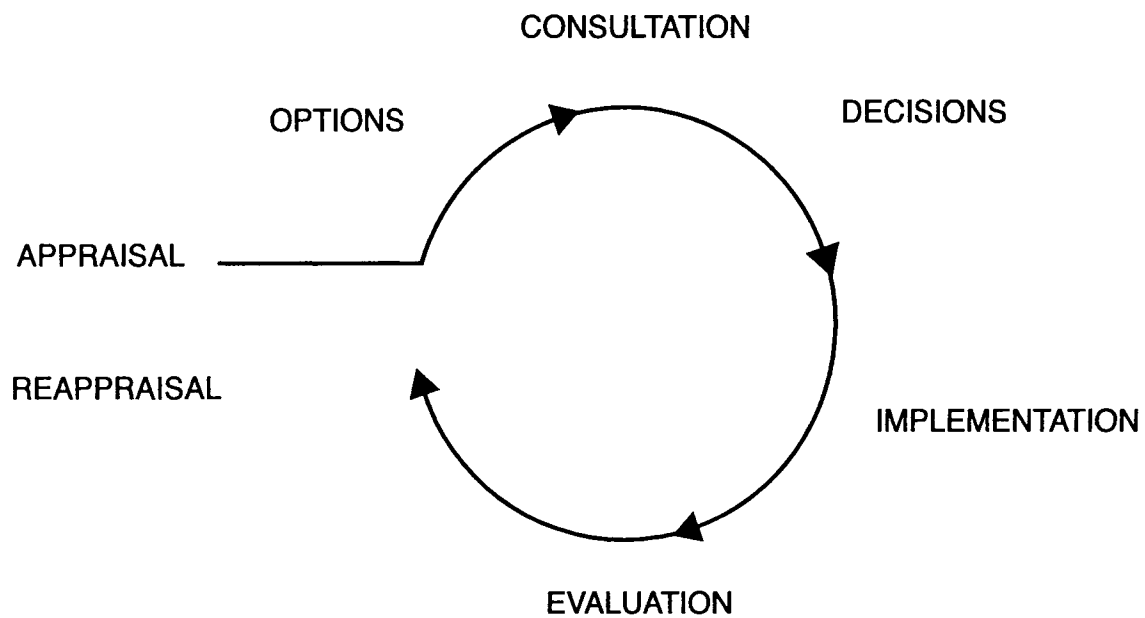


7.0 Improving Policy Making

7.1 Policy Development

7.1.1 Enhancing policy analysis

Policy analysis refers to the entire range of activities through which policy is developed and provided. In ideal terms, this starts with an appraisal of the options before consulting with interested stakeholders and subsequent decisions and implementation. This ideal cycle is completed with the evaluation and reappraisal of policy outcomes.



Policy-making cycle

Policy analysis is not a one-dimensional activity. Political imperatives and changing circumstances do not always allow for measured consultation, and evaluation is clouded by conflicting objectives contained within the same policy. Determining policy is a political prerogative, but the policy analysis process is fundamentally constrained by the ability of the public service to conceive and implement policy options. Improving that capacity implies a review of structures and systems within the public service, but equally it requires an improvement to the context within which the public service operates. In particular, it requires an improvement in the partnerships that the public service can establish to ensure fresh thinking in policy appraisal, and informed support through consultation.

The context for change

The pressures for policy change are growing. Continuing fiscal difficulties and growing consumer demands have placed governments under pressure to do more with less. The global spread of new ideas about how government should operate, the breadth of its role, and the style of its management and structures, have accelerated the pace of innovation. Few areas of social or economic policy remain constant.

Within that climate of accelerating change, the difficulties faced by the public service are increasing in some key areas.

- **Policy appraisal**

In identifying appropriate policy options at a time of rapid change, a balance must be maintained between innovation and consolidation. In preparing policy options for political consideration and for consultation:

- public service experiences in implementing current policies must inform the debate without constraining it to simply more of the same;
- innovations must be considered without allowing untested novelty to overwhelm experience;
- cross-cutting implications for other policy areas, which are themselves also facing rapid change, must be assessed.

- **Consultation**

The White Paper or equivalent consultative stage must ensure that policy options have credibility for stakeholders and affected groups. While acceptability to stakeholders is a complex and largely political judgement, credibility is a function of adequate research, coherent assessment of the capacity of the public service to administer the policy change, and a clear understanding of international policy trends. This last point is of particular significance in relation to donors and lending institutions and is one impetus for the publication of this Commonwealth Portfolio.

- **Advising on policy selection**

Aligning fast-changing policy developments across different sectors presents particular challenges. Recent managerial changes within the public service, with departments and units more single-mindedly pursuing business objectives, adds to the challenge of co-ordination.

Reasons for caution

Policy analysis is not an easily defined and well-bounded activity. In focusing on the need to strengthen the policy analysis capacity of the public service, there is a risk of policy overload resulting from the accumulation of too many policy directives with inadequate consideration of implementation difficulties. Discredited initiatives form a poor foundation for further policy developments.

A strengthened policy analysis capacity can result in a faster flow of policy proposals, when what is required is a more targeted and more considered series of initiatives.

Enhancing policy analysis capacity will highlight existing tensions between officials and politicians, particularly where these relate to inconsistent political leadership. Focusing on the policy analysis capacity of the public service may expose existing areas of difficulty.

Achieving change

There are four elements to any strategy for enhancing policy analysis capacity:

1. **Identify policy as an output**

In developing business plans and in agreeing objectives, Ministries, departments and other units within the public service must recognise policy analysis as an important output with identified targets concerning quality and timeliness.

