

Lebanon's Experiment with Installing Competitive Recruitment

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Abstract

This paper sheds the light on the experience of Lebanon in professionalizing recruitment for senior officials in leadership and policy-making positions, an initiative undertaken by the Government of Lebanon in 2005 to bring about a change in organizational culture and the enhancement of organizational performance. This study highlights its mechanisms, practical achievements, as well as successes, failures, and lessons learned. The paper frames the initiative within the international trends of public sector leadership and development, and seeks to provide recommendations vis-à-vis the establishment of a merit-based recruitment system, the institutionalization of a culture of transparency and accountability within the public service as well as the ways through which tailor-made training and capacity building programmes, along with networking, partnership-building, information-sharing, advocacy, and continuous exposure to contemporary world trends of senior civil service management and leadership, can slowly but gradually overcome present difficulties, create a climate for change within the public sector, hence leaving ample room for hope in the future.

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Introduction

In August 2005, the Government of Lebanon undertook an initiative to professionalize the recruitment procedure of senior officials in policymaking and leadership positions in the public sector. The process, undertaken from October 2005 to July 2006, targeted 39 top-ranking positions in the Lebanese administration, and involved the participation of the private sector and civil society organizations. This initiative contrasted with many customary practices that often surround the appointment of high officials in Lebanon, and sought to depoliticize the civil service which is caught in a system of “wasta”¹, emanating from political affiliation, familial bonds and confessional belonging.

The initiative was a unique practice framed in medium and long term goals including:

1. The instilling of a merit-based recruitment policy derived from internationally-recognized practices, and taking into consideration the Lebanese particularity whereas diversity, distinctive feature of Lebanese society, could become an asset rather than a hindrance for good governance.
2. A significant improvement in the attractiveness of the civil service,
3. The design of a new civil service salary structure.

It also represented a leap forward towards the establishment of a recruitment system that would lead to the emancipation of a class of competent and skilled individuals in the top ranks of the Lebanese administration who would act both as managers oriented towards organizational processes and outputs, as well as leaders who would act as agents of change within their

¹ The Arabic term for connections or associations taking the form of tribal affiliations, familial, religious, confessional or political ties

organizations, hence allowing the government to enhance its image among citizens and improve its delivery of public services.

Although it faced legislative and implementation difficulties, and by 2008 was stalled and downplayed leading to the resumption of previous recruitment procedures, the initiative remains a leading experience in public sector and public service leadership reform in Lebanon that faced many difficulties and challenges that are common in the MENA region. Moreover, recently emerging paradigms and approaches to enhancing leadership through training and learning have brought new possibilities onto government agendas that could in turn lead to the overcoming of reform implementation risks and challenges.

Prospects of Leadership and Civil Service Reform

A sound, well-functioning civil service has become considered to be an essential prerequisite for the proper functioning of five policy areas: governance, the distribution of public goods and services, economic policy, fiscal policy implementation, and fiscal sustainability. The civil service enables good governance, is directly linked in terms of size and efficiency to the delivery of public goods, enables reform through economic policy, is directly involved in efficient and effective public expenditure management and tax administration, and is expected to restructure itself accordingly to meet medium to long term fiscal sustainability goals (Schiavo-Campo, de Tommaso, & Mukherjee, 1997, pp. v-vi). As the functioning of the civil service is funded by public budgets, its proper management is therefore linked to the safeguarding of budget revenues and to the efficient use of public funds. Worldwide, the civil service comprises a considerable part of the total workforce, and was estimated in 2008 to stand at a 15% as percentage of the total

workforce of OECD32 countries alone, while in some cases reaching as high as 30% (OECD, 2011, p. 103).

The reform of the civil service is inextricably linked to an improvement in the overall managerial systems that govern it. Aiming to improve the quality of public services and the design of public policies as well as to ensure value for money in the management of public funds, civil service reforms were hence targeted at key components such as size, wage policies and structures, and accountability (Schiavo-Campo, de Tommaso, & Mukherjee, 1997, pp. 34-35). However, this essential management-focused approach to civil service reform has come to be complemented by an additional paradigm that emphasizes the importance of people, and hence, of leadership, in accompanying change. As Kramer (2002) points out, “governance is more than the machinery of public administration and more than impartial cost-benefit analysis [...] Public administrators are much more simply human than otherwise. Like the rest of us, public administrators are people, too” (p. 2). In such an approach, leading, rather than solely managing people is central to sound governance and to civil service efficiency and reform. While public management reforms have often been subjects of academic and professional debate, key features of the newer model of management based on personal responsibility for results is being more and more acknowledged.

Effective leadership, which can be best considered as a social influence process concept (OECD, 2001, p. 11), triggers change and serves as a bridge that can overcome the setbacks of a dominantly management-oriented. Even when leadership is integrated at top-rank and policy level, it can suffer the setbacks of a strictly management-oriented implementation, such as blurred top-down strategies, improper communication, and lack of leadership down the line of implementation. As such, leadership needs to be grounded in an all-inclusive approach that

creates a dynamic for change through the involvement of all concerned. According to Dunoon (2002), it has

To harness and integrate the knowledge and expertise of diverse people and groups, to make explicit and scrutinize underlying assumptions and to build common ground and momentum for change (p. 4)

By integrating skills, motivating people, and fostering a culture of initiative, leadership leads to an overall improvement of civil service performance. In fact, the motivation of people, central tenet in organizational leadership, is inextricably intertwined with performance- and result-oriented management. Indeed, the OECD (OECD, 2004) stresses that in order for governments to instill a culture of performance in the civil service they need to be able to motivate them towards achieving and measuring results (p.2). The individuals that are in fact located at this critical junction between strategy making and execution, and who need to display leadership capacities in order to carry out policy directives are senior civil servants (OECD, 2011, p. 92). While as previously mentioned, leadership is not expected to be centered solely at the policy level, senior civil servants are nevertheless considered, on account of their central position within the administration, as trend-setters that can instill a conception of public sector leadership within the government in complementarily with their managerial functions.

Transforming Senior Civil Servants into Leaders

The improvement of the performance and efficiency of the civil service as a whole therefore rests partly on the shoulders of the quality of its seniors and executives (OECD, 2011, p. 92), and among such a quality figures their potential as leaders-managers. The challenge is therefore to

establish a competent, modern, and sustainable senior civil service where the appropriate people are assigned to the appropriate positions, and where career, goals, compensation, and benefits allow the government to attract, develop, and retain leaders within its key positions. Leadership within the government would in turn contribute to the *institutionalization* of good public governance, hence allowing governments to respond effectively to needs of citizens while keeping abreast with modern global trends (OECD, 2001, pp. 12-13). Many countries around the world have sought to implement strategies for the development of public sector leaders at all levels. Some have sought to centralize the role of government in the process of leader identification and development, while others have adopted a market-based approach with little coordination from the central government. Overall, some common trends have emerged that could be considered as common strategies for the development of future leaders. These steps are:

1. The definition of competence profiles for future leaders, considering the fact that leadership for the future will most likely be different than the leadership or management required at the present moment. An example would be the development in the UK of the Senior Civil Service (SCS) core competence framework, and in the United States, of the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs).
2. The identification and selection of potential leaders, and whether such leaders should be chosen from within the civil service or through external recruitment processes.
3. Encouraging mentoring and training, namely building the capacities of potential leaders by a specialized training institution.
4. Keeping leadership development sustainable, and hence institutionalized, also through training and through the linking of performance with incentives. (OECD, 2001, pp. 23-27).

