

Attributes and Skills Needed for Senior Public Administrators in Sri Lanka: Application of Value Creating Model

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Abstract: New Public Management (NPM) requires a different mindset, and possibly different skills, in senior civil servants. In this paper, utilizing Sri Lanka as a case study, we examine the necessary skills and attributes needed for senior civil servants for NPM initiatives. The framework used is that of the Value Creating Model which was developed in Australia. The data was collected from in-person interviews with Ministers, ex-Ministers and senior civil servants in Sri Lanka. The Australian model was found to be applicable, but, if Sri Lanka is to effectively implement NPM, private sector experience, international exposure, change management experience, academic qualifications and information technology knowledge were perceived to be necessary for senior civil servants.

Introduction

Arising as a response to economic, institutional and ideological changes (Jensen, 1998), public sector reform has been a common agenda item for governments of various complexions and differing levels of economic development for more than two decades (Common, 1998). Despite the fact that these reforms have been variously labelled as managerialism (Pollitt, 1993), market-based public administration (Lan and Rosenbloom, 1992), entrepreneurial government (Osborne and Gaebler, 1993) and new public management (Hood, 1991; Kearney and Hays, 1998), the direction of the reforms is remarkably similar. The new paradigm, popularized under the term

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“New Public Management” (NPM), has been far-reaching and has been heralded as responsible for some of the most important developments in western governmental systems (Farnham, Horton, Barlow and Hondeghem, 1996). Such reforms are also being introduced into developing and emerging economies such as Ghana (Larbi, 1998), Sri Lanka (Samaratunge, 1999 & 2003; Samaratunge and Bennington, 2002), Malaysia (Common, 1999) and Hong Kong (Cheung, 1996); the extent and type of reform varying from country to country. Despite some limitations of the universal applicability of NPM (Sozen and Shaw 2002), the evidence shows that the model has enjoyed a great deal of international appeal (Samaratunge and Hughes 2001).

The rationale behind NPM varies, too. Although it has been suggested that NPM is a politically neutral movement concerned with improving efficiency, effectiveness and accountability (Hood, 1991), at least in the case of Australia, the impetus for reform was to enhance the capacity of governments to implement their agendas (Dawkins, 1995). It was introduced to achieve an improvement in “the internal processes and external relations of a public sector suffering from a number of widely acknowledged sources and related energy deficiencies” (Painter, 1998, p. 45). Presumably, this would be a relatively true reflection of the motivation of many other governments, although this is not to detract from the impact of diminishing economic resources with which to provide services, increasing demands for services, and general public dissatisfaction (albeit at least partially generated by politicians) with the “bureaucracy” (Morley and Vilkinas, 1997).

In developing countries, the primary motivation for introducing NPM may be somewhat different in that there may be demands for change from funding agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Manning, 2001; Turner 2001; Turner and Hulme, 1997), notwithstanding the fact that many governments in developing countries have also been searching for new ways of improving public sector efficiency in order to adapt to the new economic and political environment (Wint and Williams 2002).

In western countries, public sector reforms have included the separation of policy and service delivery; privatization - or at least commercialization - of some functions (Bennington and Cummane, 1997); the development of more business-like practices and attitudes; a focus on outputs and outcomes, rather than inputs; the abolition of monopolies, increased competition and a stronger focus on efficiency; and the application of user-pays principles (Hughes, 2003). From a different context, Wescott states that the reforms in Africa have sought “to improve both core functions (e.g. revenue generation, financial management, personnel management, policy formulation, etc.), as well as sector specific policy, management and organisation” (1999, p. 146).

In general, the reform processes have required public managers to do more with less (Boston, Martin, Pallot and Walsh, 1996) and in the context of lesser conditions of employment; loss of tenure for departmental secretaries (Maor, 1999; Weller and Wana, 1997; Zimmerman, 1997), longer hours, less control over their lives and lower morale (Maddock and Morgan, 1998). Coupled with these factors, public managers have also become subject to increasing criticism (Seidle, 1995; Weller and Wood, 1999). There is skepticism about their capacity to deliver services efficiently and effectively (Boyne, 1996), and, according to Behn (1995), in reference to the American context, and to Polidano (1998), in reference to the British, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand contexts, there is distrust in the relationship between politicians and civil servants. One possible reason for this may possibly be the gap between the new requirements and the perceived skills and attributes of those in senior civil service positions. Alternatively, the problem may be more systemic - one which involves not only the senior civil servants and their staff but the skills and attributes of their political masters (and their opposition in government), together with the higher expectations of the members of the societies within which they operate. Even though little has been reported about the people, the civil service managers, who have to make the transitions to new public management work (Barlow, Farnham, Horton and Ridley, 1996), as changing the skills and attributes of civil servants is possibly easier to achieve than changing other parts of the public system, this paper will only address the skills and attributes required of senior civil servants.