2. Strengthen central policy analysis bodies

Policy co-ordination requires a central body, capable of identifying policy developments across sectors and departments. Traditionally, this has been achieved by strengthening the offices of the Prime Minister or President, or the Cabinet machinery. Corresponding changes at Ministerial level include the establishment of parliamentary committees. Such bodies take a particular responsibility for monitoring that policy developments are in line with the overall national plan.

3. Improve the climate of policy debate

Policy analysis requires a mix of consolidation and innovation, of respect for existing public service perspectives, and of conviction that outputs can be improved. The balance can only be achieved by establishing an open climate of policy debate in which private and NGO sector interests, academic bodies and service providers can contribute to a broadly-based discussion.

4. Improve skills

There are particular skills required for public policy development:

- benchmarking approaches which assess the trade-off between price and quality in the purchase of policy advice;
- application of analytical tools; and
- the use of quality indicators to monitor policy outputs.

Enhanced policy analysis capacity may require systematic staff exchanges between policy units to share current approaches, and more specific training in qualitative and quantitative policy analysis.

Examples of change

In *Malaysia*, at the national level, policy analysis and evaluation is undertaken by the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department. The Macro and Evaluation Division of this Unit evaluates the impact of government policies on the quality of life and on the economy.

In *New Zealand*, in July 1991, the Minister of State Services directed the State Service Commission to review the provision of policy advice from government departments. One outcome was the handbook entitled, Policy Advice Initiative – Opportunities for Management, designed primarily for use by policy managers as a reference source and as a quick tool for assessing particular policy issues. Efforts to improve the quality of policy advice are ongoing.

In *Tanzania*, Policy Analysis and Research Units have been created in all Ministries in order to assemble all policy-oriented personnel in one organisational unit in a Ministry.

A particular initiative in improving policy analysis and co-ordination in *Trinidad and Tobago* has been the establishment of Standing Committees. Cabinet has established four Standing Committees for Energy, Agriculture, Tourism and Industry, and Services, to advise on sectoral policies and to oversee and co-ordinate the development of major projects on these sectors. These committees are chaired by the Prime Minister and comprise a mix of Ministers, senior public servants and private sector personnel with expertise and interest in these areas. The relevant Ministries function as the Secretariat for the Committees.

Within the *UK* Government, policy analysis and evaluation is being given greater emphasis and more systematic attention as part of the Financial Management Initiative and the drive to improve Civil Service management and accountability generally. They form one aspect of a broad stream of management changes introduced in recent years. Recent developments that reinforce the importance of policy evaluation work include:

- the top-down approach in the Public Expenditure Survey;
- the more strategic relationship between the Treasury and departments; and
- fundamental reviews of programme expenditure.

Other useful material (current as of 1996)

Strategic Planning and Performance Management in the Public Service, Report of a Regional Workshop for the Small States of the Caribbean, Antigua, 29 May-2 June 1989. Commonwealth Secretariat, 1989 (ComSec)

Enhancement of Public Policy Management Capacity in Africa: Report of the High-Level Working Group Meeting, Mahe, Seychelles, 24-27 September 1990. Commonwealth Secretariat, 1990 (ComSec)

From Problem to Solution: Commonwealth Strategies for Reform. Managing the Public Service, Strategies for Improvement Series: No.1. Commonwealth Secretariat, 1995 (ComSec)

Review of the Purchase of Policy Advice from Government Departments. State Services Commission, 1991, Wellington (NZ)

The Policy Advice Initiative – Opportunities for Management. State Services Commission, 1992, Wellington (NZ)

Efficient and Effective Policy. AIC Conferences, June 1993, Wellington (NZ)

Managing Quality Policy. AIC Conferences, March 1994, Wellington (NZ)

HM Treasury, Policy Evaluation: A Guide for Managers. HMSO, London, 1988 (UK)

HM Treasury, Economic Appraisal in Central Government: A Technical Guide for Government Departments. HMSO, London, 1991 (UK)

7.1.2 Enhancing policy co-ordination

All governments face the issue of how best to co-ordinate their business. One particular mechanism for *enhancing policy co-ordination* across government found in many Commonwealth governments is the Cabinet Office System.

The Cabinet Office serves Cabinet and the network of Cabinet committees which between them consider and endorse government policies. Departments with significant policy initiatives are required to clear them through the appropriate committee. The secretariat support is provided by the Cabinet Office. There is generally also a network of official committees serviced by the Cabinet Office, dealing with the day-to-day cross-departmental co-ordination of policy.

The Cabinet Office and similar systems are designed to ensure that all policies are carefully examined for possible cross-departmental implications (including public expenditure implications) before they are endorsed. Committee membership is drawn from a wide range of departments, including all those with a direct interest in the area of policy in question.

The context for change

At a time of rapid and accelerating social and economic change, weaknesses in policy co-ordination can be seen by:

- policy conflicts and inconsistencies;
- abrupt reversals or changes in policy; and
- wasted resources.

Policy co-ordination is weakened by:

- lack of trust between the senior policy makers, including the political leadership and the other participants in the policy arena;
- lack of clear definition of organisational roles among co-ordinating institutions;
- conflicting agendas of line Ministries and departments;
- an over-emphasis on confidentiality and a weak climate of policy debate with little opportunity for participation from private and NGO sector interests, academic bodies, and service providers.

Reasons for caution

Over ambitious policy co-ordination mechanisms can result in policy paralysis. Cabinet Office or other mechanisms for co-ordination must impose a framework on proposals which identify the anticipated outcome of the policy initiative – What is to be achieved by when? At what cost? and How are the results to be monitored? Although essential, this is a demanding agenda for line Ministries preoccupied with pressing operational problems.

