions.

Another dimension of the OD exercise focuses on the attitude and behavior of civil servants themselves. Motivated civil servants are likely to perform well and deliver high quality of services, thus contributing to the satisfaction and well being of the public. Happiness or well being of the civil servants is an indicator for achieving satisfaction and happiness of the public and thus GNH. It is the mandate of The Royal Civil Service Commission to ensure highly motivated and qualified civil servants who are able to deliver the services demanded by the public.

The organisational reviews carried out by the government agencies addressed key components of the organisations: vision and values, leadership, core business areas, client satisfaction of services, human resources management & development and organisational behavior and culture.

The challenge of the OD exercise is to operationalise the concept of happiness at organisational and government level; in other words, to assure that the services being delivered by the government respond to the demands and needs of the people. The leadership of the government agencies is responsible for the agency's specific contribution to the overall vision of well being through delivery of the products and services. They acknowledge that the motivation and

behavior of the civil servants are key in delivering these services to the recipients and they steer their agencies guided by the nation's vision and values.

The OD exercise offers an opportunity to operationalise the concept of GNH into the day to day functioning and performance of the government agencies. It is considered as a start, further elaboration of key indicators to measure organisational performance against GNH will be needed.

Steering on vision and values

Bhutan, unlike many other countries, is in the unique position of having a national vision and His Majesty the fourth king has indicated that its people are the strongest asset ('what we have is our people'); achieving their well-being is the ultimate purpose.

With this vision in mind, each government organisation is expected to indicate its specific contribution to the well being of the people and how to operationalise GNH. In fact, the government agencies each play their specific role in realising one or more of the four pillars of GNH: socio-economic development, good governance, preservation of culture, and conservation of nature. The organisation's vision explains this specific contribution. In the organisational reviews, all government agencies, at the national and district level, were asked to formulate a vision in which they clearly spelt out their specific contribution to the realisation of GNH.

Some of the visions of organisations in the Royal Government of Bhutan

Dzongkhag (District)

"A stable and self reliant Dzongkhag promoting balanced socio-economic development & gainful employment whilst preserving culture and environment to realize GNH"

Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs

"To be the leading organisation spearheading the efficient functioning of decentralized administration, upholding the principles of democratic governance which ensures maintenance of law and order; preserves and promotes cultural and spiritual values contributing towards the realization of Gross National Happiness (GNH)"

Ministry of Education

"To ensure a learning society with standards of education that is comparable to the International standards and that reflects the unique Bhutanese culture and values in keeping with GNH".

Royal Audit Authority

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Besides steering on the nation's vision, responsive management practice translates the national values of efficiency, effectiveness, professionalism, accountability and transparency as formulated in the RGoB's policy guidelines into organisational functioning and behavior.

Accountability refers to the organisation's capability to set professional standards and delivery of high quality services in line with the expectations and demands of the public. Professionalism refers to the civil servants having the right qualifications, competencies and attitude to perform the tasks. Effectiveness addresses whether the services delivered are the ones that are needed or demanded for. Efficiency refers to how well the organisation is using its resources to deliver the services. Transparency is about having the mechanisms in place that allow insight in the use of public resources.

Values of organisations across RGoB

Dzongkhags

- Professionalism, Team Work and Integrity.

Ministry of Health

- Compassion, Competence, Economy, Equity, Integrity, Professionalism, Quality

Ministry of Information and Communication

- Efficiency, Reliability, Innovation and Creativity

Election Commission of Bhutan

- Independence, Integrity, Professionalism, Transparency, Accountability, Credibility, Equality and Respect

National Land Commission

- Honesty, Integrity, Commitment, Fairness, Respect, Trust and Quality

Core business areas and products & services

As already mentioned, the main focus of the organisational reviews is on the delivery of high quality of services. Following the clarity on vision and values, the core business areas of the agencies were addressed. What is the mandate or core business of the agency or, what is the

added value in terms of products and services the agency delivers? What is it that only the agency can deliver and what can be better provided by other agencies? The government agencies were asked to look beyond the 'territories' of Ministries and Departments/Agencies to identify overlap and duplication, clarify roles and responsibilities and establish mechanisms for improving communication, coordination, planning and alignment of tasks and activities.