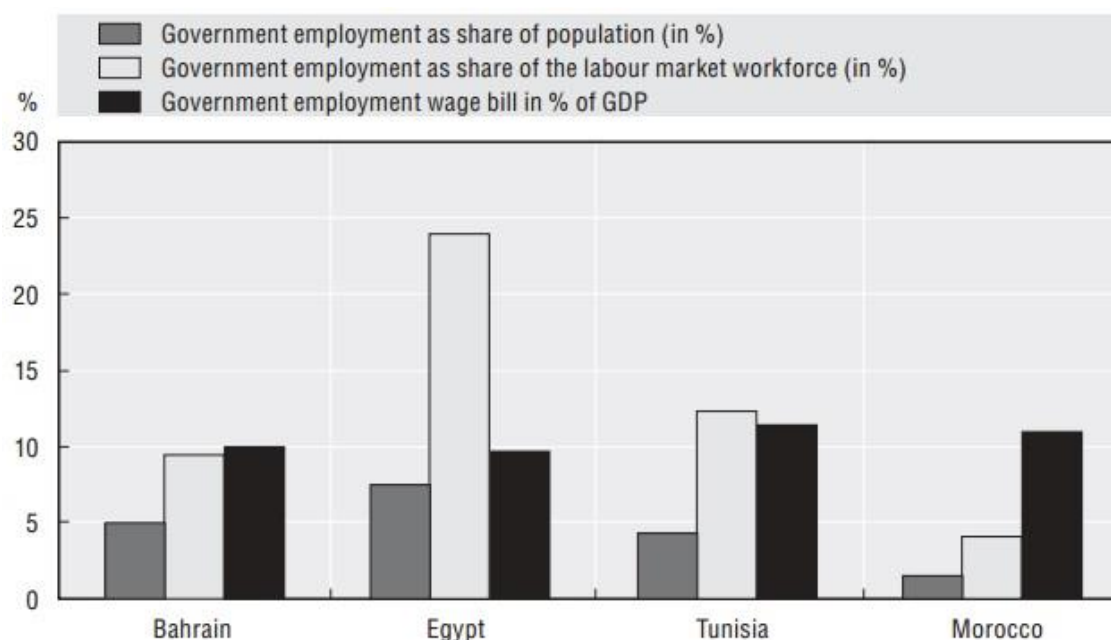
As many countries in the Arab world have become increasingly committed to reform for good governance and sound public financial management in line with the international experience, many steps have been undertaken towards supporting structural and organizational modernization within the civil service. It is at this juncture that the importance of establishing systems that encourage the identification and integration of potential leaders can be asserted.

Government and Civil Service Leadership in the MENA Region and Lebanon: An Overview of the MENA region

Civil service management systems in the MENA region traditionally fall into two broad categories: Career-based and position-based systems. Career based systems, such as in Algeria, Lebanon and Morocco, often date back from the French mandate era and involve a government structure shaped by grades, competition-based recruitment, laws, and centralized decision-making. Position-based systems, on the other hand, involve recruitment in a similar way that it is usually undertaken in the private sector, namely through advertisement, open recruitment, and appointment based on the matching of job profiles with the required competencies. However, and regardless of the structural differences between these two systems, all countries of the MENA region are experiencing, in varying degrees, similar problems: rigid systems that have little performance orientation, disparaging and unfair pay scales, disproportionate staffing levels, rigid hierarchies, lack of transparency in the organizational structure of the civil service itself, and a serious shortage of training and capacity building programs (OECD, 2010, pp. 58-59). These systems are characterized by outsized civil service structures which were well-established by the 1960's and 1970's in the aim of accompanying vast state-led economic and development plans. However, and while international trends have moved from large-scale to smaller, more

efficient governments, the situation in the MENA region has lagged behind. Moreover, high unemployment rates, political instability, and thorny contexts of political disunity have made reform in the region rather difficult (Schiavo-Campo, de Tommaso, & Mukherjee, 1997, p. 30).

Figure 1. Government employment in the four case study countries, 2008

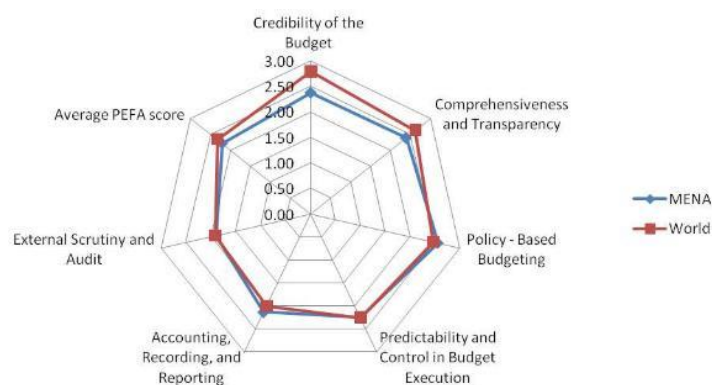


Note: Government employment in the four case study countries, 2008. From *Progress in Public Management in the Middle East and North Africa* (p.61), OECD, 2010, OECD Publishers.

Deficiencies in government size and efficiency both reflect deficiencies at the level of civil service recruitment, leadership, and management, and affect the overall financial performance and outcomes of public economic and financial policies in terms of Public Financial Management (PFM) indicators. Indeed, according to the World Bank (2010), the PFM systems in the region have been found to be, in many cases, lagging behind global PFM indicators in terms

of Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (The World Bank, 2010, p. iv), as outlined below.

Figure 2. MENA PEFA Averages Compared to Global PEFA Averages for Comparable Low Middle Income Countries



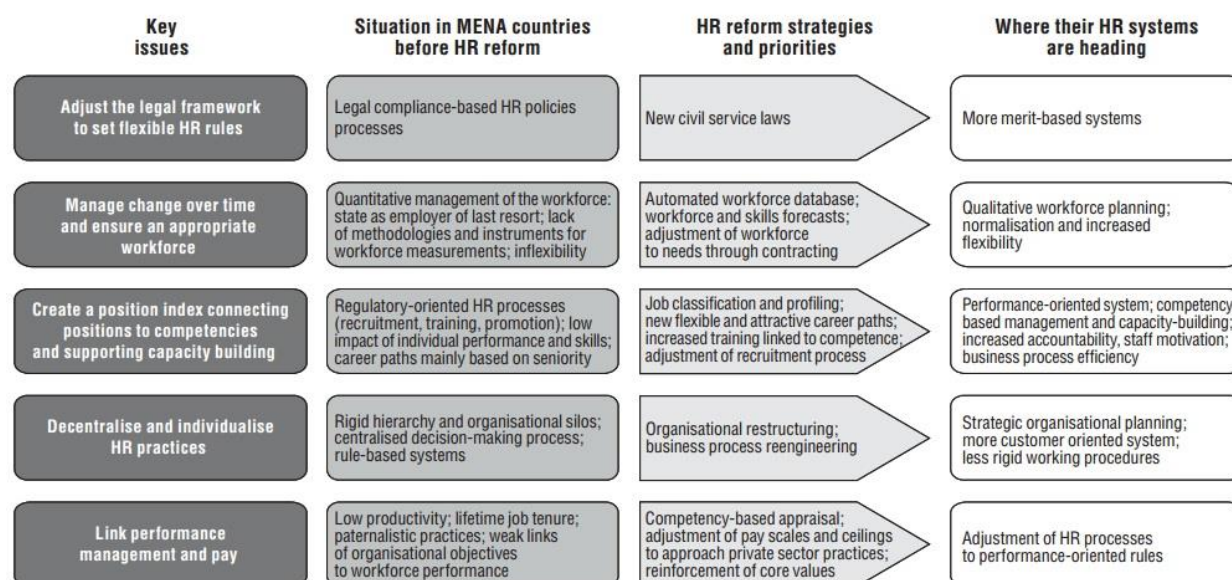
Note: MENA PEFA Averages Compared to Global PEFA Averages for Comparable Low Middle Income Countries. From *Public Financial Management Reform in the Middle East and North Africa: An Overview of Regional Experience* (p.iv), The World Bank, 2010, Washington, DC.

In an attempt to reform civil service systems in the MENA region, a number of programmes have been launched. Among these initiatives figures the Good Governance for Development in Arab Countries Initiative that was launched in Amman, Jordan, by ministers and prime ministers of 18 different Arab countries in 2005, among which 7 had by 2006 defined Country Action Plans (CAP) for public sector modernization². The initiative, supported by the OECD, the UNDP, and carried forward by the World Bank, the Arab League, the European Union, and other international organizations, aimed at the establishment of a forum of dialogue between policy practitioners. Through the initiative, a number of Country Action Plans were delineated and

² The states include: Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and the UAE.

implemented, targeting critical governance areas among which many directly target civil service reforms, such as civil service and integrity, e-government, administrative simplification, governance of public finance, and public service delivery (OECD, 2006, pp. 2-4)..

