



Original Article

THE HUMAN RESOURCE COMPONENT AND THE ROLE OF SOCIETAL MEMBERSHIP IN THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION IN PRE- AND POST-COLONIAL SRI LANKA

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Abstract

Public sector management in Sri Lanka has a long history which goes centuries beyond colonial administration. With the introduction of the colonial administrative system, drastic changes were made in the traditional indigenous public management mechanism that existed in pre-colonial Sri Lanka, resulting in extensive modifications in the human resource component. Although both traditional and post-colonial societies have been researched under many aspects, attention paid on the social organization in a human resource management perspective, focusing the human resource component and the role of organizational members in the administrative effort is near to the ground. Thus, this paper aims at distinguishing the attributes of traditional and post-colonial public administrative organization of Sri Lanka, with special emphasis on its human resource component and the role of societal members in the public administrative domain. Further, this paper searches the possibilities of reframing the role of citizens in order to improve the public service in the modern era, utilizing the themes underlying the attributes of the traditional system. This, being a desk research, the secondary data gathered for it from archival sources was comprehensively reviewed and analyzed with the support of memoing and constant comparison, in order to arrive at conclusions. In the traditional system, public administration was organized extending its structure over the entire social organization and all the societal members were acknowledged as direct stakeholders of the public administrative organization, constituting its human resource. In contrast, the colonial administrative mechanism formed a separate organization consisted of officers to manage the public affairs. As a result, the societal members' role as active members of the public administrative system diminished and the citizens became mere service receivers. Alienation of citizens from direct involvement in public services created a sense of loss of ownership which made ground for less accountability, less responsibility and less commitment in communal matters. Even though the contemporary society is quite different from the traditional context, the shared values arising out of the traditional system may open new arenas for enforcing the commitment of citizens for better management of public resources and services by increasing their involvement.

Keywords: Human Resource, Public Service, Role of Citizens

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INTRODUCTION



Extensive evidence available in chronicles and inscriptions trace back the Human Resource Management (HRM) in the public sector of Sri Lanka to early civilizations existed before several centuries. They prove the existence of broad administrative mechanisms in ancient civilizations like Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. At the time of last native government prevailed in the Kandyan Kingdom a comprehensive indigenous administrative mechanism was in operation. Kandy is commonly considered as the template of pre-modern realms with local power. Although Portuguese and Dutch regimes operated in the Maritime Provinces of the country during 16th and 17th centuries influenced substantially, the Kandyan Kingdom remained autonomous until it was completely surrendered by the British in 1815.

Under the British rule, first steps were taken to introduce modern public administrative organization, with the establishment of Civil Service, with a view to providing services to the public. Public service is referred to all organizations and activities financed out of public revenue (Warnapala, 1995). Employees of the public sector organizations or the 'public servants' are defined as all holders of offices, run and maintained out of public funds or the funds obtained from public revenue (Warnapala, 1995), excepting certain offices determined by the Constitution of the country (Article 170, Chapter IX). Generally, in Sri Lanka, it has been accepted that the duty of the public service is to render services to meet the interests of the public, based on policies and policy

frame as decided by the Government. The magnitude of such duty is so vast since it covers almost all aspects of services and facilitation to be provided by the State for the wellbeing and progression of the General Public (Silva, 2013). In Sri Lanka, the system of public administration is the major mechanism of human development, which however needs rejuvenation through transparent, efficient, equal, accountable and outcome-oriented public service processes fueled by the New Public Management initiatives (Kumara and Handapangoda, 2008). New public management is viewed as "an approach in public administration that employs knowledge and experiences acquired in business management and other disciplines to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and general performance of public services in modern bureaucracies" (Vigoda, 2013).