Skills of new public managers

Hughes has stated that the new model of public management "will totally change the way the public sector operates" (2003, p. 22). It has been argued that new public sector managers need to see their roles differently (Maor and Jones, 1999) and that they need to acquire new skills and knowledge to be effective (Savoie, 1992). In response to the paradigm shifts in British local government, Smith (1996a) found that managers had to develop new concepts and values and new mindsets about the public service; they required new skills in the "social practice of management", and they needed to develop their staff and to engage them in the change processes. Maximizing discretion at the lowest levels to achieve efficiencies has become a characteristic of many of the reforms, meaning that many more people at many more levels can and should make decisions, thus creating major implications for skill requirements and work systems (Kouzes, Loffler, Klages and Korac-Kakabadse, 1999).

The people as well as their skills might need to be different because, among other things, NPM has been characterized by the adoption of private sector management practices (see Doig and Wilson, 1998; Glynn and Murphy, 1996). It has been widely assumed that both private sector management is superior (Savoie, 1992) and private sector service delivery is better (Poister and Henry, 1994). Private sector managers are seen to be more entrepreneurial. This has other implications as this characteristic may not fit well with law and due process, characteristics of the public service that many would see as being essential. Dobel (2001) suggests that entrepreneurship may well see these things as constraints rather than warrants of legitimacy. Those with private sector backgrounds may well have quite different value systems (Pfiffner, 1999). Just the introduction of the contracted employee in place of the career public servant may result in less impartiality; differing emphases on other values, such as an efficiency emphasis rather than a probity emphasis may have important ramifications (O'Keefe 1996 cited in Niland and Satkunandan, 1999). Moreover, it has been argued that private sector ethics and public sector ethics are different and that public sector employees need to be far more accountable (Haynes and Melville Jones, 1999).

However, given the high regard for, and possible blind spots about, private sector managers, it is not surprising that the introduction of private sector managers at senior levels has become popular (Barlow et al, 1996). For example, by 1994, in the United Kingdom, slightly more than half of the chief executive and chief executive designate positions had been secured by external candidates (Maor, 1999). This is despite acknowledgement at some level that at least components of public sector management are more complex (Depre, Hondelghem and Bodiguel, 1996; Farnham and Horton, 1996). Indeed, when some public sector managers have become managers of privatised facilities the change has reportedly resulted in dramatic ideological shifts for managers (Talbot, 1993), which tends to reinforce the view that public and private sector management are so different that different forms of management education might be needed.

Other comparisons between private sector and public sector managers have shown that many of the requisite qualities might be common but that public sector executives also need to be able to develop a relationship with the public, to handle the complexity of the public system, be able to understand and deal with politics, to handle the accountability mechanisms and to be competent in public policy development and implementation (Morley and Vilkinas, 1997). This does not mean that senior civil servants have all the qualities of private sector executives, nor that the executives are shining examples of these qualities, but what it does mean is that both sectors have defined similar competencies apart from those additional competencies required for the public sector.

The picture for developing countries may be different, although Analoui (1998) has reported on work in Zimbabwe, India, Romania and Ghana that indicates an awareness of the need for more effective public managers. In the developing country of Ghana, Analoui's (1998) research with senior public managers was more specific and indicated that good planning skills, effective communication, good human relations skills, organizing ability and supervisory skills were needed to be effective. However, changes of attitudes and values were seen to be difficult to achieve due to the time, commitment and investment required. Virtanen (1996) has listed the instrumental competencies needed by new public managers: ethical competence, political competence, professional competence - in both subject area and in administration, and task competence. Over a third of OECD countries have updated their core values during the last five years and the most common inclusions are impartiality, integrity, transparency, efficiency, equality, responsibility and justice (OECD, 2000). Yet the new reforms, even in places like Australia, in providing greater autonomy for public organizations and officials, have potentially left "the way open for a recurrence of ...problems of politicization, inefficiency and even corruption" (Colley, 2001, p. 9). The situation could be worse in developing countries like Sri Lanka where heavy political control over the management of the public service has become a norm (ADB 2003). In fact, Sri Lanka has experienced an expansion of the levels of corruption and politicization of bureaucracy in the 1990s (Hulme and Sanderatne 1997).