Figure 3. The main elements of HRM reform strategies in the MENA region



Note: The main elements of HRM reform strategies in the MENA region. From *Progress in Public Management in the Middle East and North Africa* (p.63), OECD, 2010, OECD Publishers.

Today, many of these states have been committed to move forward in their civil service reforms, including reforms pertaining to personnel management systems. Many have made strong commitments in that respect, and progress has been achieved in many countries in what relates to developing competency frameworks, job profiles, compensation schemes, and linking career paths to performance assessments (OECD, 2010, pp. 61-62). In Egypt, for example, job classifications were restructured and workforce planning schemes were established. In Morocco, the restructuring of job classifications was accompanied with updating of post descriptions and

the aligning of capacities with technological changes and civil service missions (OECD, 2010, pp. 17-19). However, the main challenge that remains to overcome is the revision of the civil service laws and regulatory frameworks in order to give proper impetus to the reforms (OECD, 2010, p. 62).

The Lebanese Context

A Multi-confessional State with a Democratic System of Government

Lebanon has a democratic system of government based on the separation of power between the executive, the legislature and the judicial branches. However, Lebanon's democracy is also built on the principle of sectarian power-sharing, which was entrenched in the National Pact of 1943, an unwritten agreement which ended decades-long disagreement between Christians and Muslims over the shape of the Lebanese state, which was initially established in 1920, during the era of the French mandate. Negotiated in 1943, it established a confessional formula providing for the proportional representation of Christians and Muslims in the government's apparatus, and assigned the offices of President, Prime Minister and Speaker of the House were assigned to the Maronite, Sunni and Shia sects respectively (El-Khazen, 1991, pp. 5-13, 64). As Kisirwani and Parle (2007) point out, "the principle of sectarian representation also applies to the composition of the National Assembly, the army and bureaucracy, and encompasses seventeen officially recognized sects" (Kisirwani & Parle, 1987).

Lebanon's liberal economy

Lebanon has traditionally promoted economic liberalism and a laissez-faire economy. It has a well-developed banking, touristic educational and health sectors and is also known for its' educated labor force. Lebanon's capital, Beirut, served as a base for regional and international trade and services firms. Moreover, the Lebanese economy was resistant to the wave of nationalization and socialization that swept major Arab countries during the 60's and 70's of the past century. In fact Lebanon benefited from the political and economic development in the region as these developments "led to the transfer of human and material resources to the country. According to Kisrawani, "The per capita GDP in 1973 amounted to US\$940, a figure surpassed in the region only by some of the oil states" (Kisirwani, 1997, p. 93).

The Lebanese Civil Service

The Lebanese administration, established according to the French model, is characterized by a great degree of centralization of authority, and for its elitism in the recruitment of civil servants. This is quite felt in the system of promotion as well as in the highly centralized formal authority, both organizationally and geographically. Until 1959, Lebanon had a departmentalized personnel system which did not provide for a centralized personnel agency to administer personnel policies and procedures on a government-wide basis, but instead entrusted this function to individual ministries which were often not well equipped for such a task. The inevitable result of such a system was lack of uniformity and duplication of efforts, in addition to flagrant favoritism in personnel practices that resulted from political and sectarian pressures - which often overlap - to which government ministries and departments were subjected. It was very difficult for ministers to resist political, religious, and family pressures for special favors, which often had to be satisfied in violation of existing rules and regulations.

At the wake of the brief civil war of 1958, President Fuad Chehab, previous army commander, assumed office and attempted to professionalize the civil service. One of the main priorities of the administrative reform movement launched by in 1959 was the improvement of the public personnel system through the introduction of a merit-based system to protect the civil service from political pressures and interventions and a government wide training program that would help to improve the quality of public service employees. Legislative decree 112 dated 12/6/1959, established the Civil Service Board as the central agency in charge of recruiting employees into the administration. It was entrusted with extensive powers over practically all aspects of personnel administration in all ministries and autonomous agencies, with the exception of the army, security forces, and the judiciary. However, as time went on, this system, which was initially established to centralize recruitment, reduce nepotism and political interference in the recruitment process, remained in effect (Hobeich, 2008, p. 60) and was not modernized in light of the modern trends or in light of the requirements of the administration following the war. It was therefore the last comprehensive structural reform the civil service had witnessed.

The Legacy of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990):

While the establishment of the CSB was a great leap towards enshrining meritocratic practice that held the same powers as line ministries, the CSB lost its mandate during the civil war, and suffered from heavy political blows that even threatened its survivability in 1995 (Subotic, 2011, p. 10). The administration was further incapacitated by the fact that civil servants had to accomplish complex procedures while lacking the means and proper technical and human capacities to do so. As such, efficiency in the delivery of services stood at a low level. Moreover, administrations and institutions lacked clear systems and procedural manuals. Some

public administrations lacked strategies with clear responsibilities assigned, while staff work responsibilities were also poorly linked to decision-making. At the core of the problem laid the civil service, which suffered from the absence of a modern human resources management system, a deficit in highly qualified and trained staff, and a decrease in the overall level of skills and competencies due to outdated employment, rallying and training systems. The legacy of the Lebanese civil war became heavier with the departure of almost 200,000 professionals and skilled workers, when the entire country's infrastructure was utterly destroyed (Schiavo-Campo, de Tommaso, & Mukherjee, 1997, p. 30).

The Era of Post-War Reconstruction

Among the steps that were taken at the dawn of the post-conflict era was the establishment of a number of pillar agencies that would support the comprehensive reconstruction and reform efforts that the government of Lebanon initiated. Having suffered a number of discontinuities, the administrative reform portfolio, initially initiated during the years 1959-1960, was given new life in 1995 with the establishment of the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform (OMSAR, 2011, p. 17). The OMSAR became "entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating the rebuilding of the civil service and the public administration" (Schiavo-Campo, de Tommaso, & Mukherjee, 1997, p. 30). The Institute of Finance Basil Fuleihan was established in 1996 to accompany PFM reform through training, and hence the development of country capacities, which have been identified by the OECD as key components of public sector reform initiatives (OECD, 2006, p. 7). Among these institutions also figures the Lebanese National School of Administration, established through the law no. 222 dated 29/5/2000, and which is in charge of providing capacity building in public administration and management. In

fact, article 2 of the law stipulates that the mission of the ENA is to develop the civil service staff at the administrative levels of grades 2, 3, and 4. (SIGMA, 2011, p. 52). Focusing on the training supply side, these efforts have often forgotten to address the core challenge at hand: Support the emergence of a structured demand, based on a clear competencies framework and modern HR policies that would regulate the Civil Service, including a modern recruitment strategy.

According to a Lebanese Civil Service Board report dated 20/10/2010, the number of vacancies in all categories reaches up to 15'344, out of 22'029 full-time. Coupled with the large number of vacancies, there are 61 vacant posts at top, policy and decision-making levels, within central government, out of a total of 150 jobs, or equivalent to a vacancy rate of 41% in leadership positions. This rate reaches 70% across the civil service (including public institutions). Moreover, the civil service is witnessing a general ageing trend and is in dire need of young and competent civil servants, whereas the average age of first-category civil servants stands at 58 years, and that of second-category is at 56 years of age (OMSAR, 2011, pp. 23-24). Finally, in financial terms, and based on data published in Ministry of Finance annual and monthly publications (2000-2011), the Civil Service Wage Bill is estimated at 9% of GDP and at 29% of current expenditures.