Human resource is considered as one of the most important assets of any organization, including public administrative organizations. Human resource is simply defined as the employees who work for the organization being concerned (Opatha, 2009). According to the Annual Report – 2012 of Ministry of Finance and Planning, human resource of the public sector is identified under three major categories as Central Government, Provincial Councils, and Local Authorities. Central government consists of pensionable public service; semi-government i.e. universities, budgetary funded corporations and statutory boards; and government-owned commercial entities or business enterprises including state banks. Viewing labor as the most inefficiently



managed resource in Sri Lanka, Wijewardene (1992) asserts that Sri Lankan entrepreneurs particularly those in the public sector are often criticized for their poor management. Nanayakkara (2009) observes that Sri Lanka's public sector continues to be excessively large, expensive and incompetent. Their knowledge of the globalizing world is appallingly low, and their competencies are shamefully inadequate. Still led by the old guard, the top bureaucracy miserably fails to introduce any meaningful management change in the public sector (Nanayakkara, 2009). Despite country's preparedness towards implementation of new public management reforms in capacity building, institutional and legal framework, the quality of the public services is often claimed to be on the decrease (Kumara and Handapangoda, 2008). According to Nanayakkara (2009), modern economic development requires the support of a dynamic public sector where the government must be lean, citizen-focused, and energizing in a modernizing economy. User involvement has been identified as a useful strategy in increasing the satisfaction of public service. Engaging individual citizens and civil society organizations as partners in the design, production, and delivery of public services lead to higher user satisfaction and potential cost reductions (OECD, 2011). In Sri Lanka, citizens are still an unused resource for improving public service delivery. Citizen participation has been identified as one of the most significant elements among the essentials of the New Public Management agenda (Kumara and Handapangoda, 2008).

Sri Lanka too has developed an environment conducive to undertake the New Public Management reforms, but issues exist in the process with regard to the applicability of Western-type New Public Management reforms in the developing world arising from cultural disparities between the latter and that of the Western world (Kumara and Handapangoda, 2008). As a means of filling this void, the values associated with indigenous mechanisms, organizations, and practices of public administration may provide a useful ground to formulate and implement strategies.

In discussing the traditional public administrative organization and its transformation into a different form after colonization, the Kandyan Convention of 1815, which is considered as an important turning point in the country's history, has to be taken into consideration. With the Proclamation of 1815, the last independent native regime; the Kandyan Kingdom fell into the hands of British, bringing the entire island under foreign domination. British authority introduced drastic modifications in the prevailing socio-economic, cultural and religious spheres of the country. Although a public administrative organization can be identified as one of the traditional institutions affected largely under these circumstances, a very little attention has been paid on its attributes, modifications, and constitution of organizational members, in a human resource management perspective. Hence, this paper aims at distinguishing the two systems of public administration; traditional and post-colonial, examining their



attributes, changes occurred during the British rule, and the composition of human resource, with a special emphasis on the role of societal members in public administration. In light of this examination, it is further attempted to discuss the possibilities of reframing the role of citizens in order to improve the public service, utilizing the commonly valued standards and norms underlying the attributes of the traditional system.

PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATION AND HRM IN PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD

During the early 19th century the governance structure of the country was functioning in two forms; British administration in Maritime Provinces and the administration of the Kandyan Kingdom which was largely supported by the traditional socio-economic organizations and institutions. In the absence of a straightforward indigenous or pre-colonial model of the social context of the country, the late Kandyan society and culture were widely taken as a template for pre-colonial Sri Lanka (Rogers, 2004). Upon this ground, to identify the attributes of the public administrative organization and the role of societal members representing its human resource, governance structures and functions of the Kandyan social organization is taken into consideration.

The Kandyan Kingdom, the chief governing structure existed during the 17th and 18th centuries is considered as the successor of old civilizations and kingdoms in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa (Dewaraja 1985; 1995)

and is considered as an integral part of the traditional Sinhalese monarchical system (Dewaraja, 1995). According to Dewaraja (1995) in the Kandyan Kingdom, the whole political system was based upon, and the social system too revolved around monarchy. She further points out two other principle features of the Kandyan administrative system as bureaucratic nobility and the rigid grading system of the administrative class controlled by the unwritten yet inexorable laws of caste. According to Silva (2005), Kandyan administrative system was closely bound up with land tenure, caste, and Rajakariya. The organization through which public services were administered can be further identified with following structural features.