Co-ordinating units must ensure that their work is pro-active, providing a facilitating service to the line Ministries from which proposals are originating, ensuring that the limited capacity of the unit is not overstretched. Policy co-ordinating units do not only have negative responsibilities for preventing policy conflict, they have a positive responsibility for ensuring continuing flows of high quality policy advice.

Achieving change

Strategies to improve policy co-ordination cover the following areas:

- The primary responsibility for good co-ordination lies with the department initiating a Cabinet paper. Departments should ensure that they consider all the implications for other government agencies and consult them at the earliest opportunity when preparing a Cabinet submission.
- The actual process of consultation needs to be tailored to the complexity of the issue, the resources available, and the deadline to which departments are working.
- When the views of other departments are summarised, this must be done accurately.
- Departments should certify, generally using a set form, to the satisfaction of their Minister, that they have consulted all government agencies with an interest in the issue and that the views of those organisations are reflected properly in the paper.
- The role of Cabinet or other parliamentary committees must be clear and focused.

Examples of change

In *Australia*, the roles of Cabinet Committees have been clarified and focused to enable Government Ministers collectively to assess developments without an overload of detail.

The *Kenyan* Government has set up an Efficiency Monitoring Unit in the Cabinet Office with a mandate to study and advise the government on problems encountered during the implementation of development policies, programmes and projects, suggesting remedial measures, and carrying out the necessary follow-up. This Unit recommends to the implementing Ministries or departments and ultimately to the government, the use of the most cost-effective methods of implementing development programmes and projects, and suggests improvements in the existing methods of monitoring their implementation.

In *New Zealand*, significant improvements have been made in policy co-ordination. The single Department of The Prime Minister and Cabinet (combining the policy advice role of the Prime Minister's Office and the Cabinet servicing role of the Cabinet Office) was created in 1990 as a means of improving policy co-ordination. A number of Officials Committees are also in operation to service virtually all the key Cabinet Committees. The practice of having departmental officials attend most Cabinet Committee meetings has the advantage of allowing officials greater understanding of Ministerial objectives and expectations.

In *Trinidad and Tobago*, the Cabinet has established four standing committees in the priority areas of Energy, Agriculture, Tourism and Industry, and Services, to advise on sectoral policies and to oversee and co-ordinate the development of major projects in these sectors. The private sector/public sector combination on these Committees is intended to facilitate the exchange of ideas between the two sectors, enhance co-operation with respect to policy development, and improve the implementation of major projects.

Other useful material (current as of 1996)

Enhancement of Public Policy Management Capacity in Africa: Report of the High-Level Working Group Meeting, Mahe, Seychelles, 24-27 September 1990 (ComSec)

From Problem to Solution: Commonwealth Strategies for Reform. Managing the Public Service. Strategies for Improvement Series: No.1. Commonwealth Secretariat, 1995 (ComSec)

Ongoing Reform in the Australian Public Service: An Occasional Report to the Prime Minister by the Management Advisory Board. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994 (AUS)

Manual. 1991, New Zealand Cabinet Office, Wellington (NZ)

The Problems of Policy Co-ordination: The New Zealand Experience. Governance. Boston, J. January 1992 (NZ)

7.2 Communicating Policy

7.2.1 Improving policy presentation

Policy presentation and consultation with the public is achieved through:

- paid publicity and advertising campaigns;
- press and information services which respond to media interest and provide appropriate briefings; and
- personal communication from key officers addressing meetings and stakeholders with an interest in new developments.

The broad purpose of policy presentation strategies is:

- to create and maintain an informed public;
- to harness all suitable publicity methods; and
- to sound out public opinion on policy changes and service developments.

At a time of rapid change both in policy objectives, and in the machinery of the public service, policy presentation strategies assume a particular significance.

The context for change

The responsibilities of the public service are changing rapidly. Governments are less involved in direct service provision, and more in regulatory oversight. The public service is increasingly judged on the basis of explicit service standards rather than on its adherence to traditional methods of operation. Partnerships with private sector organisations and NGOs are being strengthened.

The public is being asked to relate to a public service which has changed its structures, systems, and responsibilities significantly in a short time. At this time of rapid change, communication with the public regarding new policy directions is particularly crucial.

Reasons for caution

Policy presentation requires more than simple announcements. Strategies for responding to the media and for communicating with the public must pay attention to the need for follow-up. Unless the policy presentation strategy can deal promptly and accurately with media criticism, and with the need for longer-term information and sensitisation campaigns, little will have been gained.

Achieving change

Improvements in policy presentation strategies require:

- the involvement of information officers at an early stage in policy formulation;
- a strengthened professional information resource, with trained staff capable of managing shifting relationships with the media;

- channels of communication which provide information officers with a good understanding of emerging developments throughout the public service;
- the management of targeted information distribution lists; and
- comprehensive monitoring of relevant media for comments on government policy.

Poor policy presentation is more easily identified than good practice. However, policy presentation is made possible, if not guaranteed, by ensuring that information officers have the capacity to manage:

- press notices, briefings, and conferences;
- interviews with Ministers;
- photo calls;
- the production of articles to go out over the Minister's name; and
- paid publicity campaigns.

Examples of change

In *Canada*, each department is responsible for putting in place its own communications group and for ensuring good communications with its public. In addition, some co-ordination on communications issues is provided by a Communications Consultation Secretariat within the Privy Council Office. Policy guidance is provided through an Information, Communications and Security Division within the Treasury Board Secretariat. Communications activities must meet Treasury Board guidelines on "no-frills" publishing which calls for the streamlining of Government publishing and the creation of a uniform "look" for materials. It aims to achieve information products that are economical, well designed, environmentally sound, and that communicate effectively.