Behm, Bennington and Cummane (2000) have argued that the skills of the public bureaucrats together with the confidence placed in them by politicians will ultimately influence the quality of government. The Behm et al. (2000) study focussed on the characteristics of quality service provision by public policy service providers (i.e. senior civil servants) in this new environment. They developed a four-level hierarchical model to show different levels of effectiveness: the two lower levels represent the core competency factors required and the higher two levels in the model represent "value-creating" factors (see Table I). The characteristics, or "values", were categorised as follows: personal attributes of the service providers; the processes used; the form of the final advice (the product); and assessment of impact. It is noteworthy that personal attributes and not just skills were included in this model which is supported by the suggestion that, at least in the past, New Zealand Ministers were not totally supportive of performance agreements with senior civil servants because of the possible failure to capture the qualitative dimensions of the relationship (Boston, 1992).

Australia is well down the path to NPM, so the question arises as to whether the policy services model developed in Australia is applicable or transferable to developing countries that are adopting some or all of the elements of NPM? Samaratunge (1999) argued that bureaucrats in developing countries such as Sri Lanka have resisted public sector reforms that have challenged their bureaucratic power, yet the promotion of sound public management is integral for Sri Lanka's strategy for economic growth

(ADB 2003) and elements of NPM are quite evident in the country. For example, there has been separation of policy making and service delivery, redeployment of surplus staff and emphasis on policy outcomes (for details see Jayawardena 1997; Samaratunge and Bennington 2002), and privatisation has been a popular government choice since the late 1980s (Kelegama 1998). However, barriers have also been evident. One example might be seen in the lack of goodwill of bureaucrats towards the new recruitment and selection method introduced by the Ministry of Public Administration in 1996.

Similarly, Smith (1996b) has argued that the continuity of tenure of senior civil servants, the prestige accorded, and the dependency of politicians on officialdom in developing countries present real obstacles for change. While there has been little work done on the skills and attributes required of civil servants in these environments, Kumssa and Jones (1999) have suggested that transitional economies need to develop active partnerships between the private and public sectors, which immediately suggests some skills and attributes that might be necessary pre-conditions for a successful transition to improved economic performance of public sectors.