Organizational Structure: The administrative structure of the Kandyan Kingdom was territorially organized with a functional division at the bottom of the administrative ladder (Dewaraja, 1995). In the territorial division, there were twelve '*Disavani*'s and nine '*Rata*'s each headed by a '*Disawe*' and '*Rate Mahatmaya*' respectively (D'Oyly, 1929). Under these officials, there were several other officials who controlled smaller subdivisions like *Thulanas* and *Pattus*. Caste system played a vital role in the administration of Kandyan Kingdom through its functional division. Co-existence of the '*badda*' or caste system virtually cut across the territorial system dividing the population into functional groups. *Rajakariya* system is the mechanism through which the citizens' contribution was taken for public service in this structural setting. According to Mendis (1952)



Rajakariya system involved the performance of two classes of duties: unpaid services rendered by people for the repair and maintenance of the paths and bridges in their districts; and services performed in respect of lands held and varying according to the caste of persons who performed them. The first form of this service consists of the compulsory requirement of engaging in public services of the government by the citizens during a prescribed period of time. In its maturity in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the key feature of the *Rajakariya* system was the performance of gratuitous services on public works such as the construction of roads, bridges, and tanks (Silva, 1981).

The mass of the people in up-country remained a static, stratified society dominated by the divisive forces of feudal origin (Pakeman, 1970). As viewed by Dewaraja (1995) the caste system in the Kandyan Kingdom was not only a self-contained autonomous social order of the people but also an official order of the society, protected, controlled and stabilized by the government. The caste system has been identified as the foundation of whole social and economic organizational mechanism in the Kandyan Kingdom as well as a mechanism of counterbalancing the absolute powers of the top level (Dewaraja, 1995). All most all the citizens became direct members of the administrative organization through this functional structure. The Kandyan caste structure was essentially a system of labor specialization providing the various services needed for the state and society where each caste was economically privileged in the sense

that it alone had the right to supply a particular kind of labour (Dewaraja, 1995). Caste consisted of a complete system of life and work, in which every man knew his place, had regular work and rarely exchanged it for another (Mendis, 1956). The caste system produces occupational niches specialized for different occupations which produced different services required for the functioning of the social organization.

Authoritarianism: The administrative mechanism was largely based on the traditional conventions and the customs of the society. Percival (1803) views that natives of the island were highly concerned about the fundamental laws and regulations, existing among them from time immemorial as the real depositaries of supreme power. According to Dewaraja (1995), an unwritten code of behaviour governed all social relationships between castes. As a result, the boundaries of the system were so strong and rigid. As noted by Amarasinghe (1999), ‘Niti Nighanduwa’; a code of traditional Sinhalese laws, distinguishes sources of law as *Raja Nitya* (the King’s Law), *Dharma Nitya* (Ecclesiastical Law), and *Loka- Nitya* (customary law). With the enforcement of these laws, especially the customary law, the system itself was so authoritarian. The recognition is given to the traditional conventions and the shared customary values were supreme. But on the other hand, this institutional authoritarianism had a humanistic approach where it operated flexibly and informally in certain situations with the paternal leadership style practiced by the chiefs at different levels.



Despotism: The top level of the public administrative organization was represented by the King, whose power was supreme and absolute (D'Oyly, 1929). According to Coomaraswamy (1908), the king ruled as an absolute monarchy. Percival (1803) views that the government of Kandy was an absolute despotism, but adds that people believed if the King ventures to encroach upon the traditional laws and values, he was amenable to the justice of his country as well as to the meanest subject. As the chief authority of the public administrative organization, the King was obliged to consult the principal chieftains and the religious dignitaries who represented the citizens before making decisions. As Coomaraswamy (1908) views, the acts of the kings' government were presumed to be guided by the institutions of his kingdom where it was usual to consult the principal chiefs and priests in making an important decision. In that sense, the powers given to the king were not legally unlimited and his powers were determined by custom or law (Jennings, 1952). Amarasinghe (1999) asserts that the king's authority was not absolute; not untrammelled, unqualified and unconditional. It is clear that the mechanism of mediating the despotic power was empowered by customs and conventions; as well as the public opinion represented by the principal chieftains and the religious dignitaries. According to Paranavithana (1959) the absolute power which the king possessed in theory was, however, limited to a great extent in practice by public opinion which demanded of the ruler to follow fundamental principles of justice and equity (*dharma*) and custom and etiquette (*sirith virith*) as

established by the policies followed by earlier rulers who served as models of kingly behaviour. Dewaraja (1988) comments that past traditions and popular opinions combined to form a healthy check upon despotism.