Establishing Competitive Recruitment Processes for Senior Government Positions in Lebanon

In an attempt to establish a framework that would allow to fill policy-making positions with competent officials that could act as agents of change in their administrations, the Government of Lebanon launched an initiative bent on establishing a recruitment process through which the best

candidates would be assigned to the best positions. In 2005, the Lebanese Prime Minister proposed to newly appointed Minister in charge of administrative reform to draft a law that would enable meritocratic recruitment. The Prime Minister also suggested the establishment of an independent committee that would screen, evaluate, and recommend the best candidates for available positions to line ministers. A committee composed of senior public officials, private sector executives and academics joined hands to set up a process based on best international practices for the transparent hiring of senior officials. A team of experts within the Institute of Finance Basil Fuleihan was asked to produce a guide for merit-based recruitment mechanisms (Subotic, 2011, p. 12)

The initiative, championed by the Prime Minister, benefited from political support at the higher level, which reinforced confidence in the process. It sought to establish a process that would allow attracting, developing and retaining civil service leaders at decision-making posts, outside the traditional recruitment procedure for Grade 1 positions. According to Article 12 of the Civil Service Law and its amendment no.3169 dated 29/4/1972, Grade 1 positions are to be filled through either direct promotion from Grade 2, or through external appointment, after which their appointment is made official through a Council of Ministers decree (Lebanese Republic, 1959) . The new process attempted to establish a system that would allow for open recruitment to take place at senior positions only, and particularly in what concerns external appointments, in order to reduce political interference in the appointment process, and allow the correct matching of job profiles with the competencies required at the position. The establishment of the recruitment system was deeply rooted in an integrative approach to all of the six components that can be considered as fundamental to senior civil service reform: scope of the senior civil services, recruitment, appointments mandates and contracts, performance assessment and pay, promotion and mobility, and finally, training and learning (OECD, 2003, p. 2).

Figure 4: Six key issues concerning senior civil service systems and reforms hereof



Note: Six key issues concerning senior civil service systems and reforms hereof. Adapted from *Managing senior management: Senior civil service reform in OECD member countries* (p.2), OECD, 2003, OECD Publishers, Paris.

By September

2005, the law was passed by the Council of Ministers and relegated to parliament for approval. As the matter was mostly pertaining to the decisions of line ministers, the implementation of the process started while awaiting parliamentary vote. This eventually led many young professionals in Lebanon as well as abroad to consider joining the civil service and contribute to its reform. (Subotic, 2011, pp. 8-12).

Objectives

When the process was launched in August 2005, it had both its objectives and components well outlined: The establishment of a transparent and objective merit based recruitment system using published criteria for evaluation and selection

- A Methodology for assessment of candidates suitable for a results and performance oriented work environment,
- Evaluation procedures focusing on potential capacity to perform of candidates rather than on educational background,
- Appropriate methodologies for interviewing.

On the medium term, the process would allow the government to recognize the need to design a new civil service salary structure, and seek to establish a pay scale that is fair, competitive, and sufficient to recruit, motivate, and retain competent and skilled public servants and leaders. On the longer term, the process would allow the creation of a largely depoliticized merit-based civil service. It would also allow for a significant improvement in the attractiveness of civil service positions, and would reduce political interference in senior civil service recruitment processes. Emphasis was placed on selecting the best-suited candidates for each position to be filled, whether by external recruitment or via internal promotion or mobility.

Institutionalizing the process

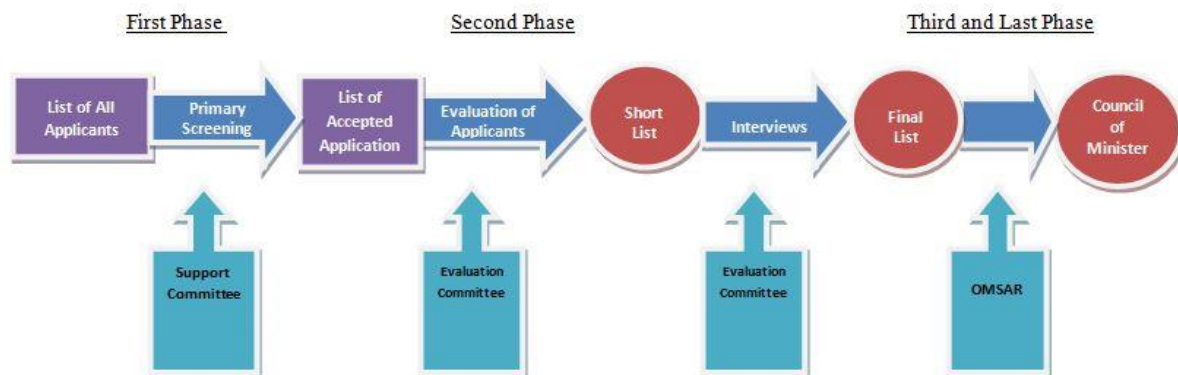
The development of a system through which senior civil servants would be recruited took into account internationally recognized practices and was outlined in a series of eight consecutive steps:

1. the announcement of the process and the safeguarding of its credibility;
2. the establishment of a steering committee;
3. the outlining of position descriptions;
4. the announcement;
5. the receipt of applications;

6. the screening of applications;
7. the short-listing of candidates; the oral interviewing process;
8. the decision and award phase.

The entire process was therefore inspired by general Human Resources Management practices that have become considered cornerstone practice in recruitment procedures. Moreover, the recruitment process itself integrated a series of components that would allow for a proper transition from recruitment, to pay and benefits scale management, to capacity development, in a manner that would create an enabling environment for leadership development.

Figure 5: The 2005 recruitment process in sequence



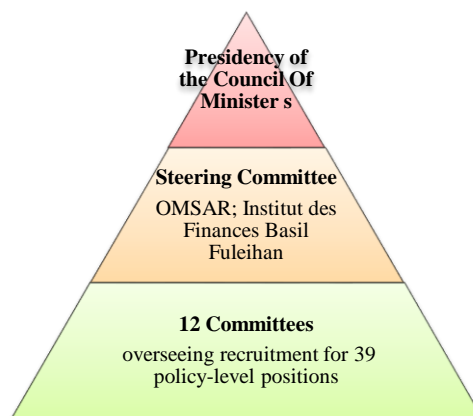
Note: The 2005 recruitment process in sequence. From “Lebanon: Enhancing meritocratic recruitment within the civil service” by S. Subotic, 2011, *Case studies in governance and public management in the Middle East and North Africa* (p.14).

- *The announcement of the process and the safeguarding of its credibility:* the official announcement of a new recruitment process in 2005 was made by the Prime Minister himself to counter the effect of low expectations of change and renew confidence in the

government's will to reform. It highlighted the core values endorsed by the process: neutrality, credibility and equal opportunity.

- *The establishment of a steering committee and sub-committees:* The government sought to set up specialized committees that would design, implement, and oversee the recruitment of executives for 39 policy-level positions in the Lebanese administration. 12 committees were set up for the implementation of the process, each composed of 5 to 7 renowned figures from the public sector, the private sector and academia. Overall, 53 personalities contributed free of charge to the process. Their work was supported by a secretariat of both key institutions, the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform (OMSAR), and the Institute of Finance Basil Fuleihan. The steering committee and its related subcommittees were also responsible of reviewing position descriptions, drafting, reviewing and approving announcements for posts, deciding on media campaigns, accepting and screening applications, selecting evaluators, reviewing and approving evaluation matrices, shortlisting candidates, preparing and overseeing oral interviews, re-conducting interviews, and ensuring that feedback and notifications are provided to applicants and that complaints or questions are dealt with in due time.

Figure 6. Specialized committees to oversee the proper implementation of the recruitment process



- *Creating proper position descriptions and job profiles:* The committees also sought the creation of job profiles that included detailed job objectives and specific measurable outputs as well as of a matrix of key competencies, skills, and knowledge that candidates were expected to have to successfully conduct their job. In an effort to identify and attract applicants with leadership qualities, job profiles also included personal qualifications such as: leadership styles, teamwork, handling skills, and other sets of prerequisites. The descriptions also highlighted the challenges of the position, career development prospects and expected compensation packages.
- *Announcements:* Following the establishment of specific position and job profiles, announcements were designed to also include common elements such as deadlines, job locations, financial packages and remuneration, addresses for sending CV's, and so forth. Advertisement ranged from USD 30,000 to 45,000 per advertisement and constituted the sole direct cost to the process.
- *Receipt of applications:* When the positions were advertised, 2842 application were received from throughout the world, some Lebanese emigrants even applied from the United States and Australia. The applicants hailed from different backgrounds and held different credentials. As figure 7 indicates however, the majority of applicants (84%) were male while only 16% were female. More interestingly however, is the fact that most applicants were in fact private sector professionals (65%), while only 26% were public sector executives – the matter which points out to the fact that proper recruitment along with competitive benefits in the public sector remains attractive for a large number of private sector professionals.