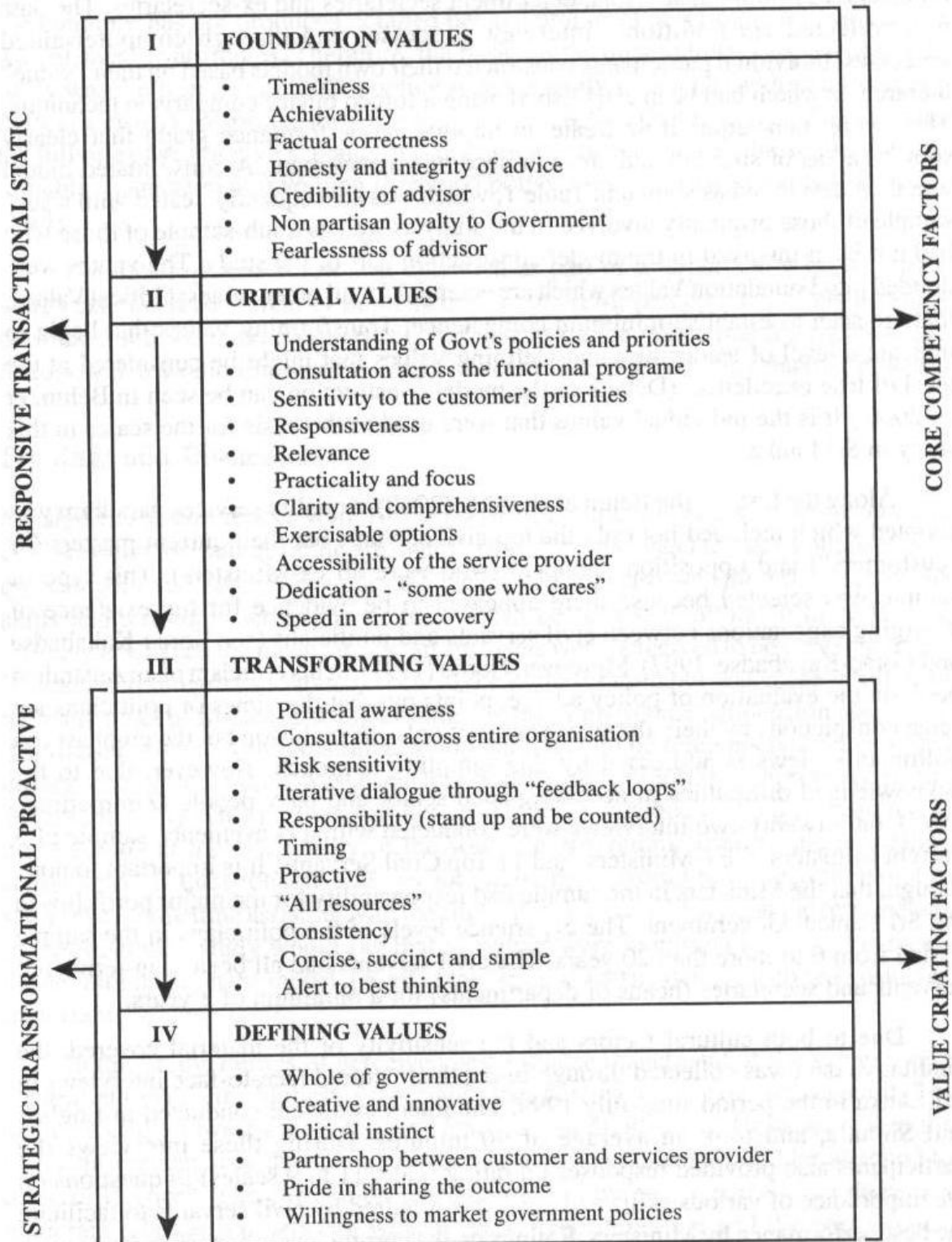
Even where the public sector has been a barrier to change and lacks fit with the new management paradigm, it must be kept in mind that any bureaucratic reorganisation will be initiated and controlled by political and administrative leaders (Maor and Jones, 1999), so the temptation to “throw the baby out with the bath water” needs to be avoided. In fact, Borins and Warrington (1996) have stated that civil service reforms have to be brought about by existing civil servants.

Due to the paradigmatic organisational change required by NPM there will be new demands on management education (Koch, 1999). Therefore, attention to their service and developmental needs is important. Identifying and “correcting” skill deficits and problem behaviours is a complex task because the behaviours have been reinforced for many decades by strong systemic (and bureaucratic) forces.

This study

The literature has done little to inform top civil servants about the skills and attributes needed to add the most value to the process of government policy services and administration, nor how their services might be improved (Bennington, Behm and Cummane, 1998). The reasons for this appear to be based on the difficulties in establishing criteria for evaluation, the confidential nature of much of the work of senior civil servants and the lack of a mechanism for evaluation. Thus, this paper examines the usefulness of the Behm et al. (2000) value creating model for Sri Lanka and examines the skills that civil servants need to add greater value to government in the new environment.

TABLE 1: A Value Creating Model of Policy Services



This Australian model was developed through the involvement of ministers, ex-ministers, key political advisors, department secretaries and ex-secretaries. The data was collected *via* traditional interview processes and through computer-aided processes. Individual participants constructed their own models based on their “value” hierarchies which had been established using a forced binary comparison technique. They were then required to create an importance-performance graph that clearly showed areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. A consolidated model was then developed as shown in Table 1, which was subsequently tested with a sub-sample of those originally involved in the study as well as a sub-sample of those who had not been involved in the model construction part of the study. The values were divided into Foundation Values which are essential for all other values; Critical Values, that are seen to establish minimum competence; Transforming Values that begin to indicate a level of leadership; and Defining Values that might be considered at the level of true excellence. (Details of the model construction can be seen in Behm, et al, 2000.) It is the individual values that were used as the basis for the scales in this study in Sri Lanka.