Key in this part of the exercise was the shifting focus of service delivery from agency's point of view to the recipient's or client perspective. Government systems and procedures are designed according to the agency's or civil servant's convenience, rather than that of the client or customer. It was acknowledged that client orientation or customer satisfaction should be the guiding principle for designing the service delivery systems and procedures. The concept of 'one window or one stop facility' has been adopted for implementation. It entails a change in organising the services for the convenience of the public and the need for closer coordination and collaboration within and between the government agencies.

Service Standards for Agencies dealing directly with the public

For licensing, security and other Agency specific clearances, a one window approach shall be implemented by the concerned Agencies. The principle behind this system is to ensure that clients do not have to chase after their papers, rather it shall be the responsibility of the Agency to follow-up on the required clearances from within as well as other Agencies in the Government. For example- Environmental Clearance, Security Clearance, Forestry Clearances, Business and Industrial Licenses, Driving Licenses, Land Transactions, etc. *(Excerpt from the OD Report- Strengthening the Bureaucracy, 10th October 2007)*

The other issue being addressed is what products and services have to be delivered by the government agencies and which ones can be corporatized or outsourced or privatised. A number of issues were considered. Due to the increasing capacities in society and the growing unemployment, mainly under the youth, there is scope to hand over products and services to the

private sector. At the same time, the government is shifting its focus on policy development and regulation and is inclined to hand over specific services and implementation activities. The possibility of public-private partnerships is being explored and a framework to be established to facilitate such partnerships.

Outsourcing/Privatisation

There are many functions of Government Agencies that can now be outsourced. The following is a list of generic services undertaken by Government Agencies across the board which shall be outsourced to the private sector, where ever it is feasible:

- Estate management services including cleaning, gardening, security and maintenance of the premises and buildings
- Transportation and logistics including mail service, ticketing, and hotel bookings
- Events management for visitors, seminars, conferences
- Chadis(Preparation for ceremonies, high level meetings, foreign delegation)
- Secretarial and publication services including design, layout, printing and bulk photocopying
- Research and surveys including data collection, data entry and processing
- Translation services
- ICT applications and networks
- Audio visuals and documentations of events (*Excerpt from the OD Report-Strengthening the Bureaucracy, 10th October 2007*)

In line with the above, the reviews address the further decentralization of specific services from national to district level and delegation of responsibility and authority to district levels.

Further Decentralisation to the Dzongkhags/ Gewogs (Districts/ Blocks)

Decentralisation towards full realisation of RGOB's policy for Local Government in Dzongkhags and Gewogs is enshrined in the Constitution and will be fully activated through political reforms in 2008. Some of the services which will be decentralised to the Dzongkhags-

- i) Authority to approve traditional rural house construction by Dzongkhags.
Decentralisation of Land transactions, transfer of inherited properties and issuance of Citizen Identity Cards to Dzongkhags.
- ii) Delegation of more authority from Department of Forest and Department of Roads to the Dzongkhags.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

One way of monitoring the level of satisfaction of the public vis a vis the civil servants and the services they are getting is by introducing mechanisms whereby the public can evaluate the quality of services. In turn, the civil servants must acknowledge and react to the feedback put forth by the public.

An urgent need and immediate measure that can be taken is the establishment of performance indicators for services. For example, this can include:

- promptness indicator: time it takes to deliver a service; to be communicated to customers and right to claim if not (e.g. citizen charter, ombudsman, feedback system)
- efficiency: reduction of red tape to the maximum; customer friendly approach to the service (demand driven rather than supply driven)
- effectiveness: does the customer get the service he/she asked for?
- friendliness: the way the customer is being treated by the civil servant – attitude and behavior of civil servants can be addressed through standards (do's and don'ts), training and capacity development (e.g. front desk training).

Through the OD exercise, and for the first time, all agencies carried out a Customer Satisfaction Survey in which customers or clients were asked to value the services provided by the agencies. Some of the questions or issues raised in these questionnaire were:

Some questions from the CSS questionnaire of the OD Exercise

Mandate

1. The services delivered by this organisation* makes me feel
 1- Very Happy 2- Happy 3- Not so Happy 4- Unhappy 5- Never Happy

2. Organisation* provides all the services it should.
 1- Strongly Agree 2- Agree 3- Disagree 4- Strongly Disagree 5- Don't know