Decentralization of Powers:

Although the king was vested with a supreme power, there were subordinating officers and lower level decision-making entities. According to Dewaraja (1988), most of his judicial powers except the right to inflict capital punishment had been delegated to his officers, including *Adhikari*; the chief ministers and *Disavas*; the Provincial Heads. The *Disavas* had his own administrative staff which he appointed from among the members of the local aristocracy. At times when royal authority did not penetrate into the provinces through royal and temple villages, the *disavas* was able to make common cause not only with those he was supposed to rule but also with the petty bureaucrats under him (Dewaraja, 1988). In organizations functioned at village level and caste level like *Gamsabha* and *Rata Sabha*, the members could discuss together and make decisions relevant to issues among them. It was evident that *Gamsabha*; the village courts had both civil and criminal jurisdiction (Heyley, 1932), and discharged certain administrative functions during the Kandyan times (Karunananda, 2005). *Rata sabha* or *Variga Sabha* can be identified as a mechanism of settling caste based disputes and infringements of customary conventions. Ryan (1953) observes that this entity served to purify the atmosphere, preserving the caste integrity. The scope of operations of *Rata Sabha* covered both



social and judicial spheres. Commenting on the jurisdiction of *Rata Sabha*, Peries (1956) notes that besides the practices of charm, false and malicious accusations of disgraceful conduct, and actions in contempt of the *Rata Sabha*, the other offenses all relate to illegal social and sexual relations between members of different castes or classes. Amarasinghe (1999) states that a hierarchical appellate system existed in pre-colonial Sri Lanka. D'Oyly explains that the liberty of seeking redress, first by application to the Principal People of his village, next to the Headmen or Chiefs of the Province, next to his superior Chief, to the *Adhikari*, to the Great Court and lastly to the King. Appeal lying from the entire subordinate to any of the intermediate or to the Supreme Authority, in case either party is dissatisfied with their jurisdiction. These institutions made the members enable of making consensus-based decisions regarding the matters affecting to them to a certain extent. Coomaraswamy (1908) identifies such entities as democratic and communal organizations. All the institutions operating in the administrative mechanism were responsible for making decisions regarding both administrative and judicial matters. No separate organizations were existed for handling the administrative matter and judicial matters in different manners.

Feudalism: Land and its tenure form the key to the social economy of the Kandyans (Coomaraswamy, 1908). The land and the service were inseparably associated where the possessors were subjected to regular public duties and contributions.

Jennings (1952) distinguishes the feudalism existed in the Kandyan system for the greater potential authority given to the King by it. According to him the chiefs were governing the respective areas or having the ownership of land by reason of appointment by the king. But on the other hand, the king had no effective power unless he had the support of his subordinates (Jennings, 1952). One of the most important features regarding the social system of that era is the prominence given to the public sector. Many of the performances of the society were in communal nature where each person or categories of people were obliged to perform the services assigned to them by the traditional system. Peris (1956) interprets the caste system as a mechanism by which the labour resources of the Kingdom could be mobilized for public services. People had their own sources of income, accumulations of personal wealth and assets, which were based on traditional occupations and the caste-free occupation; agriculture. But only a minor importance was given to the personal enterprises. Hired labour was considered derogatory both to the employer and the employee (Dewaraja, 1988). Coomaraswamy (1908) states that merchants were few or none in Sinhalese caste structure. The relationship existed among the heads and the subordinate people were not mainly based on material returns. It was a sort of leader-member relationship with closer emotional and psychological ties. Headmen were considered as patriarchal heads of the society and its members (Karunananda, 2006). Discussing the conflicting context existed in Kandyan government Dewaraja (1985)



comments that emotional and psychological ties cut across political barriers stabilizing the position of the King.