Amongst the various types of communication is the Federal Identity Programme intended to achieve clear and consistent identification of its institutions and to assist the public in recognising and gaining access to federal programmes and services.

In *Kenya*, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is responsible for gathering and disseminating information in the public service through such media as television, Kenya News Agency, radio, Kenya Gazette and the newspapers. The Offices of the President and Vice-President both have Press Units to cover day-to-day official functions. In each Ministry, press releases are issued by either the Permanent Secretary, the Minister, or any other officer authorised by the Permanent Secretary. The government requires each Ministry or department and Civil Servants to act as public relations agents of the government in the day-to-day operations.

In *Malaysia*, the Ministry of Information is generally responsible for policy presentation. Public Relations Officers from the Department of Information under the Ministry are stationed in various Ministries and departments to ensure that official news and information are released through press releases; press conferences, interviews with Ministers and/or senior officers, and special launchings.

The Government of *Trinidad and Tobago* has recognised that to improve policy presentation a Communications Strategy is needed which outlines objectives, targets and means. This Strategy focuses on three issues:

- the circulation of information to the relevant sections of the public;
- in a hostile media environment. the development of "an alternative system" of information dissemination, i.e. an alternative to the national media; and
- the institution of mechanisms to receive specific feedback from the public.

Other useful material (current as of 1996)

From Problem to Solution: Commonwealth Strategies for Reform. Managing the Public Service. Strategies for Improvement Series: No. 1. Commonwealth Secretariat, 1995 (ComSec)

A Guide to Good Communications Management. Treasury Board Secretariat, March 1992 (CAN)

The Manager's Deskbook. Third Edition. February 1993. Treasury Board of Canada (CAN)

Treasury Board Manual. Communications Volume, available from Supply and Services Canada (CAN)

Planning Information Products: Effective, No-Frills Publishing Practices. Treasury Board Secretariat, November 1993 (CAN)

Alternative formats: Access for All. Government of Canada, December 1993 (CAN)

7.3 Political and Administrative Roles and Responsibilities

A critical issue in modern democratic governance is how to establish the appropriate mix of roles and responsibilities or interface between bureaucracy and elected officials or between politicians and Civil Servants in policy development. Historically the interface between bureaucracy and democratic rule has long been turbulent, ambiguous and controversial. Getting the relationship right is vital for effective government and for better delivery of services to the people.

The need to define management roles, the desire for improved support services for decision makers (politicians) and the quest for meaningful and effective allocation of duties and responsibilities among public officials, have all been central and critical to efficient government.

The formal relationship under discussion is specifically between the elected official (Minister) and senior Civil Servant variously known as Permanent Secretary, Principal Secretary, Deputy Minister, Director General, Chief Director, etc. The core issues in the formal and functional relationship in policy making are managerial influence, power, authority, responsibility and accountability. Traditionally and in the Westminster type of government, the Minister is responsible for policy development while the Permanent Secretary is responsible for management and the implementation of policy.

The implementation of government reforms and new policy requires that the two sets of officials develop a meaningful and positive interface, which contributes to the achievement of government goals, objectives and policies. The fundamental questions that are often raised in this interface relate to the right mix of relationship, the critical factors that can contribute to a more meaningful and effective political administrative interface, role differentiation and the implications for service delivery to citizens.

The context for change

Improving the interface in policy development and management is predicated upon the need to respond effectively and efficiently to the:

- emerging problems and issues in the management of administrative reforms of the public service;
- need to re-define the roles and responsibilities of the Minister and the Permanent Secretary in an attempt to meet the expectations of the public or consumers of public policy;
- identification of policy and administrative boundaries between elected and appointed officials; and
- development and sharing of the best practices, processes and procedures of enhancing the interface.

The roles and relationships between politicians and Civil Servants have to be clearly delineated. One of the most recent developments in the interface is the introduction of political or special advisers to the Minister. This added layer of officials has been seen in many countries as necessary in order for the politician to implement public policy with a mixture of advice from bureaucrats and a political party official who is not elected but serves at the pleasure of the Minister.

Redefining the management roles between the politician and the bureaucrat within the public service is a key strategy in improving not only efficiency in government but also delivery of service by the state. Redefining management roles and clarifying boundaries between bureaucrat and politician in a democracy seeks to address the following concerns:

- The growing prominence and power of bureaucracy poses important problems in a democracy because it means that non-elected officials have greater opportunities to influence policy, potentially in ways that disregard public preferences. This in turn makes the task of elected officials especially important since they must oversee the bureaucracy, infuse it with democratic preferences and make it accountable to democratic process;
- The formulation of an appropriate mix or optimal mix between elected and non-elected officials becomes important because it determines the extent to which the policy machinery of government reflects predominantly the preferences and values of elected officials or the preferences and values of public servants that are not elected;
- The conflict between politics and administration derives from more than the growth of the administrative state and the increased knowledge and skills needed to deliver modern government services. The different values, perspectives and concerns of politicians and public servants fuel the conflict that often arises between them. The values emanating from democratic politics and elected officials include responsiveness, accountability, short term perspective, revitalisation or modernisation, power, conflict, compromise and change. These contrast with the values of bureaucracy, which include non-partisanship, professionalism, continuity, expertise, experience, problem-solving, long term perspectives and effectiveness; and
- The pressures on the state to respond to the needs and demands of the public, to respond to market forces and to comply with rules. Citizens are demanding new approaches to good governance, better and more effective and efficient methods of service delivery, conflict management and improving skills and knowledge with which to deliver the services.