Figure 7: Gender Distribution of Applicants

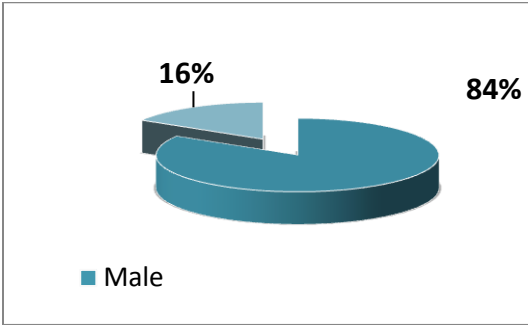
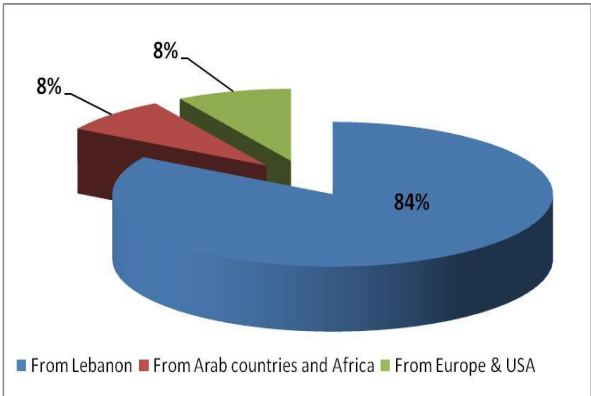


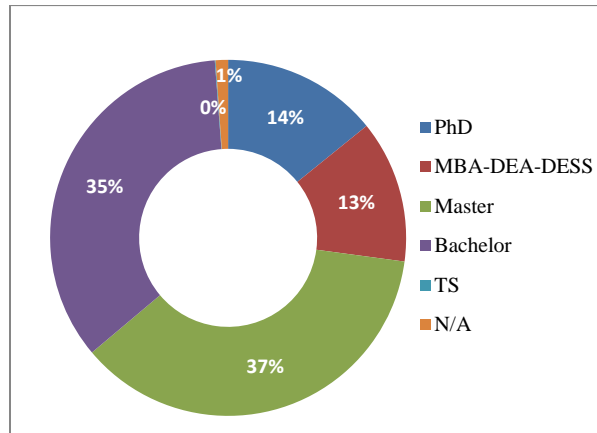
Figure 8. Source of applications



- *Application Screening:* this step was twofold. The first consisted of a manual screening that separated the obviously not eligible from the eligible before proceeding to the second screening stage. The candidates retained had to meet the following conditions: Possessing the Lebanese Nationality, holding the required university degrees, and enjoying the required professional experience. During the second screening, committee members selected applicants to be retained (10 to 15 candidates on average) based on set evaluation criteria detailed in a screening matrix, taking into considerations key qualifications that indicate potential leadership skills, including executive experience and experience in leading teams

and working in complex environments. The cost of processing 2,842 applications was rather low: around USD 160 per application.

Figure 9. Academic credentials of applicants

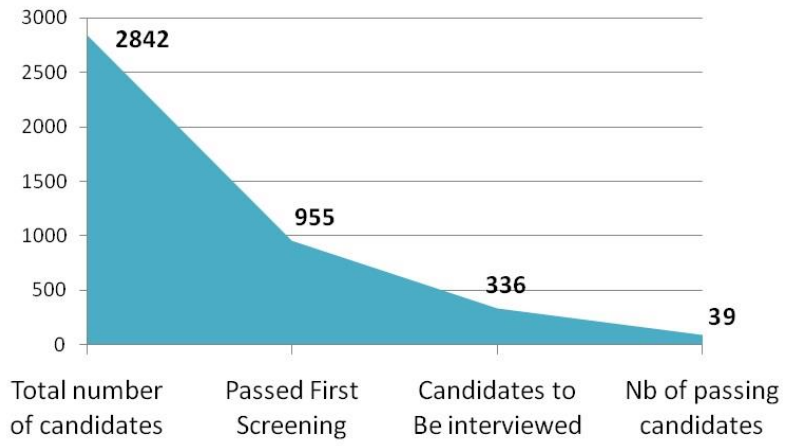


- *The short-listing process:* committee focus groups were then held for the purpose of setting up interviews with the short-listed candidates. Each interview panel included: a panel leader (skilled interviewer-tester), a technical specialist (an expert in the particular knowledge and skills needed for the job), a representative from the Lebanese Civil Service Board, Lebanon’s central civil service recruitment institution, a representative from the concerned ministry, and a line manager, namely the person to whom the successful candidate would report. A standard evaluation grid and marking plan were designed to measure the depth and particularity of the general and specific professional experience of the candidates as well as their relevance to the offered position. The process resulted in a short list of candidates (3-5) that moved on to the interviews phase.
- *Oral interviews:* The evaluation committee conducted structured interviews with the short listed candidates. More importantly however, is the fact that interviews focused on personal

qualities rather than skills only, as it is these particular qualities that are sought after when attempting to identify future leaders. Among such skills that were particularly sought after figures security, dynamism, sociability, sense of initiative, ambition, persuasion skills, negotiation skills, control of emotions, ability to listen, strategy for answering, reactions, and attitude towards challenges and difficulties.

- *Decision and Award:* By the end of the process, a total number of 39 candidates were identified as being the “best persons for the best positions” from a total number of 2,842 applications. However, only seven of the positions were filled as per the committee recommendations: four committee members and one Director General for the Telecommunication Regulatory Agency, and one Director General position for the High Council for Privatization. The appointments were made at positions that had no previous confessional legacies. In all of the other cases, confessionalism trumped meritocracy and professionalism, and led to a great deal of frustration both for the interviewees as well as for the committees (Subotic, 2011, p.14-15). Figure 6 outlines a summary of the process in its main stages.

Figure 10. Overall results of the “Competitive Recruitment Process for Senior Government Positions” conducted from October 2005 to July 2006



Code	Name of Position	No of positions	Date Post Announced	Deadline Application	Passed First Screening	Candidates to Be interviewed	Nb of passing candidates	Date Report submitted	Action	Comments
	Secretary general of Higher Council of Privatization	1 full time	25/08/2005	10/09/2005	18	8	3	26/05/2006	Ziad Hayek appointed June 1st	
MOH001	Mohafizeen	4 full time	24/10/2005	10/11/2005	98	40	12	04/03/2006	Decision by Council of Ministers	Committee did not meet Minister & PM
EDL001	Head of the board for Electricité du Liban	1 full time	18/10/2005	30/11/2005	29	11	5	28/02/2007	PM & Minister to interview candidates	Committee did not meet Minister & PM
EDL002	Member of the board for Electricité du Liban	6 full time	18/10/2005		146	23	8			
CAA001	Head of the board for the civil aviation authority	1 full time	18/10/2005	30/11/2005	13	7	2	27/03/2006	PM & Minister to interview candidates	Committee did not meet Minister & PM
CAA002	Member of the board for the civil aviation authority	4 full time	18/10/2005		35	26	8			
TRA001	Head of the Telecommunications regularity authority	1 full time	18/10/2005	30/11/2005	20	6	3	22/03/2006	Appointed	Committee did not meet Minister & PM
TRA002	Member & Head of Market and Competition Unit	1 full time	18/10/2005		21	12	4	02/06/2006	Appointed	
TRA003	Member & Head of Telecommunication and Technique Unit	1 full time	18/10/2005		48	16	4		Appointed	
TRA004	Member & Head of Legal and Licensing Unit	1 full time	18/10/2005		3	3	1			
TRA005	Member & Head of Information and Consumer Affair Unit	1 full time	18/10/2005		23	6	3		Appointed	
IDAL001	Head of the board for IDAL	1 full time	30/12/2005	15/01/2006	13	13	2	09/05/2006	PM to interview candidates	
IDAL002	Member of the board for IDAL-full time	2 full time	30/12/2005		69	12	3	20/11/2006		
IDAL003	Member of the board for IDAL-part time	4 part time	30/12/2005		81	13	5			
MOET	General Director of Economy and Trade	1 full time	30/12/2005	30/01/2006	41	12	2	08/05/2006	PM & Minister to interview candidates	Committee did not meet Minister & PM
MOWE&W	General Director of Petroleum	1 full time	15/02/2006	12/03/2006	43	13	4	05/02/2007	Committee to sign report & submit to Minister	Committee did not meet Minister & PM
MOWPT	General Director of Urban Planning	1 full time	21/04/2006	11/05/2006	47	24	3	23/11/2006	PM & Minister to interview candidates	Committee did not meet Minister & PM
MOSA	General Director of Social Affairs	1 full time	01/06/2006	21/06/2006	109	45	4	29/12/2006	PM & Minister to interview candidates	Committee met Minister on 22/01/2005
HCE001	Head of Electricity Authority	1 full time	13/06/2006	04/07/2006	30	9	5	09/07/2007	Committee signed report	Committee did not meet Minister & PM
HCE002	Members of Electricity Authority	4 full time	13/06/2006		34	14	8			
MOA	General Director of Agriculture	1 full time	26/10/2006	15/11/2006	34	23	4	15/06/2007	Committee signed report	Committee did not meet Minister & PM
TOTAL		39			955	336	93			