All the caste-based communities or the occupational niches were considered as subsystems of the main system where the tight relationships link them with the social order inseparably. To ensure the proper performance of the entire social organization, performance of different occupational niches was of utmost importance. Dewaraja (1995) views this institutional arrangement as a dynamic force driving the cogwheels of the administrative machinery. In addition to the provision of services through occupational niches, people had to employ in government work through 'Rajakariya' system. In light of these facets it can be asserted that during this pre-colonial era, the public sector occupied the place of most prominent organization of the country including all the strata of the society and through that, all the people of the society. The social structure was the organizational structure through which different functional requirements were fulfilled. Therefore, the entire society or the social organization can be considered as the administrative organization of the public sector during this era. Even with the substantial effects of Portuguese and Dutch regimes in Maritime Provinces, Kandyan Kingdom continued to function within its traditional system. Kannangara (1966) views that when the British arrived in Ceylon at the turn of the 19th century; a long period of European rule in the Maritime Provinces had resulted in a partial change in the feudal organization that had existed there, while in the

Kandyan Kingdom it remained virtually intact.

In light of these attributes, it can be noticed that traditional public administrative organization was based on a decentralized system on geographical as well as on functional bases further delegating powers to communal institutions at the bottom of the power structure. At the same time, authoritarianism was valued but in a rather humanistic and flexible disposition. Despotism was recognized subject to conventional directives and public opinion, leaving the absolute supremacy upon the traditional laws. Moreover, Superior-subordinate relationships were valued as leader-member relationships where superiors lead the subordinates with a sense of leadership while subordinates loyally accept and follow the leader. Above all, the human resource of the organization comprised of all the members of the society, including every person belonging to every geographical and functional division, where every individual member had a certain role to perform in public service. Thus, these commonly accepted and valued standards can be identified as the main themes underlying the attributes of the traditional public administrative organization.

PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATION AND HRM DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

The Civil Service of Ceylon originated with the establishment of Crown Colony Rule in 1801 (Kannangara, 1966; Silva, 2006). According to



Pakeman (1970) under the crown colony system, the final power over the territory was retained by the British Crown through the secretary of State in Whitehall, while the local authority was entrusted to the sovereign's representative, the Governor. By the Kandyan Convention of 1815, the Dominion of the Kandyan Provinces was vested in the Sovereign of the British Empire. Proclamation 1815 declared that all civil and criminal justice over the Kandyans was to be administered according to the established forms and through the ordinary authorities, while the government reserved to itself the right to interposition when necessary (Pakeman, 1970).

The pre-colonial public administrative mechanism existed in the Kandyan Kingdom was not modified immediately after the Proclamation of 1815 where it was agreed to rule the country according to the laws, institutions, and customs established and in force amongst the inhabitants. But the Royal Proclamation No 21 of 1818 made the Kandyan Convention ineffective. It declared the supremacy the British Crown, exercised by the Governor and his Agents and to which obedience of all citizens is due. Even after the proclamation of 1818, the Kandyan Provinces were continued to be administered under a separate governance structure distinct from that in the Maritime Provinces. But the survived chieftains after 1818 rebellion were reduced to impotence as paid servants of the government who had to obey its orders implicitly (Pakeman, 1970).

But as a result of the strength of the existed administrative mechanism, they had to maintain some aspects of the native mechanism unchanged. According to Kannangara (1966) Headmen who attached to and formed a part of that administrative system could not be displaced without affecting the social and political stability of the country. This situation led British administrators to establish only a superimposition of a loose form of European authority over the feudal organization that had belonged to the former monarchs during the early years of their regime. Up to the Constitutional reforms in 1933, to govern through a greater part of the former administrative machinery, a European structure was superimposed on a part of the former feudal organization, which was retained though greatly changed in character (Kannangara, 1966). Although it was inconsistent with the egalitarian, humanitarian and liberal concepts of British administration, they maintained this caste feudalism with slight modifications until it was officially abandoned by an Order of Council in 1832 (Silva, 2005). The system of government thus established, which can be considered as a mixture of existed Sinhalese and new British administration systems, remained basically unchanged up to 1833. Colebrook reforms (1832 – 1833) opposed *Rajakariya* system on both economic and humanitarian ground (Mendis, 1956) and decided to abolish the system. All contributions and gratuitous services were declared to be abolished, by these early British reforms, subject to certain reservations and exceptions (Kannangara, 1966).



With compared to the indigenous social organization of public administration, the British organizational arrangements modified the system forming a new organization featured with following attributes.