Reasons for change

Improving the functional relationship between the politician and the public servant has been driven by:

- the demands for change in policy development and public management practices in order to improve service delivery;
- the need to change organisational structures to adapt to the social, political and economic environment within which public management operates. Within the public service reform agenda, particular attention is given to openness, accountability and good governance whose dynamics are based on leadership skills and purposeful goal-setting;
- the political and administrative changes that are taking place sometimes without precedents and sometimes without rules, or codes of conduct;
- the new skills, knowledge, technology and information required for leadership;
- the political and economic liberalisation programmes resulting in the transformation of practices, behaviour patterns and the demands from a larger public for better quality of service. Paralleling these changes, civil society has a desire to participate in the formulation of public policy and new forms of managing conflicts. Both have brought to the fore the need to draw boundaries and build bridges between bureaucracy and elected officials;
- the problems of maintaining a politically neutral Civil Service in a highly political atmosphere and occasional fears of politicisation of Civil Services. Also the contrary, the bureaucratisation of the politician; and
- political interference in administrative matters.

Achieving change

In terms of achieving the "right" relationship between elected officials and bureaucratic officials, the Commonwealth experience suggests there are promising approaches: redefining and clarifying both managerial and policy roles.

Redefining managerial roles

Commonwealth experience indicates that in redefining management roles and delineating the political and administrative boundaries in policy development and management:

- Clear distinction must be made on the separation of powers between politicians and public servants;
- Principles should be formulated to guide the allocation of functions and responsibilities of Ministries of Public Service or Personnel;
- Roles of political advisers should equally be made clear to both the politician and public servants to avoid conflict and duplication of functions;
- Functions of Cabinet Secretaries or the Head of the Civil Service are to be clearly defined; and
- Boundaries between policy making and implementation should be clearly separated.

These guidelines are based on the following fundamental principles:

- Elected officials bring with them authority endorsed by the democratic process in which parliamentary elections are held periodically. They also bring the skills of political leadership and the ultimate responsibility to account to the legislature for what has been done or not done;
- Appointed officials bring proven ability, knowledge and experience, and status derived from being appointed on merit. They have an obligation to put their ability and knowledge to work in support of the Minister and the responsibility to account either directly or through senior officers, to the relevant Ministers, to parliament or provincial legislature as required and to the public for performance of their departments.

A more recent development in the political and administrative interface is the appointment of political advisers by Ministers. The appointment of political advisers is a tactic used by Ministers to achieve greater political responsiveness from the bureaucracy. The rationale for this strategy is that the persons appointed directly by Ministers are more likely to work to further the political goals of the Minister, thus achieving a greater degree of responsiveness from the bureaucracy.

In the United Kingdom, for example, in 2001, each Minister was allowed to have two political advisers on staff. They are political appointments by the Minister and are not Civil Servants (although they could be Civil Servants on leave of absence). Nor are they party political appointments. Political advisers are of two types:

1. Expert advisers who give briefings with which a Minister may check or challenge official advice.
2. Generalist advisers mainly as political aides-de-camp.

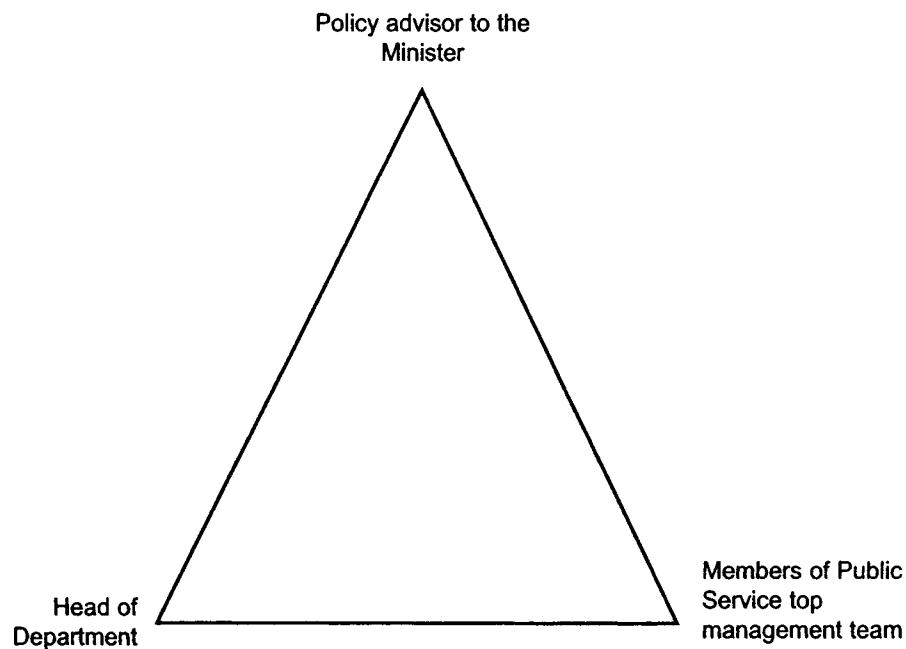
Many governments based on the Westminster model tend to develop a protocol of good governance in which codes of conduct for Ministers and Civil Servants are established. The codes should be seen in the context of the duties and responsibilities of members of the executive wing of government, which are generally set out in a handbook. The codes and guidelines vary from one country to the other.

