

Strengthening Performance Capability of Civil Servants in Nepal

Training for Human Resource Development



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Abstract

The public sector in Nepal has always fallen victim to criticisms due to its inability to deliver services as expected. One of the main factors that strengthen the performance capabilities of civil servants is the training provided to them. If effective training opportunities are provided equally to all their performance will become better. The thirteenth plan (FY2070/71-FY2072/73) provides that the 'Training for All' program will be conducted for all civil servants for administrative good governance. The Civil Servants' National Training Policy, 2071 and Directives on Training for All, 2071 also focus on providing need-based training opportunities to all civil servants. However, training opportunities are not being provided in accordance to the existing policies and regulations. This project aims to identify the problems and challenges in the existing system of training for civil servants and how those problems and challenges can be addressed.

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Acronyms

NASC Nepal Administrative Staff College

Executive Summary

Background

A key indicator of good governance is the good performance of government agencies. Government agencies should be effective, efficient, accountable and transparent for this. In order to practice good governance it must be made sure that the human resources recruited into government service are well equipped for service delivery. They should be neutral, competent and impartial and should perform their duties diligently. They should be thoroughly professional and professionalism can only be attained through proper education and training. For this they need to be provided with the required training opportunities, the learnings of which, they can apply in their day-to-day professional lives for effective service delivery. This research aims to find out the problems and lacunae related to training provided to civil servants and give recommendations to tackle those.

Methodology

- The primary source of data for this research are the policies referred and outcome of survey and interviews conducted. The respondents of the questionnaire were 50 Section Officers from 18 public agencies. 10 more officials with similar experience were interviewed. Informal discussions were held with other concerned stakeholders.
- Purposive method of sampling has been applied to identify the respondents of the survey and interviews conducted.
- The secondary source of data include writings of experts, authors, analysts from books, journals, magazines, articles, and other publications in the related field.

Key Findings

- Most respondents attended more than three training in the past five years.

- Training are not provided on the basis of ranks and responsibilities.
- Need identification prior to training is not done in most cases.
- Officials from outside the valley have very less access to training as most training are conducted in the valley
- Pre-Retirement Training is not provided to all retiring officials.
- Training materials are not provided in advance.

Key Recommendations

- Need Based Assessment should be done by conducting a poll annually.
- More training should be held outside Kathmandu Valley so that officials outside the valley, esp. rural areas have easy access.
- NASC should have branch offices in different parts of Nepal.
- Pre-retirement Training should be managed for all retiring officials
- Resource materials should be provided before the training.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Civil service is that division of the government which performs administrative functions and operates to deliver effective service to the general public. According to the Black's Law Dictionary, civil service is the administrative branch of a government and civil servants are the group of people employed by these branches (Garner, 2004).

The civil service has a long history. It can be said that civil service was existent in Nepal even during the time of national unification. However, recruitment, transfer and promotion of civil servants was solely in the hands of the rulers. The present system of civil service in Nepal dates back to 2007 B.S. (1951 AD) (Adhikari, 2014). The modern civil service system of Nepal was institutionalized after the establishment of the Public Service Commission in Nepal on 15 June 1951 A.D. The PSC is an independent constitutional body that has been smoothly functioning since its establishment. The Commission is involved in selecting meritorious candidates required by Government of Nepal for various vacant posts. The civil service was formalized and brought under the legal framework following the promulgation of Civil Service Act, 1956 A.D. (Awasthi & Adhikary, 2012)

Training for Human Resource Development in the Civil Service

For the smooth functioning of any organization it is vital that four resources be managed effectively: money, equipment, information and people (York, 2009) In order to strengthen the performance capabilities of civil servants, it is essential that special attention be given towards the management and development of human resources. Every organization requires human resource that is capable of relentlessly striving towards the achievement of the organizational goals. Therefore, organizations should invest in making their employees more effective in their jobs because when organizations invest in improving the knowledge and skills of employees, the investment is returned in the form of more productive and effective

employees. (York, 2009). To enhance the productivity of employees the following opportunities should be created:

1. Training

Different kinds of training related to the tasks one needs to perform should be provided to employees before they begin their job and on the job too.