Code	Name of Position	No of positions	Date Post Announced	Deadline Application	Passed First Screening	Candidates to Be interviewed	Nb of passing candidates	Date Report submitted	Action	Comments
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	TOTAL	39			955	336	93			

Decline of the Process: Challenges and Lessons

By the end of the process, Lebanon had attempted to introduce a fundamental reform to the recruitment of executives to the highest positions in the civil service. The hiring under the draft law of 2005 was anonymous and, rather than taking into principal consideration the traditional and longstanding aspect of recruitment in the policy-level civil service – religion, the process was based solely on merit. Moreover, the confessional issue was left to the discretion of the line minister, who would decide whether to consider the matter or not. Should ministers decide to do so, the committees would have already provided ministers with their recommendations of the most qualified individuals for the post. However, the appraisal of the process was not unanimous, and in fact represented a threat to a greatly rooted system of sectarian appointments, which eventually led to heightened political tensions and interventions that precipitated the discontinuation of the process. In 2008, the OMSAR prepared a proposal outlining recruitment procedures for senior civil service positions within the framework of the process implemented in 2005. Moreover, the concerned Minister proposed the introduction of a decree that would render the implementation of the process binding while awaiting parliamentary vote. However, when the “Mechanism for the Appointment of Senior Leadership Positions in the Lebanese Government” reached the vote of the Council of Ministers, it was defeated by an overwhelming margin of 28 votes against, and two in favor. This eventually marked the steep decline of any hopes in a decree or law-based process, to the disappointment of all those who were initially interviewed and short-listed in 2005, and to the deep frustration of all committee members who had held high hopes in the establishment of a formalized and modern recruitment process. (Subotic, 2011, pp. 6-15).

However, the 2005 recruitment initiative and its attempted revival represented nonetheless an ambitious undertaking that challenged many assumptions underlying civil service reform in Lebanon. Firstly, it proved that many public sector officials and public figures hold a belief in the need to reform top-ranking civil service recruitment processes away from confessional complexities and nepotism. Secondly, it also allowed for the identification of viable alternatives to legislative- and decree-based initiatives that could prove to be as effective in creating an enabling environment that would allow for eventual legal changes to take place. Key steps have emerged as lessons for the launching of any future initiative:

- “Learn from experience”: undertaking an assessment of the strength and weaknesses of the past experience, using a questionnaire to be filled by all participating candidates, observers, committee members. Information collected would be instrumental in improving the process and will need to be complemented by a critical review of what was achieved and what was not. Linkages to the legal and organizational aspects, and with strategic HR management should be explored.
- “Recognize effort and solicit contributions”: inviting a selected number (or all) of those who participated to the process to express their views and concerns, and to contribute to identifying challenges and improvements. A Focus group of 10 to 15 people is recommended with structured discussion based on pre agreed guidelines.
- “Measure workload and ensure visibility”: Inventory vacant positions and prioritize them. A profile for every vacant position including desired qualifications and pay schemes should be prepared based on existing information including legal texts, expected roles, linkages with other institutions, etc. Such information will be used when preparing job advertisement and

evaluation criteria. Otherwise, advertisements as well as final recruitment might reveal a great degree of ambiguity in what relates to compensation and pay, a central matter in promoting and retaining leaders within the senior civil service

- “Strategize, communicate, rally support”: some of the main deficiencies that seem to have been identified in the implementation of the reform initiative is the limited involvement of key stakeholders such as parliament and civil society. The recruitment process was mostly a government-led initiative, and little coordination did take place between parliament and the government prior to the submission of the draft law to the legislative floor. Moreover, the limited involvement of civil society did not allow for lobbying and advocacy to take place, and which would have undoubtedly increased pressure on both parliament (in 2005) and government (in 2009) for the formal adoption of the process. (Subotic, 2011, p. 15). As such Setting up a new strategy should include covering strategic, organizational, legal and financial aspects; improving processes and tools; dedicating resources (staff, financial, etc); agreeing on a work plan showing milestones and deliverables; but of equal importance, communicating: A parallel communication strategy should be prepared to accompany the launch and implementation of the process. Public debate should be encouraged and supported with an adequate flow of information and data.

Moreover, as the initiative did face implementation difficulties related to the existence of a confessional and sectarian tradition, it becomes essential to seek to better address the issue of sectarianism in any future initiative. As religious and ethnic communities are very strong component of Lebanese society, a future recruitment process could envisage overcoming the discrepancy that might arise between a new process and customary procedures, by integrating the approach of religious

and cultural diversity. This would allow the process to reach its objectives while responding carefully and efficiently to the issue of sectarian and confessional representation.

Capacity Development: Towards a Learning-centered Leadership?

The Lebanese experience in the reform of recruitment at policy-level civil service clearly outlined the need for change within the administration. The failure of the initiative itself delineated the need for a more gradual approach to be undertaken in order to create the proper institutional climate for formal change in the future. In the absence of a possibility of radical change from traditional, confessional- and political- based recruitment at the highest level of government towards a modern senior recruitment management structure, emerges the need to develop mechanisms that would be conducive of change. A valuable paradigm for the promotion of change is that of transformational leadership, outlined by Burns (1978) as follows:

The transforming leader looks for possible motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents (As cited in Dunoon, 2002, p.7).

Among the approaches to transformational leadership figures the learning-centered leadership approach that “reflects a more collectivist view of leadership, and emphasizes processes such as dialogue and other forms of reflective conversation to build shared understandings and momentum for change”. Not only so, learning-centered leadership enables individual and group learning, where people become more self-aware, have more clarified assumptions, and where groups achieve a more in-depth understanding of issues they face.