Role of the Minister:

- Provide vision and policy direction;
- Oversee and monitor policy implementation;
- Secure Cabinet support or resources;
- Represent the Ministry in Cabinet;
- Account publicly for the performance of the Ministry;
- Take collective responsibility for Cabinet decision; and
- Be a change sponsor.

Role of the Permanent Secretary:

Three basic roles of the Permanent secretary:

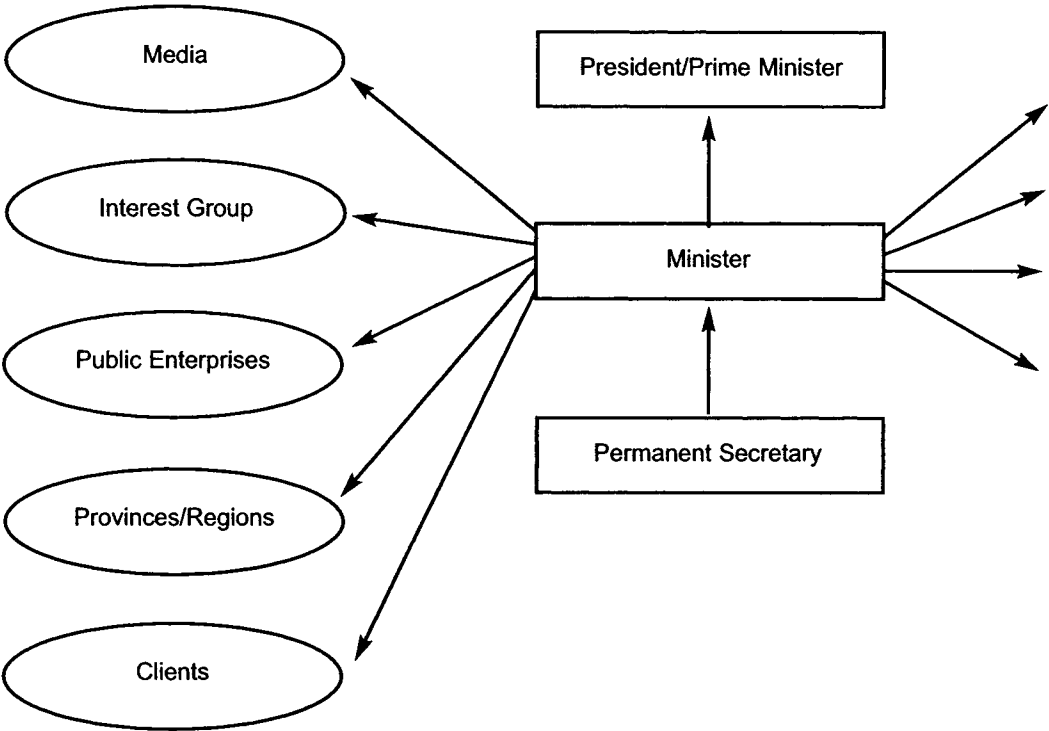


Other Significant Roles:

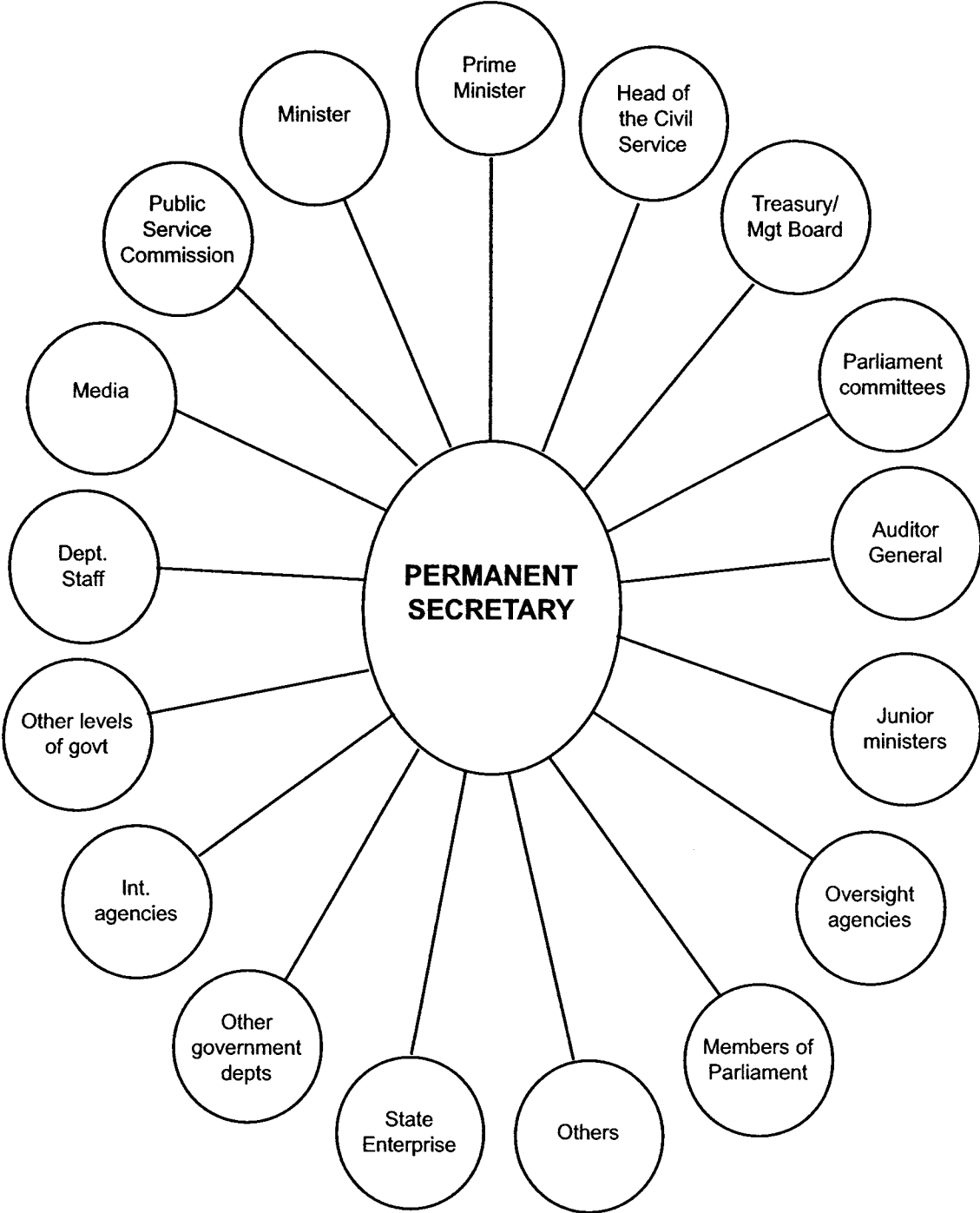
- Inform and advise elected officials accurately;
- Implement policy and Ministerial decisions efficiently and effectively;
- Be fully accountable to the Minister;
- Co-ordinate, control, manage and communicate with other departments;
- Be a change agent and utilise all relevant sources of data and advice so as to give the Minister the broadest possible bases for policy considerations;
- Manage finance, human resources, technology and other resources;