Organizational Structure: In these reforms, Colebrook recommended the establishment of an administrative mechanism organized purely on a territorial basis (Pakeman, 1970). With this decision, the functional division operated at the bottom level of Kandyan social organization was removed.

Liberalism: The British reforms loosen the tightly interwoven relationships of economic and social order in the Kandyan administrative machinery. “The people were different from the rulers in very many respects and they were living under a different social and economic order. While forces coming from outside, and from the more developed society, carried them towards more liberal institutions where those coming from within took them towards authoritarianism (Kannangara, 1966).” He views this pull in opposite directions as one of the main threads which ran through the development of the administrative structure in Ceylon. When the caste-bound duty system was made ineffective and *Rajakari* system was abolished, people were released from the compulsory duties of the public administrative organizations. The supreme authority held by age-old customs and conventions was challenged and the recognition given to them was thrown down. People were enabled to move to other jobs beyond

their caste-based traditional occupations. But this liberalism was practiced only for weakening the traditional system. People could enjoy no social, political or economic liberalism under the foreign regime and its administrative mechanism. The protection of the rights promised by the 1815 Proclamation proved to be less important than the establishment of full British colonial control through forceful administrative measures (Godden and Casinader, 2013). Pakeman (1970) observes that the British administration of crown colony system as an authoritarian form of autocracies, sometimes benevolent, sometimes repressive.

Democracy: British administrators in Ceylon attempted to establish a formal system of governance based on rule of law. They imposed rules and regulations which would be applied equally to all citizens. It was presumed to follow an egalitarian approach but actually, there was no social, political or economic freedom in the broader outlook.

Centralized Bureaucracy: As observed by Pakeman (1970) at the top of the social pyramid were the officials of the Ceylon Civil Service where their private conduct was regulated by elaborate social conventions which made civil servants an exclusive ‘caste’. Throughout the British period, government service was considered by Ceylonese as employment par excellence, and the Civil Servant was the most prestigious official of them all (Fernando, 1970). Referring to the Report of the Commission of Constitutional Reforms, Warnapala



(2005) views that the character of the administration of Ceylon in the period before 1932 remained that of a centralized bureaucracy. Further, he asserts that the hallmark of the administration system introduced by the British during this period was authoritarianism.

Capitalism: Abolition of traditional public administration system with the caste system and *Rajakari* system allowed people to choose occupations freely. Adherence to caste-bound duties and obligations were no more required. According to Pakeman (1970), the early British reforms enforced mobility of labour and growth of individual freedom where it was expected to gear the whole administration system of free enterprise. Upon this background, the communal and collectivistic performance of citizens in the social organization was turned into a different role with a capitalistic and individualistic view.

Employer-Employee Relationship: Both native chiefs and citizens who involved in duties related to public services were paid salaries under the British administration. This situation promoted an employer-employee relationship between the management and the subordinates, changing the leader-member relationship existed during the period of sovereign rule.

Separation of powers: At the very inception the management of public sector, represented by the Civil Service, handled all executive, legislative and judicial functions of the

country as the embodiment of British power. Mendis (1956) comments that sufficiency of government depended on the efficiency of Civil Service during the early years of British administration. Later the Ceylon Civil Service was structured in accordance with the notion of separation of powers with sufficient means of checks and balances (Silva, 2006).

Separate Organization: As a result of the abolition of the functional division associated with *Rajakari* system of the traditional hierarchy and the establishment of Civil Service, public sector of the country was transformed into a particular organization where there were employers and employees. After the establishment of British administrative structure in public sector, the civil servants who were the members of it formed an important group whose interests the local government inclined to respect (Kannangara, 1966). With the abolition of *Rajakari* system and establishment of separate entities to carry out different functions according to the separation of powers, the existed social and economic order related to the feudal organization started to decline. In the traditional customary mechanism, communal or public work was undertaken by the inhabitants in the capacity of shareholders or members. With the deterioration of the authority of associated institutions which regularized the system, a breakdown of the public administration system convinced by leader-member relationship was also visible.