2. Skill Development

Organizations should focus on enhancing skills of their employees so that they can deliver better service. Skills can include: writing, oratory, conversational, driving etc. depending upon the nature of job.

3. Research/Innovation

Employees should be involved in research works based on their responsibilities.

4. Performance Development

Performance development of employees should be done by teaching employees about how they can perform their tasks in an efficient and effective manner to get the best results. Techniques such as performance appraisal can be useful in this.

All four of the above mentioned techniques of human resource development are equally important but this research focuses on the aspect of training. Training is the consistent and effective transfer of appropriate knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviours that lead to the achievement of predetermined and specified outcomes. Organizational successes largely depend upon individual commitments and competency of the employees (Gautam, 2013). Competency of employees can be boosted by giving them training based on their nature of work and needs.

The Government of Nepal has been emphasizing on the necessity of training for civil servants. The thirteenth plan (FY2070/71-FY2072/73) provides that the ‘Training for All’ program will be conducted for all civil servants for administrative good governance. The Civil Servants’ National Training Policy, 2071 and Directives on Training for All, 2071 also focus on providing need-based training opportunities to all civil servants. Training for civil

servants are primarily managed by The Ministry of General Administration in collaboration with NASC.

Collaboration of the Ministry of General Administration with NASC

The Ministry of General Administration (MoGA) is that body of the government which regulates and manages the civil service. Along with many other functions, this ministry also looks after the human resource management of civil servants in Nepal. This includes recruitment of civil servants, their mobilization and trainings and workshops for skills enhancement amongst others. Training for civil servants are organized by the NASC. NASC was established with the motive of providing necessary training to the employees of the Government of Nepal and Public Enterprises by identifying measures for enhancing the capability of Nepal's public administration system. One of the major functions of the Ministry of General Administration is the standardization, co-ordination and evaluation of various administrative training programs to be conducted by Government of Nepal which it does in collaboration with NASC.

Rationale behind the research

It is not easy to be recruited in the civil service. The Ministry of General Administration first figures out the number of vacant seats in all government offices and forwards the number to the Public Service Commission which accordingly announces vacancies in government services annually. Civil Servants are recruited after they pass three stages of a fiercely competitive examination. The selection process is well known for being fair and impartial which assures that only the best of the candidates make it through.

Despite the recruitment of excellent personnel, the productivity and service delivery of government agencies have frequently been questioned. One of the main factors that can help in enhancing the productivity of civil servants is the relevant and need based training provided to them. This research was conducted in order to better understand the situation of

training provided to civil servants in Nepal and to provide viable recommendations to the existing problems.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of project are to:

- Review the existing policies related to training of civil servants.
- Interview stakeholders and find out practical challenges related to training of civil servants.
- Identify gaps and lacunae in the existing policies and in practice.
- Provide recommendations to the Ministry of General Administration to promote training for all.

2 Methodology

2.1 Research Questions

Question 1: How often are training opportunities provided to civil servants?

Question 2: Is the nomination process for participants fair?

Question 3: Are training opportunities provided on the basis of rank and responsibilities of officials?

Question 4: Are trainings inclusive?

Question 5: How applicable are learnings through training on the job?

Question 6: Are training materials up to date and sufficient?

Question 7: How do you find the physical facilities of the training centre?

Question 8: What are the indicators to measure the success of a training?

2.2 Research Design

Table 1: Methods used to answer research questions

Research Question	Method Used to Answer Question
Question 1	Questionnaire and key informants interviews
Question 2	Questionnaire and key informants interviews
Question 3	Questionnaire and key informants interviews
Question 4	Questionnaire and key informants interviews
Question 5	Questionnaire and key informants interviews
Question 6	Questionnaire and key informants interviews
Question 7	Questionnaire
Question 8	Questionnaire and key informants interviews

2.3 Instruments

The instruments used to conduct this research were questionnaire for survey and interview schedule for interviews. The instruments were designed by the researcher and reviewed by her supervisor who is an experienced person in the area of this research.