Along the lines of the Behm et al. study (2000), a quality services paradigm was adopted which included not only the top civil servants but their current masters (or “customers”) and opposition members (who were all ex-Ministers). This type of sample was selected because there appeared to be evidence for the existence of diverging expectations between civil servants and politicians (see Korac-Kakabadse and Korac-Kakabadse, 1997). Moreover, Harris (1997), in his criticism of an Australian book on the evaluation of policy advice, points out that the views of politicians are often conspicuous by their absence. Thus, not only the inclusion but the emphasis on politician’s views is addressed by this sampling approach. However, due to the acknowledged difficulties in accessing such senior and busy people (Zimmerman, 1997), only twenty-two interviews were conducted with a convenience sample of 5 current Ministers, 6 Ex-Ministers, and 11 Top Civil Servants. It is important to note, though, that the Ministers in the sample had responsibility for the major portfolios in the Sri Lankan Government. The experience levels of the politicians in the sample varied from 6 to more than 20 years. The civil servants had all been long-term civil servants and secretaries (heads of departments) for a minimum of 3 years.

Due to both cultural factors and the sensitivity of the material covered, the qualitative data was collected through in-depth structured face-to-face interviews in Sri Lanka in the period June-July 1999. The interviews were conducted in English and Sinhala, and took an average of 90 minutes. During these interviews the participants also provided responses on rating scales (1 to 9 scales) to questions on the importance of various skills and attributes required by civil servants to facilitate the best performance by Ministers. Ratings on the current levels of performance were also obtained (again, using a 1 to 9 scale). The quantitative data was provided directly by the interviewees in the presence of the interviewer.

Although there have been a few attempts to describe the competencies needed for the new public manager (see Armstrong, 1998; Dann, 1996 and Virtanen, 1996) the literature has not produced detailed behavioural level descriptors or much in the way of specific attributes. Therefore, the basis for the quantitative component of this study was the Behm et al (2000) policy services study which has addressed some of these criticisms in respect to the Australian context. Although this study did not address the full role of senior civil servants, it is of particular relevance here due to the changes to public management involving increased policy roles for civil servants (Marshall, 1998).

The data reported below was collected as part of a larger study in Sri Lanka which examined the extent of implementation of NPM, perceptions of relationships between politicians and civil servants, influences on the policy making process, and factors which would improve the effectiveness of the public policy making process.

Findings and Discussion

No significant differences were found between groups (ministers, ex-ministers and civil servants) on ratings of the attributes. Therefore, the data has been collapsed into one category and Table II provides the means and standard deviations on each of the skills and attributes across the sample. It can be seen that, although there is little difference between the mean ratings, all attributes were perceived to be very important. Honesty and integrity of advice received the highest rating but was closely followed by many other attributes. The high ratings on the "importance" dimension appears to be different to that of the Australian study but it should be remembered that a forced binary choice technique was used to establish the importance hierarchy in the Australian study. This process was not used in this study due to the time required to do this without the availability of the software programme used in the Australian study, and it is questionable whether the participants would have been prepared to spend even more time assisting with the study. It is also quite likely that the respondents in the Australian study would say that all values were important because this meets the definition within the model, i.e. all of the "values" had by definition to be considered important.

In this study, ratings of perceived performance (enactment of the values) were somewhat lower – the highest performance was perceived to be on "achievability" of advice and the lowest rating was on "fearlessness of advisor". However, given the slight differences it is questionable whether any real weight should be attached to these differences. The correlation between the ratings was $r = 0.617$ so there is a moderate relationship between what is considered important and the performance level attained by the civil servants. This is a positive sign as it indicates that there is some common basis for understanding what is important in the roles.

TABLE 2: Perceived Importance and Performance of Attributes of Top Civil Servants' Work