Customer Service

1- Strongly Agree 2- Agree 3- Disagree 4- Strongly Disagree 5- Don't know

3. Organisation* provides services with the highest possible standards.

4. Staff show they care about helping me.

5. Staff have the right knowledge and expertise to deliver the services.

6. Staff work quickly and professionally.

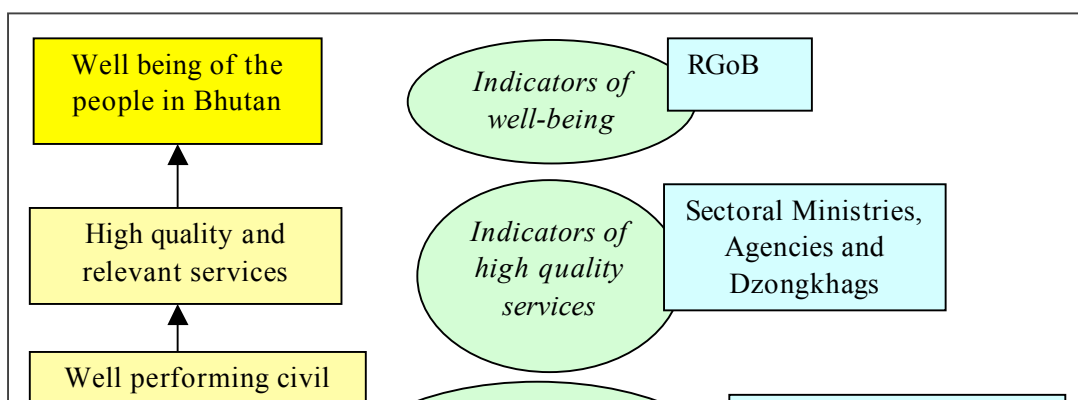
7. Staff deal with customers in a fair and impartial manner.

8. Getting service from organisation* is straightforward and convenient.

The overall outcome of the exercise confirmed the need to improve service delivery, especially general service standards in terms of quality and delivery process and time. The attitude and behavior of the civil servants related to quality of services was addressed as well; efforts have to be made to strengthen client orientation through training of front desk civil servants improving procedures.

Well being of the civil servants

Organisational or government values are being reflected in the behaviors of the civil servants. As mentioned earlier, Performance management has been introduced and job satisfaction and career development, amongst others, are indicators for measuring professional well being at individual and organisational level. The civil reform process focuses on the well being of the civil servants as an indicator for organisations in realising their contribution to GNH.



Well-being at different levels

The Royal Civil Service Commission so far was instrumental in implementing HR issues such as recruitment and promotion of civil servants, It is gradually handing over these responsibilities to the agencies themselves meanwhile moving towards a regulatory body that provides policies and standards for professionalism and well fare in the civil service. In this transition process, performance management is being implemented addressing job satisfaction, career development and personnel welfare as key elements for motivation and well being of the civil servants. If the well being of the civil servants is being addressed, it is likely that they will be motivated to provide the desired services to the public. The organisational reviews are considered as a start; the challenge is to further operationalise the elements that assure motivation and well being of the civil servants.

Leadership

Executives (or leadership) play a key role in effecting organisational performance. They are the critical actors as they bear the final responsibility for the quality of services being delivered by their staff and take the lead in shaping the organisational culture and performance.

The civil service reform focuses primarily on the leadership role in making organisational change and performance part of their management practice and good governance. This is a challenge as the highest level of executives is in charge of the reform process and at the same time is being asked to look critically in the functioning of the government functioning for which

they themselves are responsible. A start is being made to organise conferences and lectures for executives to address organisational development as a tool to strengthen the government agencies towards service delivery and to reflect on the changing scenario in the government in light of the democratization process.

The leaders of the Royal Government can find inspiration in the 4th Druk Gyalpo as a role model of leadership towards achieving GNH.

The 4th Druk Gyalpo is a role model for leadership

What makes King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, one of the “100 top leaders who shape our world” according to the 2006 TIME Magazine’s list? What makes him a role model for leadership? What are his key competencies? Near the top of the list must surely be his visionary and value-driven leadership. He has a clear development vision for his country and has utilised his power to guide his people along this vision and values. This has involved exercising responsible rule during the last 40 years over a population where the low literacy rate and education level could have been exploited by a more unscrupulous leader.