Both the Minister and Permanent Secretary must fulfil these roles in complex accountability environments. Both have multiple accountabilities and both are involved in the agenda setting stage of the policy making process.

Minister's Environment and Agenda Setting



Permanent Secretary's Environment and Agenda Setting



Role of the Cabinet Secretary:

- Provides, as the Prime Minister's or President's Permanent Secretary, advice and support to the Prime Minister on a full range of responsibilities as head of government;
- Provides support and advice to all Ministers and oversees the provision of policy and secretariat support to Cabinet and Cabinet Committees;
- Is responsible for the quality of expert, professional and non-partisan advice and service provided by the public service to the Prime Minister;
- Is Chairperson of a committee of Permanent Secretaries; and
- In some countries, has a say in the careers of Permanent Secretaries as the Prime Minister is usually guided by his or her advice in the nomination of Permanent Secretaries.

Skills for the Permanent Secretary

- Communication skills: ability to present a case clearly and effectively;
- Negotiating skills: crucial for presenting department's case in negotiating with other Ministries especially the Treasury;
- Administrative skills: to get through the huge volume of paperwork e.g. delegation;
- Skills of decision: knowing when to act or when to accept advice;
- Interpersonal and management skills; and
- Strategic vision and strategic management skills.

Who measures the performance of the Permanent Secretary?

The performance of the Permanent Secretary is measured differently in different countries. In some countries the Public Service Commission does most of the performance appraisal that would result in promotion, transfer, and dismissal. While in other countries, performance measurement is done by both the Public Service Commission and Cabinet Secretary and recommendations are forwarded to the Prime Minister. More recently and notably in Canada and the UK, the Cabinet Secretary, in consultation with the Minister of a given Ministry, processes the performance of the Permanent Secretary. In Canada the appraisal has seven basic elements:

1. The Clerk of the Privy Council (Cabinet Secretary) first meets with the Permanent Secretary to discuss objectives for the upcoming period. The objectives upon which measurement is based are divided into three categories for future evaluation: departmental objectives, corporate objectives and leadership and human resource management objectives;
2. At the end of the period, the Permanent Secretary prepares an assessment of his or her performance against the objectives agreed earlier. Performance is measured on a five-point scale;
3. The Cabinet Secretary meets with appropriate Minister to discuss the performance of the Permanent Secretary;
4. The Cabinet Secretary meets with certain other key officials, including the Head of the Public Service Commission and the Head of Treasury Board to solicit views;
5. Based on these interviews, the dossier of the Permanent Secretary is brought before a committee of senior officials to discuss and assess his or her performance;
6. Based on the assessment of the committee of senior officials, the Prime Minister makes a final decision with respect to promotion, demotion, etc, and in consultation with the Clerk of Privy Council makes decisions regarding performance pay; and
7. The Cabinet Secretary meets with the Permanent Secretary to review the comments and decisions made as well as to discuss objectives for the coming year (Peter Larson, 1999).

Role of Political Advisers

- Can, unlike Civil Servants, advise the Minister from a political party perspective;
- Can handle relations with the party, write briefs on departmental policies for government backbenchers and deal with constituency matters;
- Can act as an unofficial channel between their Minister and the press;
- May help the Minister with public appearances; and
- Within the departments they comment on papers going to the Minister and advise him or her on political rather than administrative dimensions of policies and feed in new ideas.

Developing the management relationship

A few governments, on being elected into office, opt for a series of activities geared to preparing Ministers and parliamentarians for office as well as to improving the relationship with appointed officials. The interventions take the following forms:

- A three day orientation programme for all parliamentarians which focuses on issues such as the legal environment of the public service, approaches to managing Ministers, media relations and the parliamentary system;
- Cabinet holds a series of teambuilding activities, which focus on managing relationships with the Civil Service, and the performance of Ministers;
- Ministers submit regular reports on the performance of Ministries in the achievement of objectives; and
- Governments conduct retreats for Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and chief executives of public enterprises.