Thus, it is clear that the valued standards in the post-colonial public



administrative organization including, centralized bureaucracy, liberalism which freed societal members from conventional organizational bonds but with forceful enforcement of the law, capitalism are quite different from the traditional administrative values discussed above. The most important change occurred in relation to human resource of the organization was the establishment of a separate service consisted of recruited and paid officers,

with clear employer-employee relationship detaching the societal members from their roles and performance in public service.

Following table summarizes the distinctive structural features of the public sector of the country and its human resource in the period of sovereign rule and during the colonial era.

Table 1: features of the public sector and its human resource in pre and postcolonial eras Source: Developed by the researchers

Pre-Colonial Era	After colonization
Organizational structure: Territorial Division + Functional departments at the bottom of the structure based on Caste and Rajakari system	Organizational structure: with corresponding territorial and functional divisions
Authoritarianism – (<i>Authority of traditional system powered by conventions and customs in compulsory Rajakari and caste-bound duties</i>)- humanistic and flexible	Liberalism – (<i>from compulsory duties</i>) - authoritarian and forceful implementation of rules and regulations
Despotism - <i>subject to public opinion and conventions, traditions</i>	Democracy/rule of law - <i>Forceful Authoritarianism of enforcement</i>
Decentralization of powers (<i>democratic and communal organizations of rural societies</i>)	Centralized bureaucracy
Feudalism (<i>mutually beneficial and obligatory service system based on land tenure</i>)	Capitalism (<i>mobility of labour, free enterprise system</i>)
Leader-member relationship	Employee-employer relationship
No Separation of powers	Separation of powers
Human Resource: all the members of the social organization	Human Resource: Recruited officers

ROLE OF SUBJECTS AS THE HUMAN RESOURCE IN TRADITIONAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

The traditional administrative mechanism was largely powered by the social spirit associated with the underlying values of the social organization. In the traditional system citizens were life-long members of the

social organization. Each citizen had to play a unique role within the public service organization which developed strong inter-relationships and inter-dependencies among each other. The obligatory nature of the owed services made them committed towards proper performances. A noticeable factor regarding the commitment is it does not result fully through a strong system of sanctions. The traditional system



drove people to share the common values and accordingly the commitment towards performing assigned services became voluntary. The recognition is given to commonly accepted traditions and customs as the fundamental laws and regulations was immense. All the members of the social organization respected these conventional guidelines and voluntarily considered them as the boundaries of behaviour. Consensus-based decision making can be seen practiced in different layers of the administrative organization. Even within the despotic administrative mechanism, support and loyalty of subordinates was a major determinant in maintaining powers. Caring and paternal leadership of the chiefs endorsed the loyalty of the members. With the caste system and the aligned social organizations like *Rata Sabha* and *Gam Sabha*, citizens could directly participate in making decisions regarding the matters affecting to them to a considerable extent. The strong caste related traditions framed solid and clear boundaries around the occupational niches. Free dissemination and sharing of knowledge regarding different duties of public services were not allowed. Each person has a unique role to play within the social organization. This background supported forming a sense of ownership in the minds of the citizens who belonged to different occupational niches, regarding their role in the social organization. They shared the responsibility of performing assigned services, while collectively holding the accountability for proper performance. Performance of duties was not based on commercial transactions. Each person or community group was obligatory in

providing services assigned to them by the traditional system. The chiefs and the lay citizens maintained a leader-member relationship where a caring and paternal leadership style was valued. Leaders and the members mutually trusted and respected each other and also the system enabled them to gain mutual benefits. As such, Lifelong commitment, obligatory duties, recognition and respect to shared conventional directives, consensus-based decision making, sense of ownership, collective responsibility and accountability, voluntary commitment, caring paternal leadership style, mutual respect trust, and mutual benefits can be identified as some important aspects of the traditional system. There may be spaces to develop strategies based on these values to empower citizens towards a more active role in the public sector by utilizing the spirit of indigenous value systems.