Some observers have commented that the former King Jigme Singye Wangchuck has led his people more in the spirit of Buddha rather than as a worldly King. Indeed, numerous aspects of his leadership, where he has consistently put the country’s interest above his own, could be seen as being in the mould of servant leadership.

Observers have also drawn some parallels between King Jigme Singye Wangchuck’s leadership and that of others whose leadership left a profound mark, such as Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel and Mother Teresa, citing the same selflessness and dedication in combination with a clear focus. Possibly Time Magazine put it more succinctly when, in its profile of King Jigme Singye Wangchuck for its 2006 list of 100 Most Influential persons, it commented “If politicians are inherently suspect because they seem so eager to grab power and so reluctant to surrender it, what does one make of a leader who voluntarily gives up his position by placing his people’s needs before his own?” – (*Excerpt from SNV Magazine- Leadership and Change, February 2007*)

The PCS and Performance Management intend to address right sizing as:

- the right person for the right position
- the right numbers for the given amount of work
- efficient individual and team functioning
- training and capacity development strategy

In line with the above, the right size or Human Resources Management and Development issues in the reform process entails:

- job profiles/job descriptions, numbers and utility of HR to deliver the highest possible standard of products and services in the most efficient way;
- organisational structure indicating clearly the relationship between core business areas, processes and support systems in the organisation;
- Information technology as one of the key indicators in defining number and profiles of staff;
- the organisational structure (organogram) for effectively organising the roles and tasks;
- Required job profiles matching with qualifications, competencies and attitudes of staff referring to the right people for the right jobs and the capacity to obtain them in time;
- Performance management indicators in line with the Position Classification System and linked to the mandate and core business areas;
- Mechanisms such as delegation of responsibility, planning, monitoring and evaluating of the work of individuals and teams in place and operational;
- Feedback mechanisms (horizontal and vertical) in place and implemented;
- Individual and team coaching implemented;
- Training and development based on roles and responsibilities and longer term promotion and career perspective.

Organisational behavior and culture

The culture in the civil service exudes harmony, trust, care, accountability, responsibility, efficiency and professionalism. “Culture is to an organisation what personality is to an individual”, hence the civil service culture must instill the highest standards of ethics.

The RGoB’s policy is to enhance the morale and professionalism of the civil servants and promote integrity in the Civil Service. It is the civil servants who make public policies and make the government systems function; they embody the RGoB’s vision and values in their day to day behaviors and have the potential to create the desired culture; that is, seeing the world through the people’s eyes and their needs all the time. How to create and sustain such an organisational culture was a question addressed in the organisational reviews and needs further elaboration as changing mindsets of the civil servants and the government culture can’t happen over night.

Just to share an example: people are likely to change their behaviors and carry out the tasks and decisions when they are being involved and consulted in the problem analysis and solutions for their own situation. Most people have the desire to contribute to their organisations; it is a matter

of establishing the mechanisms that allow them to do so and thus address the well being of the civil servants. In the OD exercise staff participated in the assessment; in some cases it was the first experience ever that teams collectively reflected on their organisational functioning and discussed how to improve performance.

The Organisation Behaviour Survey (OBS) that was carried out identified the extent to which the staff valued their organisation. The rationale for knowing the opinion of staff is that organisations can know how they are doing and whether changes introduced are producing the desired effect; it is a key tool for gathering information the organisation can use for improvement. The Organisational Behaviour Survey addressed organisational components like: Mandate, Customer Service, Human Resource, Systems and Processes and Organisational Culture. The questions asked were pertaining to the civil servants attitude, perception and behavior and how they contribute to GNH.

The First phase of the Organisational Development Exercise across the Royal Government of Bhutan has been completed. Alongside the OD exercises, sub-committees were formed to complement the OD exercise. A comprehensive research were carried out by the sub-committees to derive substantial information and recommendations on further – Improving the Delivery of Quality Services, Decentralisation, promote Public Private Partnership, enhance Performance Management and Sensitizing Civil Servants on Democracy. The results of the OD exercise and the sub-committees have been submitted to the Government for review and await directives for implementation of the recommendations.

It is anticipated that the OD exercise conducted by the Government will not only allow the agencies to assess their relevance in the face of major political reforms taking place in the country but make the bureaucracy more efficient and effective in meeting the challenges ahead and more importantly make the agencies improve their service delivery to the TSAWA SUM (The King, Country and People), which will ultimately lead to the Happiness of the Bhutanese people.