Attributes	Importance		Performance	
	Mean	MD	Mean	MD
Timeliness	8.23	1.77	6.73	1.28
Achievability	8.05	1.73	6.81	1.12
Factual correctness	8.24	1.38	5.57	1.08
Honesty and integrity of advice	8.46	0.86	6.73	1.32
Credibility of adviser	8.26	0.93	6.05	1.22
Non-partisan loyalty to Government	7.95	1.32	6.00	1.48
Fearlessness of adviser	6.90	1.41	5.15	1.46
Understanding of Govt's policies and priorities	7.96	0.72	5.19	1.15
Consultation across the department	7.42	1.02	5.58	1.07
Sensitivity to the Minister's priorities	8.19	1.03	6.40	1.39
Responsiveness	7.16	0.78	5.94	0.73
Relevant	7.47	1.13	5.57	0.98
Practical and focused	7.50	0.86	5.86	0.94
Clear and comprehensive	7.36	1.01	5.77	0.90
Exercisable options	7.25	1.48	5.65	0.93
Personal accessibility	8.00	0.80	5.84	1.26
Dedication - some one who cares	7.47	0.99	5.47	1.06
Recover errors quickly	7.67	1.16	5.67	1.28
Political awareness	7.79	0.92	5.47	1.02
Whole of organisation/department	7.33	0.90	5.73	1.28
Risk sensitivity	7.25	1.00	5.38	1.03
Feedback loops	7.42	1.17	5.21	1.03
Take responsibility (stand up and counted)	7.30	1.21	6.00	1.32
Timing	7.78	0.81	5.56	1.15
Proactive	7.56	1.20	5.24	1.30
All resources	7.40	1.24	5.47	0.92
Consistency	7.52	1.40	5.62	1.24
Concise, succinct and simple	7.67	1.05	5.80	1.32
Alert to best thinking	7.78	1.00	5.72	0.90
Whole of government	7.19	1.17	5.38	0.96
Creative and innovative	8.05	0.92	5.38	0.92
Political instinct	7.38	1.20	5.50	1.03
Partnership between customer and services provider	8.15	1.46	5.80	1.00
Pride in sharing the outcome	8.40	0.96	6.64	0.73
Helps all government policies	8.06	1.35	5.83	0.99
Vision	8.18	1.40	6.14	1.08

Scale of importance - 1: not at all ... to ... 9: most important attributes

Scale for performance - 1: very poor ... to ... 9: best possible performance

Given the number of attributes and the inability to reduce these through a multi-variate statistical process, such as factor analysis (due to the sample size), the variables were categorised on the basis suggested by Bennington, Behm and Cummane (1998), i.e. they were grouped collaboratively by two researchers into “personal attributes”, “process characteristics”, “form of final advice” and “impact of advice”. (Although this seemed as if it should have been a simple exercise, some of the attributes were difficult to classify as they could be categorised in more than one way.) Table 3 provides a summary of this data.

TABLE 3: Mean Ratings of Politicians and Civil Servants in respect to the Skills and Attributes required under NPM

	Politicians		Civil Servants		Mean	
	I	P	I	P	I	P
Personal attributes	7.95 (0.32)	5.41 (0.48)	7.80 (0.34)	6.56 (0.27)	7.97 (0.52)	5.94 (0.71)
Process	7.80 (0.33)	5.00 (0.28)	7.40 (1.07)	6.09 (0.26)	7.59 (0.81)	5.59 (0.73)
Form of advice	7.69 (0.28)	5.33 (0.39)	7.52 (1.07)	6.31 (1.04)	7.60 (0.77)	5.84 (0.73)
Impact	8.36 (0.40)	6.28 (0.52)	7.61 (1.76)	6.36 (1.04)	8.03 (1.21)	6.31 (0.76)

I: Importance; P: Performance

Across both Tables 2 and 3, it can be seen that the importance ratings were higher than the performance ratings; and in the case of Table 3 this was true for politicians and civil servants. In each case civil servants rated their performance more highly than that reported by the politicians, but as this finding is consistent with much of the self-appraisal literature - see Harris and Schaubroeck, 1988) – this is not seen to be a real issue.

When the top civil servants were asked what additional skills and experience they would need in a NPM environment all twelve said that they thought some private sector experience was necessary, and some of them added that international exposure (4 mentions), academic qualifications (4 mentions) and change management (3 mentions) would also be useful. Illustrative comments included:

“Working in different sectors, good experience in new managerial practices, more formal education (preferably MBA)”

“Professionally qualified people, international exposure, must have some experience in the private sector, good English knowledge with good interpersonal skills”

“Mixture of public and private sector capabilities, a good knowledge of public service requirements, understanding of service quality”

“Certain specialised knowledge of the private sector, technically qualified people with IT knowledge”

“Some experience in the private sector through training and development, generalist with new outlook”

It is noteworthy that all politicians interviewed thought that top civil servants should have experience in both the private and the public sector, notwithstanding what the issues raised by the literature in respect to private sector managers.