2.4 Sample

Both random and purposive method of sampling have been applied to identify the respondents of the survey and interviews conducted. The questionnaire was distributed amongst Section Officers from different offices who had come to NASC as participants of a training. Amongst them, only officers with experience of five or more years in the civil service were made to fill the questionnaire. Random sampling was done to conduct face to face interviews with ten officials.

2.5 Data Collection

The data collection for this research was done by conducting field research. 50 Section Officers from 18 Public Agencies were given questionnaires to fill. Further, 10 officials with similar experience were interviewed face to face. Informal discussions were held with other concerned stakeholders.

2.6 Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected was analysed by using MS Excel.

2.7 Limitations

The actual topic of the research ‘Strengthening Performance Capability and Effective Mobilization of Civil Servants in Nepal’s Public Administration System’ was very extensive. The three months’ time allocated for the fellowship would not be enough to conduct the research. Therefore, the researched decided to limit the topic to ‘strengthening performance

capability of civil servants'. The research was made more specific by limiting the research area to the aspect of training for strengthening performance capability of civil servants.

3 Results and Discussion

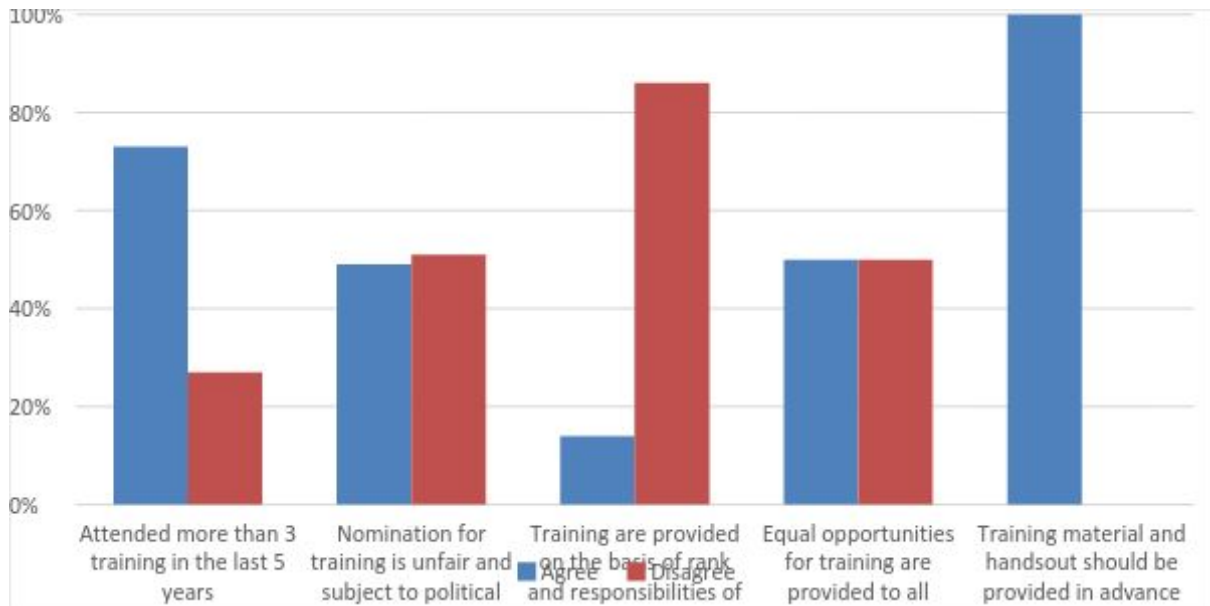


Figure 1: Responses Collected via Field Research

3.1 How often are training opportunities provided to civil servants?

Training for civil servants on various issues take place at NASC round the year. The data collected through the research shows that 73% of the respondents have attended more than three training in the last five years. This means that most government officials have been getting training opportunities frequently which is positive.