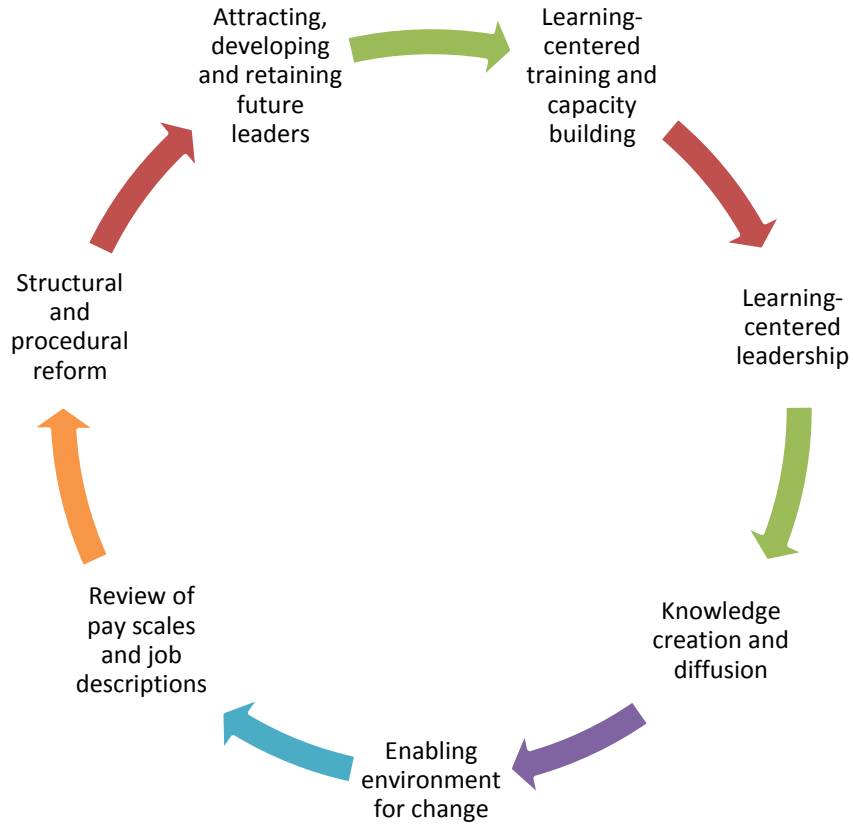
Figure 11. Four dimensions of Learning-centered Leadership

Strategic Leadership Working with others to: understand changing external and internal environments, clarify a preferred future (whether for the organisation or a particular program or initiative), engage with 'current reality' (Senge 1990), build momentum to achieve the vision, and develop alliances internally and externally.	Values-based Leadership Clarifying and articulating values to guide staff in decision-making; creating a climate in which values-related issues (such as ethical dilemmas) are discussed openly and in which gaps between espoused values and the values being enacted can be explored. Personally acting in ways that model the values espoused.
Leadership for Knowledge Creation Enabling people of diverse perspectives/backgrounds to integrate what they know, generate novel perspectives and achieve deeper understandings about the underlying nature of difficult problems facing the organisation, as well as strategies for dealing with those problems.	Developmental Leadership Working with individuals and groups so as to strengthen their capacity for effective action. Acting as coach, mentor and facilitator in ways that enable open and relatively safe exploration of underlying assumptions and beliefs.

Note: Four dimensions of Learning-centered Leadership. From "Rethinking leadership for the public sector", D. Dunoon, 2002, *Australian journal of public administration*, 61(3), p.11.

At the system level, learning-centered leadership underlines the importance that senior executives become trend-setters and learning-experience designers rather than charismatic figures. In order for systems to increase efficiency from such a perspective, top managers should learn to lead *with* the people (Dunoon, 2002, pp. 7-10). This approach to leadership encompasses four dimensions that can be best exemplified in the figure below.

Figure 12. Learning-centered training for structural and procedural reform



Following the decline of the development of senior leadership through a system reform oriented approach emerged therefore the paradigm of developing leaders from *within* by putting due emphasis on a people-based approach, hence, a learning-centered leadership approach. In an attempt to foster learning-centered leadership in the Lebanese administration within the present context, the Lebanese Institute of Finance Basil Fuleihan, which is in charge of providing PFM-related training and capacity building services to public sector officials, recognized the “critical junction” (OECD, 2011, p. 92) between a performance-oriented civil service and the role that senior civil servants can play. It opted towards developing the learning-centered approach to leadership in existing senior civil servants, in an effort to create an environment hospitable and conducive of change.

Building Capacities of Senior Civil Servants

In 2010, in collaboration with international partners such as the French National School of Administration (ENA) and the Embassy of France in Beirut and with the support of the Lebanese private sector represented by a leading bank - Fransabank, the Institute launched a yearly certification program tailor-made for senior civil servants. The Meetings of Lebanese Senior Officials Program was a milestone in the move towards developing leadership at the executive and policy ranks of the Lebanese administration, focusing on public finance management reform as an entry point to civil service reform. Each yearly program is designed of four consecutive sessions of two days each. Sessions tackled central topics for both management and leadership at the senior level.

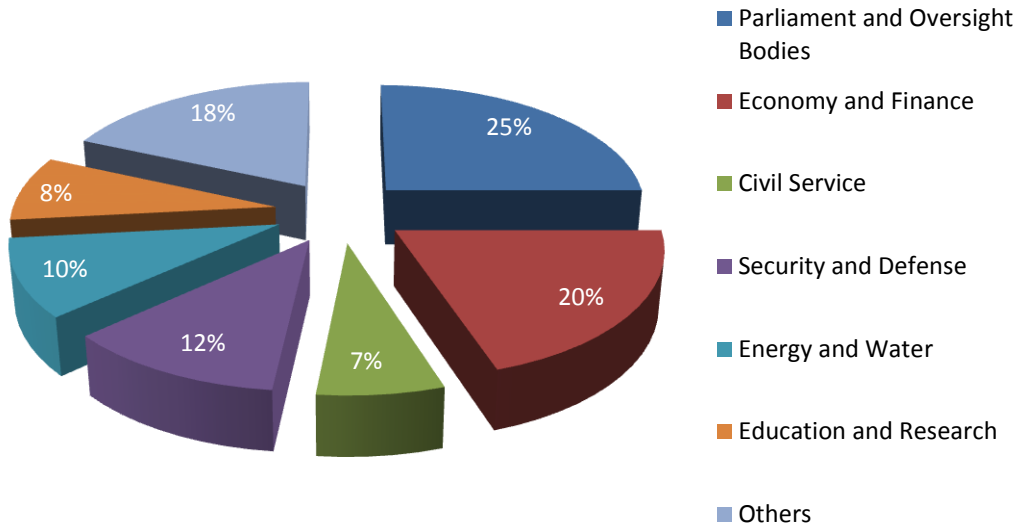
Table 2. Themes of the programs held from 2010 until 2013

	First session	Second session	Third session	Fourth session
2010	The processes of state modernization	Public finance: Instrument of state modernization	Decentralization	Leadership and change management
2011	Public policy design and implementation	Public finance: Instrument of state performance and modernization	Civil service today: costs, challenges and opportunities	Control, audit and evaluation of public expenditure
2012	Public finance: Instrument of state performance and	Public procurement	Control, audit and evaluation of public	Leadership and change management

2013	modernization	expenditure		
	Public finance: Instrument of state performance and modernization	Evaluating and mobilizing customs resources	Leading change within the administration	Economic realities and corruption

By 2013, 60 Grade 1 officials from throughout the Lebanese public administration had participated in the meetings of 2010, 2011, and 2012. They represented 37 public administration and institutions, including the civil service, parliamentary and oversight bodies, security and defense, energy and water, and economy and finance. Among the participants, 38% were women, while 62% were men, the matter which indicates the presence of an ambitious feminine component at the top ranks of the Lebanese administration.

Figure 13: Participants to the Meetings of Senior Officials per Administration



Note: Participants to the Meetings of Senior Officials per Administration. From *Rencontres des cadres dirigeants de la fonction publique Libanaise* (p.7), Institut des Finances Basil Fuleihan, 2013 Beirut: Institut des Finances Basil Fuleihan.

All of the programs included the following characteristics:

- A standard training component: Whereas senior civil servants would be formally trained and exposed to new skills, orientations, and general modern trends in each session,
- An exchange and group learning experience: Each session includes a solid component that emphasizes the exchange of expertise among participants, hence fostering common and group learning experiences that are fundamental to the development of a learning-centered approach to leadership (Dunoon, 2002)
- Building bridges among senior civil servants: through encouraging the fostering of personal relations among participants, in an effort to bridge the gap between public sector organization in an effort to promote a clearer and common vision to future policy and strategy.