In respect to any new skills that might be required in a NPM environment by top civil servants, 10 mentioned “interpersonal skills”, 6 mentioned “information technology knowledge”, 4 mentioned “adaptability” and 4 mentioned “report writing skills”. The illustrative comments by civil servants provide further examples of new skills thought to be needed:

“Understanding of the changing role of the state, people as customers, changing attitudes, sensitivity to demands of the people, transparency in government activities, IT knowledge, adaptability and flexibility”

“Interpersonal skills, more professional/formal qualifications, international exposure, must have some experience in the private sector, a good English knowledge and more challenging experience, IT training, project report writing, more activities between universities and the public sector”

“Conceptual skills, presentation skills, negotiation skills, interpersonal skills, networking skills and a sense of marketing (to look at public as consumers/stakeholders)”

“IT knowledge, managing change skills (interpersonal/communication skills). Adaptability to new environments”

Politicians’ views on the skills required for civil servants in a NPM environment were not markedly different to those of the civil servants. Seven indicated that “adaptability” was needed, 6 suggested “improved interpersonal skills”, and 3 suggested that “strategic thinking skills” were needed. The illustrative comments provide some further ideas:

“They need to change their attitudes, different working culture, different strategies and understanding of new changes.”

"They need good knowledge of English, presentation and negotiation skills, different strategies to convince foreign donors from time to time and report writing skills."

"Need strategic thinking, solution to different problems, ability to convince ministers with facts, good understanding of rules and regulations and how this rigid process can be changed for the betterment of the people, and other negotiation skills."

"They need interpersonal skills, how to look after people's aspirations by meeting their needs and wants, understanding of how to provide customised service."

"They need to know how to find solutions to problems. Therefore they need strategic thinking, flexibility and proper working culture (changing attitudes)."

"They definitely need more interpersonal skills, new ideas, to be well read about changes in the world, and more flexibility."

Comparisons with Australian data

It is of interest to note that the list of skills and attributes developed through individual interviews with a similar sample from Australia were confirmed as being important by this Sri Lankan sample. This provides added validity to the list of components in the Behm et al. (2000) model which might be used to both develop and assess the performance of civil servants in senior roles.

However, the skills and attributes needed for senior civil servants in a NPM environment in Sri Lanka seemed somewhat different to those expected in a western environment. It is possible that this was due to the fact that the interviewees had already been asked to rate the importance and performance levels of a wide range of attributes and that this had influenced their thinking. It is also possible that the civil servants in Sri Lanka have more of an administrative rather than a policy development role which would have affected the responses. Notwithstanding that both countries operate a Westminster model, Polidano (1998) has pointed out that there are wide and growing divergencies among countries that operate this model. In this case, though, the concerns appear to be quite different. The discourse was different. This tends to suggest that very tailored approaches to the development of senior civil servants is necessary and that simply enrolling them in western MBA or public management programmes probably would not be effective. Their perceived emphasis on private sector experience was interesting although it is unclear as to the type of impact this would have.

Conclusion

Whether or not NPM becomes a major focus of change in Sri Lanka, this study has identified many of the skills, attributes and experience thought to be needed by top civil servants if they are to add additional value to the process of governance of Sri Lanka. These attributes were identified through interviews and completion of rating scales by both current and ex-Ministers and by top civil servants, so even though the sample size was limited, the seniority and extent of responsibility held by these interviewees still makes the results useful. This study provides support for the importance of the attributes elicited in the Behm et al (2000) study. Moreover, the importance of the “honesty and integrity” attribute is consistent with research on leadership which indicates that honesty and integrity are immutable attributes (Scarnati, 1997). The OECD work on ethics (Bartok, 1999) and recent literature¹ suggest that this is an area that cannot be over-emphasised.

The attributes and skills required of senior civil servants both in a developing country such as Sri Lanka and in a more developed country such as Australia appear to be very similar, but there are indications that both groups are starting from different points and therefore their training and development needs are different.

In Sri Lanka there was extraordinary consensus between Ministers, ex-Ministers and civil servants on the issue of the type of experience needed for the NPM environment: all thought that private sector experience was necessary. This obviously has implications for the career path and succession planning as well as for the recruitment and selection of senior civil servants. The questions arising from this that need further exploration include the amount, type and level of private sector experience deemed to be necessary, and whether this might be substituted by or supplemented by training or educational programmes such as MBA's or perhaps through “shadowing” senior private sector managers over a period of time. However, the Value Creating Model of Policy Services was supported and there are indications that by a few additions to the model (e.g. private sector experience, international exposure, change management experience, academic qualifications) that the model could be generalised for use beyond simply the policy services role of public sector management.

¹ Even though western systems are not renowned for corruption and ethical breaches in the public sector, Mitchell (1999) has argued that there is abuse at almost every level of government by almost every person in the US public sector.

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