However, a large number of retiring civil servants have been deprived of Pre-retirement training opportunity. Pre-retirement Training is the training given to senior civil servants prior to their retirement. Some officials might want to continue their work life after

retirement by establishing a business or doing something else of their interest while some might want to stay at home and completely relax. Pre-retirement training readies them psychologically for any kind of life they might want after retirement. This training helps retiring officials to be prepared and positive towards life after retirement. However, not all retiring officials are provided with this training.

3.2 Is the nomination process of participants for training fair?

For participation in any training, officials must be nominated by their superiors. 49% of the respondents said that the process of nominating employees for training is fair whereas 51% said that the process is unfair and is frequently subjected to political interference, nepotism and favouritism. Respondents seemed keener to participate in training abroad and also mentioned that nomination process is mostly unfair for abroad training.

3.3 Are training opportunities provided on the basis of rank and responsibilities of officials?

Unless the training has relevancy to the area of work the officials are engaged in there is no point of nominating and sending them for training. 86% of the respondents answered that trainings were not given on the basis of the ranks and responsibilities held by them. This leads to less applicability of lessons learnt at the training on the job. Most of the respondents were also of the opinion that they attended training to gain points for promotion rather than to apply their learnings on the job.

3.4 Are training inclusive?

Government offices have been emphasizing on inclusiveness in training and have also been successful in maintaining that to a large extent. The Civil Servants' National Training Policy, 2071 also talks about providing equal training opportunities for all but 50% of the respondents said that equal opportunities are not provided to all.

3.5 How applicable are learnings through training on the job?

Civil servants are not always given training based on the nature of their job due to which the applicability of learnings through training is minimal. Training should always be need based. Before designing a training, it is essential to do a training need assessment to understand the requirements of the officials. However, in most cases, need identification prior to training is not done.

3.6 Are training materials up to date and sufficient?

Contradicting views were received in this question. On one hand, the respondents who were participants of training said that resource materials provided by external facilitators were up to date but those provided by the faculty at NASC were sometimes not updated. This could be because the faculty at NASC has to take classes on the same subject matter repetitively and they sometimes go to class without reviewing the material they prepared long time ago. On the other hand, the NASC staff said that resource materials provided by the faculty is always up to date but resource materials provided by externals are sometimes not updated.

Training materials are provided for all sessions but mostly the distribution of materials is done immediately after the session or even after a few days. All respondents were of the opinion that training materials should be given at least a day in advance of the session so that they can go through the material and prepare for the session before hand. This will also help them engage and interact better in class.

3.7 How do you find the physical facilities of the training centre?

The infrastructure of the training centre is not at its best. The training centre has a hostel of its own but the hostel cannot accommodate all participants during residential training. Due to this many participants from outside the valley have to stay in hotels and the allowance provided by the government for staying in hotel is very less. This discourages participants from outside the Kathmandu valley to attend training in Kathmandu. The Civil Servants'

National Training Policy, 2071 aims to make training accessible to civil servants from all parts of Nepal but accommodation problem is creating hindrances in this.

Also, the usage of modern technology during sessions is limited only to powerpoint presentations. Internet based training such as e-training, virtual classroom, tele-training etc. are not used. Respondents blamed long hours of power-cut and slow internet service for this.

3.8 What are the indicators to measure the success of a training?

Feedback forms are provided to participants of training after the completion of every training. First of all, the success of a training is measured by evaluating the feedback forms filled by the participants. Secondly, the performance of an employee after returning from a training is observed by their superiors to see the effectiveness of the training.

