

## **Webinar**

### **‘Existing Gaps in the Civil Service Structure: Remedies proposed in the recent Civil Service Reforms’**

**August 16, 2021, at Executive Development Institute,  
National School of Public Policy, Lahore**

**Speakers:**

- i) Dr. Ishrat Husain - Adviser to the Prime Minister for Institutional Reforms and Austerity**
- ii) Dr. Saeed Shafqat - Director, Centre for Public Policy and Governance, FCU**

**Moderator: Mr. Ahmad Nazir Warraich - Dean Executive Development Institute, NSPP**

## Webinar

### **‘Existing Gaps in the Civil Service Structure: Remedies proposed in the recent Civil Service Reforms’**

On August 16, 2021 the Executive Development Institute hosted a webinar on ‘Existing Gaps in the Civil Service Structure: Remedies proposed in the recent Civil Service Reforms’. This was the first ever Webinar held at NSPP under the auspices of the Executive Development Institute and was widely attended by almost 300 participants. Its objective was to discuss ongoing civil service reforms being proposed and introduced. Dr. Ishrat Husain, Adviser to the Prime Minister for Institutional Reforms and Austerity and Dr. Saeed Shafqat, Director of Center for Public Policy and Governance of FC College were the Panelists. The Dean EDI, Mr. Ahmad Nazir Warraich hosted the session as Moderator.

**Dr. Ishrat Husain** apprised participants of the critical importance of civil service reform in evolving times. He emphasized that with changing dynamics, civil service needed to be adaptive and dynamic. Developing countries needed to review and reform their governance processes in order to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The learned speaker dilated upon the reform process of civil service by citing it as an ongoing process since 1973. He highlighted that four spheres were critical in any reform process, namely, induction into service, promotion, training, compensation and retirement. Regarding induction, a comprehensive reforms are being implemented in consultation with Establishment Division and Federal Public Service Commission. As for a Federal Secretariat is concerned, the officers would be grouped in four streams i.e., General Administration, Revenue, Technical and Social Sector Stream.

Dr. Ishrat Hussein stressed the importance of merit based promotion and strict application of a transparent promotion criteria. The system of writing performance evaluation reports or ACRs would be replaced with performance monitoring based on meeting key performance indicators. Goals and targets would be agreed upon at the beginning of the year and key performance indicators to measure the achievements would be established. It would facilitate an open discussion between the appraisee and the supervisor on the identification of administrative needs to carry out the assigned tasks. A mid-year review would follow to assess progress and provide feedback. This way the Performance Evaluation Report (PER) would be used mostly

as a tool to serve the twin purpose of honing the skills of the officer as well as to meet the needs of the organization.

Thirdly, the importance of training was greatly emphasized. It was underscored that training of all Civil Servants at all levels – Cadre or non-Cadre should be mandatory and linked explicitly to promotion in the next grade. Professional training for specialists such as engineers, scientists, accountants, health experts, educators, economists, etc., would be introduced and new institutes established to fill in the gaps. The systematic training of ex-cadre and non-cadre officers on the lines of the cadre services would be mandatory for promotion. Mid-career and senior management training courses at National Institutes of Management (NIMs) would now be divided in two parts – the first half would be common training course at NIMs while the second part would take place at the Specialized Training Institutions (STIs) in respective professional fields of each service. Continuous and ongoing professional training is important but promotion should be linked to meeting the benchmarks of KPIs rather than based on seniority.

Regarding retention and compensation, it was acknowledged that the salary structure needed to be revised to incentivize hardworking officers. Dr. Ishrat Hussein stated that studies showed that officers in Grade 17-22 were poorly paid while the employees in Grade 1-16 were better paid than those in the private sector. He also observed the trend of excess employment in the lower grades. Remuneration of civil servants should be competitive to market-based salary. It was observed that this unbalanced proportion needed to be streamlined with leaner organizations so that hardworking senior officers could be given better salaries and redundant or excessive staff could be weaned out, thus keeping the wage bill within limits.

Speaking of retirement, Dr. Ishrat Hussein observed that pensions posed a major fiscal strain on the exchequer and studies were under consideration for efficient pension reforms. Dr. Ishrat Hussein further stated that Local Government is a potential channel for improvement in service delivery and reforms under the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment were also under consideration.