According to the participants, the Meetings allowed them to:

1. Deepen their knowledge in Public Financial Management (PFM)
2. Enhance their ability to evaluate public policies and set performance indicators
3. Renew their vision in what relates to their professional function
4. Become better prepared for new challenges
5. Develop their managerial skills and their willingness to experiment with new approaches to the management of the institutions
6. Obtain personal fulfillment

They also saw the Meetings as an opportunity to:

1. Network among leaders, exchange and compare experiences
2. Share successes and challenges while comparing and, discussing expectations
3. Identify, discuss, and compare common problems
4. Find and develop confidence in the values of the civil service
5. Speak openly
6. Become familiar with the nature and missions of other institutions

Fostering Regional Cooperation and Exchange of Expertise

In line with the objective of developing a learning-centered leadership at the top ranks of the Lebanese administration, another initiative was launched in 2010 for the purpose of increasing the prospects of regional cooperation within the Mediterranean basin through allowing Lebanese public managers and leaders to become acquainted with regional experiences and expertise pertaining to the role that the public and private sectors should play in regional socio-economic development. Indeed, since 2010, Lebanon became a participant to the Cycle of Higher Studies for Economic Development in the

Mediterranean (CHEDE-MED), which was organized on a yearly basis with a number of regional partners. These meetings of the CHEDE-MED aimed at discussing the major socioeconomic challenges that the Mediterranean basin is facing. With the participation of private sector leaders, the program was able to foster synergies among the public and private sectors of the five participating countries, in support of economic development in the region. The 1st edition of the CHEDE MED meetings which was held in 2010 brought together 37 representatives from both the public and private sectors from the participating countries and was organized through a cooperation between the Institute of Public Administration and Economic Development (France), the Higher School of Economics and Finance (Italy), and the Institute of Finance (Morocco), and the Institut des Finances Basil Fuleihan (Institut des Finances Basil Fuleihan, 2011, p. 27). In 2011, the CHEDE-MED meetings were organized around the theme of “Innovation: A Lever for Economic Development”, through the partnership of the Finance Institutes affiliated to the Ministries of Finance of France, Italy, Morocco, Spain, and Lebanon. The meeting organized in Lebanon was entitled “Lebanon: A Mediterranean Hub at the Service of Innovation” and was sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Beirut and Mount Lebanon (CCIA-BML). Discussions covered the role of Lebanese institutions in promoting innovation, and participants were invited to interact with more than 25 resource persons including policymakers, academics, bankers, economists, and innovators. The meetings also allowed participants to exchange their experiences and know-how around many economic and social challenges their countries have been facing (Institut des Finances Basil Fuleihan, 2012, p. 47).

Leadership Skills in Specialized Topics: Public Procurement as an Example

A third initiative is also in the process of being launched, and seeks to reinforce the leadership skills of top-ranking officials in the field and practice of public procurement by enabling them to increase their knowledge in the field and acting as trend-setters within their administrations. Such an initiative is expected to improve the current misperception among public leaders of the strategic dimension of procurement in the global economy and enhance political will and ownership to drive this priority reform in Lebanon.

Table 3: The leadership in public procurement program

Objective	To encourage dialogue and raise awareness on the strategic role of public procurement in the public financial management and its implication on the national economy
Target Audience	Ministers, Parliamentarians and Director Generals, Court of Audit Judges, Advisors to Ministers
Selection Criteria	Institutional Affiliation / Influence on decision making
Learning Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better understanding of the central role of procurement. - Develop a shared view on the importance of procurement, and determine the best efficient methods to implement procurement processes.
Duration	Half day seminar / Twice a year on a selected theme (First Think Tank Session tentatively in November 2013)
Suggested Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The role of procurement strategy in delivering national objectives - Contribution of PP to employment and economic growth - Procurement as a tool to measure budget performance - The procurement cycle, timing and planning linked to the budget cycle
Output in 3 years	30 decision and policy makers targeted 6 think tank sessions 6 policy briefs

Conclusion: Reforming Recruitment for Leadership: Issues to Take into Consideration

The Lebanese experience in the installment of a competitive recruitment system that integrates a management-oriented outlook with a strong leadership component was marred with difficulties and eventually led to the decline of the initiative at both the legislative and executive levels. The challenges the experiment faced were characteristic of those found throughout the MENA region, and revealed the extent to which status-quo and customary practice prevails over reform and modernization aspirations. However, it also brought to the agenda of reform key components that need to be addressed before any attempt at altering the recruitment process is undertaken, such as the need to involve to a much larger extent both civil society and parliament in order to create a viable space for debate, pressure and lobbying. It also brought forth into the agenda the pressing need to undertake revisions of job descriptions and pay scales for senior civil servants conjunctionally with an overhaul of salary and compensation structures throughout the public sector. As such, prior to the re-launch of a leadership-oriented recruitment process in Lebanon, key issues should be taken into consideration:

The competitive work environment

As the regional labor market has become extremely competitive, a serious and realistic attempt to attract highly qualified staff will only lead to desired results if based on a clear understanding of what the market place is currently offering and is coupled to the revision of the pay and benefit packages offered by the Lebanese Government. Recruitment will not be considered successful and cost effective if the average number of qualified applicants per advertised position is below 10.

Pay Schemes

Members of the recruitment committee, the secretariat as well as candidates, considered the lack of clear and transparent information about the pay scheme and benefit package of the concerned position

as one of the major challenges to attracting highly qualified staff. Despite the fact that most information may be drawn from the electronic pay system of the Ministry of Finance, the Civil Service Board did not elucidate this ambiguity although it was a major factor in deterring qualified candidates.

Presently, ambiguity still prevails as it is not established by empirical evidence that the salary rates are inadequate for the majority of civil servants to maintain a decent standard of living nor that they are uncompetitive in relation with the private sector. Access to data on the civil service sector pay is necessary for elaborating an analysis on the scope of the anomalies and distortions.

This ambiguity is believed to cause skewing in the recruitment process (a job pay that looks unattractive may reveal interesting and vice versa). Entertaining such ambiguity is believed to discourage graduate staff with professional and technical skills that are not familiar with public sector functioning and to encourage those “who are well introduced”.

Furthermore, an inequitable treatment in the various institutions and between public administrations and public institutions has been identified. Differences in responsibilities between the various grades are not clearly defined and staff carrying out similar work or in similar grades could earn significantly different amounts. This is contrary to the international provisions in the field, which foresees equal pay for equal work.

It is therefore recommended that prior to the launch of the new recruitment process, that a comprehensive job profile be prepared with a detailed description of the job to be advertised, challenges and risks, pay and benefit. Such information will be necessary to the issuance of an attractive advertisement note, and would also give meaningful signals (fairness, competitiveness) sufficient to attract and retain competent civil servants.

On-line Application and Candidate Database

The automation of the application process (that could be inspired from the UN on-line recruitment site as a good practice) and the electronic management of the process including feedback on receipt of applications and notifications of results, would undoubtedly increase the public's confidence in the initiative. Provisions for reporting and statistics generation could be included in the design allowing to monitor the process and to evaluate it at any one time.

For security and personal privacy reasons, the Candidate Database would be separate from any HR management system used within the Civil Service Board.

Training and Capacity Development

Finally, the development of leadership at the senior civil service cannot simply be achieved solely through a system and procedure-based outlook. While attracting, fostering, developing, training and retaining leaders can be integrated within the recruitment process itself public sector executives need to be developed as learning-centered individuals and not solely as charismatic orators. They need to be exposed to modern trends of public administration conjunctionally with the development of their personal- and people-centered skills. They need to be complemented by leadership training that emphasizes learning as a continuous process that they would in turn instill in their administrations and staff, hence raising their sense of awareness, their interest in learning and exchanging knowledge, and in eventually challenging existing practices. Once a learning-centered leadership has developed within the senior administration, an appropriate environment for change would have been fostered, hence allowing the shift towards system-based reform and the reform of complete administrative structures, such as the recruitment processes.

On the longer term, the Government is expected to mobilize all efforts to create a largely depoliticized and meritocratic civil service through the establishment of a transparent and competitive recruitment process for all civil servants and of independent and credible redress mechanisms and appeal agency. It is also called upon to make significant improvements to the attractiveness of civil service with respect to both remuneration and fairness of civil service management actions. Attracting and retaining talents within the Civil Service is undoubtedly a key step for any country to attain its full development potential.

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