4 Recommendations

Based on the results from the research the following recommendations are made:

- Special attention should be given to make training accessible to all. Nominations should not be subjected to outside interference. There should be provision of departmental action against the person who is nominated without meeting the criteria set.
- More training should be held outside Kathmandu Valley so that officials outside the valley, esp. rural areas have easy access. At present, the NASC does not have any branch offices outside the valley. If branch office of NASC are established on regional level then this problem can be mitigated to a large extent.
- Resource materials should be provided before the training so that participants can prepare for the sessions in advance and can contribute more during the sessions.
- A confidential complaint mechanism should be developed in all offices through which officials who feel that nominations are unfair can lodge their complaint anonymously and actions can be taken against the offenders after proper investigation.
- Need based assessment should always be done. After completion of a training, participants should be able to apply the learnings in their day-to-day work.
- A poll should be conducted annually to identify the training requirements of the employees.
- Pre-Retirement Training should be managed for all retiring officials.
- Use of modern technologies during training should be encouraged to make sessions more interesting.

5 References

Books and Journals:

- Bryan A. Garner (Ed.), 2004. Black's Law Dictionary.
- Ganga Dutta Awasthi & Rabindra Adhikary, December 2012. Changes in Nepalese Civil Service After the Adoption of Inclusive Policy and Reform Measures. Available at:
http://www.cedepnepal.com.np/www.cedepnepal.com.np/web_resources/files/201503011219056076.pdf
- Janak Raj Gautam, 2013, Management Training to Government Auditors: A Case Study, Prashasan.
- Kenneth M. York, 2009. Applied Human Resource Management: Strategic Issues and Experiential Exercises.
- Suresh Adhikari, 2014, Governance System

Policies:

- The thirteenth plan (FY2070/71-FY2072/73)
- National Training Policy, 2071
- Directives on Training for All, 2071

6 Appendices

6.1 Questionnaire for participants of training

Name:

Office:

Rank:

1. When did you join the civil service?

2. How many trainings have you attended in the past 5 years?
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. More than 3

3. Name the trainings you attended in the past 5 years.

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- 4. Do you think everyone is provided with equal opportunities for trainings?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

- 5. Do you think the nomination process for participants is fair?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

- 6. Are the trainings inclusive?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

- 7. Are trainings interactive?
 - a. Yes
 - b. Fairly
 - c. No

- 8. Which technique of training do you like the most?
 - a. Lecture only
 - b. Interactive Lecture
 - c. Practical Role play/ Exercise
 - d. Other (Please Specify)

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9. Are trainings provided on the basis of ranks and responsibilities of the civil servants?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

10. Have you been able to apply your learnings through trainings in your job?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Other (Please Specify)

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11. Have trainings helped you in enhancing your skills?
- a. Yes

If yes, what kind of skills, please specify:

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b. No

12. How would you rate the applicability of learnings of trainings undertaken? (on a scale of 1-5)

- a. 1
- b. 2
- c. 3
- d. 4
- e. 5

13. Do you think the training materials provided during trainings are sufficient and relevant?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Other (Please Specify)

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14. Are training materials up to date?

- a. Yes
- b. Sometimes they are not
- c. No

15. How would you rate the quality of training materials provided? (on a scale of 1-5)

- a. 1
- b. 2
- c. 3
- d. 4
- e. 5

16. Knowledge of resource persons on subject matter is generally:

- a. Poor
- b. Not very good
- c. Good
- d. Excellent

17. Are resource persons able to clarify the issues covered?

- a. Yes
- b. Sometimes
- c. No

18. The time of each session was:

- a. Lengthy
- b. Adequate
- c. Short

19. The physical facilities or the training center are:

- a. Excellent
- b. Very good
- c. Good
- d. Poor

20. Which aspects of trainings do you think need to be improved?

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21. What suggestions would you like to give to resource persons?

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22. What suggestions would you like to give to the training institute?

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23. Any other suggestion on issues related to trainings provided to Civil Servants:

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6.2 Interview Schedule for Officials from NASC

1. On what basis are topics for training decided?
2. What is the process of selecting participants?
3. What kind of interesting/innovative techniques are applied during training?
4. To which technique are the participants most responsive?
5. What are the indicators to measure the success of a training?
6. Budget for training? Lack of budget or not?
7. Have civil servants been provided with training as per their post and responsibilities or not?
8. How are training made inclusive?
9. How reliable is the need assessment done for trainings?
10. How often are training materials updated?