TRANSFORMATION OF HUMAN RESOURCE: SHIFTING ROLE OF CITIZENS IN POST-COLONIAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

In the pre-colonial system, the organizational structure of the public governance mechanism overlaid on the entire social organization. All the members of the social organization were playing an active role as partners of the public service. The functional departmentalization operated at the bottom of the hierarchy ensured the involvement of ordinary people in the implementation of public services and administration through caste system and *Rajakari* system. But in the formal public administrative mechanism established during the colonial era, the functional division of the structure



consisted of newly created Departments with freshly recruited employees assigned to perform distinctive functions related to public service. The citizens were no more the partners with direct responsibilities of performing for the public service. They became the receivers of the services produced by such organizational units. The role of citizens' became passive towards a standardized public service. With the deterioration of the authority of the agencies which regularized the traditional customary procedures where communal work was undertaken by the inhabitants as the shareholders of the village, a breakdown of this useful system of maintaining communal work was visible (Karunananda, 2005). During that period public sector of the country was administered under a separate organizational arrangement consisted of British officials in a bureaucratic and an authoritarian style. Till the emergence of the nationalist movement in the first decade of the century, the supremacy of the civil service, which formed the brazen wheels' of the colonial regime was not challenged, and therefore held supreme power (Warnapala, 1995). The later developments of the public administrative organization have largely incorporated this bureaucracy and supremacy into their behavioral traits. With the liberalism introduced with the Western administration system, the authoritarian ties of the traditional system started to loosen, convincing the traditional citizen to depart from their involvement in public sector performances. The collapse of a traditional administrative mechanism created the ground for promoting private ownership and wealth maximization among the citizens

through a capitalistic approach. The leader-member relationship existed between the citizens and the authorities of the governance mechanism were broken down. The new public service system centered on the specific organization of paid public servants was completely based on employee-employer relationship. As such the lessened involvement and participation of citizens from the public sector created a gap between citizens and public service, resulting in less commitment and accountability on the part of citizens.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION FOR A HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICE

Undoubtedly, the possibility of re-enforcing the entire indigenous mechanism with traditional customs and conventions in their original form is impossible in the current context. But there can be ways of developing strategies for utilizing the citizens' involvement in the public sector by inspiring the values underlying the past system. Empowering citizens towards a more active role in the public sector can be implemented in different aspects and through different strategies. The strong social spirit powered by the commonly accepted conventions and traditions was the invisible thread that tied all the citizens and the governance mechanisms effectively in the traditional system. Promoting such strong social spirit will contribute to increasing citizen's participation in public administrative endeavors. Good governance and accountability can be upheld as shared values among the citizens which gives recognition to these concepts urge the necessity of practicing. A culture of mutual trust and respect should be



developed where citizens and officials of the public sector organizations understand each other and stand for each other on fair and just grounds. Instead of the bureaucratic and authoritarian supremacy still remaining in some parts of the system, a user-friendly and service-based style of working should be promoted, forming a communal and democratic organization with a more humanistic and flexible temperament. Services provided by the public sector organizations bring benefits to citizens and to the society at large. Citizens' commitment towards protecting and upgrading the public services and their outcomes should be enhanced with a sense of collective responsibility. On the other hand, effective and efficient performance of public servants, who work for perfect outcomes in terms of public welfare and development should be recognized and rewarded with a view to encourage them towards more positive results. Oat the same time, officials of the public service should be held responsible for the consequences of the decisions they make. The citizens' contribution to public sector organizations would be more effectively gained if a sense of ownership can be developed in their minds regarding the public assets, efforts, and outcomes. Citizens can be given a place in appropriate public decision-making forums. Especially the right to information should be strengthened regarding public projects and other efforts. There should be more spaces for whistleblowers. An

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open door policy in public inspections and complaints will assure high involvement and concern of citizens on public service and its outputs. This open door policy would not be effective if it is not followed by a proper mechanism to enforce the law against malpractices in an efficient manner.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the traditional public administrative organization prevailed in the Kandyan Kingdom during the last period of native sovereign rule was drastically modified by the British colonial imperatives. The structural features as well as the social spirit associated with the administrative mechanism were changed in to different forms. With the establishment of a public administrative structure isolated from citizens, a wide gap was formed between public administrative organization and citizens. Possibilities of utilizing the underlying social spirit associated with the traditional system, where all the citizens of the social organization contributed in public service through their unique roles, can be identified as a foundation for crafting effective strategies for increasing citizens' participation in public administrative efforts. Such an effort will open an extensive opportunity for the country's development by increasing the quality of public service and ensuring the sustainability of public value.

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