Some countries organise orientation courses for Ministers in order to ensure a smooth transition upon being elected into office. The key objectives of the orientation programme are to enhance the Ministers' understanding of:

- The key dimensions of a Minister's job;
- The party programme;
- How to structure a Minister's office, notably the appointment of Ministerial staff members;
- The policy-making process, including the structure of Cabinet and Cabinet Committees;
- The proper relationship between a Minister and the professional public service;
- How to deal with the media and lobbyists; and
- How to achieve a balance between work and family.

Management programmes for Permanent Secretaries

Many countries have placed emphasis on developing senior and top managers in the Civil Service. Some countries have put in place conditions which must be met before an official is promoted to a Permanent Secretary. One such condition is that the official should have attended minimum courses on management designed by a national management training institute. In general courses for Permanent Secretaries have included the following competencies:

- Intellectual competencies: the cognitive capacity and creativity of a Permanent Secretary to understand and respond in a strategic manner to the complexities of management in the public sector;

- Future building competencies: capacity to see beyond the single departmental issues to the larger context of public management development;
- Management competencies: Permanent Secretaries must be action-oriented individuals who have the intellectual capacity to anticipate and cope with the short, medium and long term consequences of their strategies. Permanent Secretaries must also understand the inner workings of government, the public service and key players. Teamwork is also an important management competency;
- Permanent Secretaries must be capable of effectively interacting with public and private sector individuals, supervisors, peers and subordinates. They must have excellent interpersonal skills; and
- Personal competencies: must have the ability to sustain high energy levels and resist stress under the ongoing pressures of protecting the public interest.

Political and administrative interface challenges

The challenge is to:

- Develop agreement on goals and roles;
- Build trusting and productive relationships;
- Recognise that management styles will differ;
- Recognise that Ministers often come to their jobs with no relevant training or experience;
- Develop an interface characterised by integrity, professionalism, openness and learning; and
- Identify boundaries between policy formulation and management.

Possible approaches to facilitating the interface

- The strategic planning process: the process facilitates the establishment of a shared vision and clear objectives of the Ministry;
- Regular meetings: regular meetings between elected and appointed officials would provide opportunities for dialogue and feedback and provide a forum within which the relationship could be developed and improved;
- A system to evaluate Permanent Secretaries: a clear and objective system of measuring the performance of a Permanent Secretary could improve the relationship;
- Management development of Permanent Secretaries: the identification of appropriate competencies and skills for Permanent Secretaries ought to provide a basis for their selection and training. Appropriately equipped Permanent Secretaries could go a long way towards ensuring that they play their part in nurturing a healthy and productive relationship;
- Coaching and mentoring: both Ministers and Permanent Secretaries could benefit from systems of coaching and mentoring; and
- Development of codes of conduct: clearly stated codes of conduct for both Ministers and Permanent Secretaries and guidelines for their conduct could also be useful in facilitating the interface.

Examples of facilitating the interface

In the *UK*, the Government established a new Centre for Policy Management Studies (CAMPS) as part of imparting managerial and leadership skills to top Civil Servants;

In *Grenada*, the Commonwealth Secretariat facilitated a weekend intervention that included the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues, and all Permanent Secretaries and all political advisers. The Commonwealth Secretariat has also facilitated such seminars in *St. Kitt's & Nevis*, and *St Lucia*;

The *Barbados* Government also utilised a retreat setting to bring together parliamentarians and senior public servants for focus on, among other issues; the appropriate relationships between elected and appointed officials;

In 1998, *Swaziland* held a retreat for Ministers and Permanent Secretaries to discuss political and administrative interface problems;

In *Sierra Leone*, after the democratic elections, the Commonwealth Secretariat and Department of International Development (DIFD) facilitated a retreat for Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, and Chief Executive Officers focusing on policy management and improving their relationship;

In 2000, the *Bermuda* Government had a two-day retreat for Ministers and Permanent Secretaries facilitated by Commonwealth Secretariat officials; and

In 2001, *Namibia* held a retreat for Ministers and Permanent Secretaries on development.

Other useful material (2nd edition)

Dunn, D. *Politics and Administration at the top: Lessons from Down Under*, Pittsburgh Press, 1997.

Agere, Sam (ed) *Redefining Management Roles. Improving the Functional Relationships between Ministers and Permanent Secretaries. Managing the Public Service Strategies for Improvement Series: No 10*, Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999.

Draper, G. *The Caribbean Experience*, 1999. CAPAM Practice Knowledge Centre.

James, Simon, *The British Experience*, 1999. CAPAM Practice Knowledge Centre.

Larson, Peter, *The Canadian Experience*, 1999. CAPAM Practice Knowledge Centre

Plowden, W. *Ministers and Mandarins*. Institute for Public Policy Research, 1994.

Civil Service Reform: Report to the Prime Minister from Sir Richard Wilson, Head of the Home Civil Service, published by Cabinet Office (UK)

CAPAM High Level Seminar for Cabinet Secretaries. Cambridge University UK. A report by Sandford Borins, Sept 1997.

Eddie Teo, Permanent Secretary (Prime Ministers Office) Singapore 2000.

Dennis Osborne, *Governance, Partnership and Development*, 1999.

Kevin Theakston, *Permanent Secretaries: Leadership as Conservation* 1999

Rudy B Aneweg, *Advising Prime Minister*, 1999.

Wade Mark, *The New Public Administration: A re-examination of the political and administrative interface*: CAPAM Biennial Conference 1998, Malaysia.

John Hilligan, *Comparing Relations between Politicians and Public Servants in four countries: Transformation or Re-affirmation* CAPAM Biennial Conference 1999, Malaysia.

Canadian Center for Management and Development: *Treasury Board: The Leadership Network*, 2000.