**Dr. Saeed Shafqat** emphasized the need to strengthen both the training mechanism and the continuous capacity development of officers, post induction and throughout service. He observed that the age-old system of examination whereby 25000 candidates attempt the Central Superior Services exam and only 250-300 get successful needed to be examined critically in order to utilize the services of many able candidates who were otherwise capable and bright

but had not been able to get allocated. He also emphasized the need for domain-specific knowledge among candidates sitting for the CSS exam. He said that appropriate policy measures requiring a careful redesigning of the recruitment process and strengthening the autonomous status of the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) was need of the hour.

Observing governance challenges at the provincial level, Dr. Saeed Shafqat stressed the need for reforms to empower the lower tiers of the government for a responsive civil service. He suggested the importance of reviewing the examination system of the Provincial Public Service Commission as well wherein political patronage may have a hand in influencing merit based inductions and allocations. He also spoke of a tenure system fraught with transfers and an inefficient system of accountability which oft creates hurdles in the efficient performance of service.

Dr. Saeed Shafqat stated that public service was unlike corporate service therefore the concept of market based salaries may not be a prime priority for effective governance. Officers serving the public are gratified by the concept of public welfare and service for public good which in itself is a value. Strengthening of governance procedures, fair and merit based inductions and choosing the right man for the right job may be the priority for any reform process. Institutional memory is another critical component of effective governance which leads to effective decisions and governance. Institutional memory must be preserved and reforms must be directed at safeguarding the institutional memory of organizations and departments and its human resource.

The Panelists affirmed that the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century required a responsive and robust civil service. For this skill enhancement and optimization of existing resources was essential which required certain old processes to be done away with. There was consensus on training as a cornerstone of progression with special attention required in harnessing the skills and capacities of officers/officials working in grades 17-18 as the officers in this cohort represent the true face of the government.

**Dr. Ijaz Munir**, Rector NSPP offered vote of thanks to the Panelists for their candid and expert views. He reiterated the support of NSPP in the ongoing reforms with particular reference to training at MCMC, SMC and NMC levels. The Rector emphasized the importance of training and in particular the critical role of the Mid-Career Management Course as a baseline from

which in-service officers have to be trained in the requisite knowledge and skill sets. He observed that the role of the Executive Development Institute in bridging the gaps between private and public sector senior executives and intelligentsia was crucial for a 360-degree review of reforms and policy feedback. He stated that NSPP was committed to offer state-of-the-art training facilities to the civil service as well as continuous professional development through customized short courses and policy dialogues at EDI. He also hailed the Webinar as a step in this direction and resolved to host further Webinars on issues of governance individually as well as with partner associations such as the FCU.

**A robust round of Question & Answer session took place at the end. Some of the main themes that were discussed along with gist of answers is given below:**

#### **New Public Management (NPM)**

Dr. Saeed Shafqat while responding to a query that New Public Management (NPM) had not been implemented in Pakistan responded that NPM as a strategy is more favorable to the corporate sector. NPM takes citizens as clients whereas the notion of customer-client relationship best serves the corporate sector and western world.

#### **Good Governance by strengthening lower rungs of bureaucracy & e-governance**

Dr. Ishrat Hussein emphasized the need to strengthen the lower tier of government as it is where the most interaction occurs with the general public. E-governance is essential to address routine matters. By offering the public a single window and click option for their concerns, complaints and queries.

Dr. Saeed Shafqat also stressed the need of strengthening lower tier of government by changes in the system of recruitment and improvement in training.

#### **Importance of Specialised Training**

Dr. Ishrat Hussein spoke of specialized training as an ongoing process. Responding to reforms in specialized training, he elaborated that the government shall focus on specialized training in important stages of professional development as well as promotion. For improving the working of Ministries and Departments, important initiatives have been proposed of devolving forty divisions into the four occupational streams i.e. technical, administrative, economic, and social. Technical experts are proposed to be employed as Deputy and Joint Secretaries to advise on technical matters.

**On privitisation**

Dr. Ishrat Hussein highlighted the need of developing a synergy between all stakeholders of government. He opined that collaborative efforts for the good of the country were required. with no place for prejudice and personal biases. Privatization or otherwise can be decided with consensus.

**Compensation Package**

Dr. Ishrat Hussein underscored the importance of introducing compensation packages for the Federal and Provincial Government at a comparative level. He said hardworking staff must be encouraged by compensations and stipends to boost their morale and serve as an inspiration for others.