Public Service System in Nepal:
Historical Background and Challenges in the Changing Context

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1 Introduction

Nepal is an underdeveloped country with limited resources. Moreover, being a landlocked country, unavailability of free access to sea route has become another handicap for national development. Geographically, more than half of the total land mass lies in the hilly region. As a result, majority of Nepalese, who are relying on agriculture, have not been able to prosper economically. Mainly for the villagers belonging to hilly region, the rough and infertile terrain has never helped them to survive economically. Because of these reasons and related socio-economic aspects, government of Nepal is now facing a sort of crisis. Moreover, Nepalese people recently abolished the institute of the monarchy and installed a new political system. For an impoverished nation with yearly budgetary allocations largely dependent on foreign aid, these problems have precipitated into larger financial problems affecting political and administrative morale. It is needless to say that the public service exists as an important pillar to shore up the nation. However, some serious anomalies are being noticed in Nepal's public services. For example, trustworthiness of public services has hit the rock bottom, as they have not been able to make independent policy decisions.

The term “Governance” means different things to different people. Among the many definitions of “governance” that exist, in this context the most appropriate definition is “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development.” Based on this definition, the concept of governance is concerned with the management of the development process, involving both the public and the private sectors. The impact of popular demand on governance would have an inescapable influence of shaping structure of the government authority, policies, programs, management and the behavioral pattern of its officials in tune with public choice. In return, the government gets an aura of public ownership over its organizations of programs. This is broadly how governance in twenty-first century democracy is crafted to work good for the people. The United Nations Development Program uses “good governance” not just “governance” and has linked with sustainable human development (UNDP 1997:1–3).

The term “Good Governance” has been used widely by political scientists, universities and research organizations or experts related with bilateral and multilateral donors. Even when the models of development were under serious scrutiny globally, the World Bank’s study on the impact of its assistance to sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s came up with an epoch making conclusion that “poor governance” had in fact hindered its assistance from being trickled down to the people. Similarly, poor governance has been blamed for the colossal human deprivation in South Asia. Even before that, the World Bank, in its 1997 report had chastised the world community seeking development assistance that accountability, transparency and participation need to be observed as the basic tenets of the conduct and procedures of government activities along with a stress on control of corruption. Good Governance is necessary for poverty alleviation, corruption control and so on. However same program suggested by the donor agencies in African states or
other parts of the world, may not work in Nepal. Nepal has its own history, religion and tradition. Better Service delivery and enhancing public service is important but at the same time, content of good governance should be tailor made for Nepal. In this paper I will first explain the historical background of Nepalese administration, some characteristics, reforms, present situation and problems. Finally I will come up with some recommendation to sort the problems in Nepalese public service.

The establishment of the local public service system is important because public employees dispatched to provinces by the central government have not been able to fulfill the local needs. In addition, lack of comprehensive development policy is widening a gap between central and rural areas. To fill up the gap between the regions, decentralization of the administration is important. In this essay, I would like to emphasize the historical background of Nepalese administrative system and challenges in public service system in the changing context.

2 History of Nepalese Administration

Modern history of Nepalese public service dates back to 1770 when Nepal was united from smaller princely states. King and the royal palace enjoyed all the rights in appointing public servants and mainly the courtiers and their offsprings and relatives decorated all the important roles of public servants. In various branches of public service like Finance, Foreign Service, Law and so on, these courtiers got easy appointment as they were the ones with access to education. However, situation changed a lot after first revolution in Nepal in 1950, which witnessed the overthrow of the Rana oligarchy. Since then, after establishment of Public service commission (PSC) of Nepal in 1951, common Nepalese, too, started to function as prominent public servants. Free access to education helped the common Nepalese achieve this feat. To study about Nepalese public service we have to see some facts of administrative changes in different period.

2.1 Kirata Administrative System

Kirata administration started from 900 BCE to 300 CE. The central administration consisted of the King, Ministers, Council of State and Central level Administrative Apparatus. The King used to run the entire administration of the country from his Royal palace.5 The Royal palace served as the central secretariat and had its influence throughout the territory of the Kirata Kingdom of ancient Nepal. It worked as the nerve centre and hub of administrative and political activities. The king was the head of the state as well as the government, exercising all executive, legislative and judicial powers and also controlling the entire socio-cultural and religious affairs of the society. Kirata rulers used to take keen interest in the welfare of the people. Kirata King Patukhad undertook several public welfare activities construction of roads, temples, rest house, and development of market areas etc.6 The Kirata rulers had a Council of State called Chumlung which played an important role in the Kirata administrative system. It was composed of king, ministers, high-level army officers and two other members elected by the people.7 Hence the council presents a mixed model consisting of politicians, army officers and people’s representatives. Presumably the king used to be its chairman. Its major functions were:

a) to provide information to the king for making decisions on major state issues;

b) to formulate policies on different aspects of national life;

c) to enact rules and regulations.

2.2 Lichhavi Administrative System

The Kirata dynasty in Nepal was followed by the Lichhavis who ruled Nepal from the first century A.D. to 880 A.D. There was the compulsion for the Lichhavis to develop fairly a large administrative infrastructure both at central
and local levels. In fact, Lichhavi Nepal had a well-organized administrative system throughout the kingdom. 8) In this era Nepal was under the dictatorship of the Lichhavi King. The king was a dictator exercising legislative, executive, judicial and military powers; but in practice his dictatorship was benevolent one because of two reasons. Firstly, the dictatorship was dedicated to the promotion of the welfare of the people. Secondly, the Lichhavi rulers ruled the country in accordance with the law based on the Hindu religious scriptures. Hence, the rule of law was the cornerstone of the Lichhavi administration. The royal charters, decrees and laws were highly respected by all including government servants. The king himself used to warn and punish those government servants who violated them. Lichhivi King used to have Principal Officer and his assistant of Royal palace. Whenever the king happened to be weak or incapable, they used to exercise real authority in the name of their master and as such only those having the confidence of the king could be appointed in their respective positions. Their appointment also used to be stated in the inscription for public information.

2.3 Malla Administrative System

By the middle of the 8th century A.D., the once renowned and powerful rule of the Lichhavi dynasty, which ushered in a golden period in Nepalese history, started to crumble. The Lichhavi policy of decentralizing considerable powers at the local level had gradually made most of the central level offices and army organizations redundant and irrelevant thereby leading to their reduction and making the central government militarily weak and motivating the feudal lords of the distant parts of the country to rule independently. But when the Malla era was started, some Malla kings exercised their sovereign authority directly by themselves at their own discretion. Such kings were not only the heads of the state but also of government exercising all executive, legislative, judicial and military powers. They were omnipotent in all state affairs. Such style of exercising sovereign authority by the king was called one man’s rule. However there was also the system of dual rule. In this form, the king’s brothers, sons, nephews, uncles and even father used to exercise state powers as joint rulers. 9) The Major functional areas of the government were, Maintenance of law and order, Defense system, Collection of revenues, Construction and maintenance works, Foreign affairs. Hence some sort of central level administrative organizations presumably did exist to perform all those functions. Each administrative organization or department must have been under the control of a minister. 10) The Malla administration of medieval Nepal was undoubtedly somewhat simple in form and smaller in size in comparison to those of the Lichhavi administration. Based on largely limited monarchy, the Malla polity had given democratic flavour to administrative set up with people’s voice having much weight and importance.

2.4 Pre-Rana Administrative System

The Conquest of Nepal Valley by Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1769 A.D. is the starting point of pre-Rana period (1769–1846 A.D.) in Nepal’s history. A prudent ruler of the then tiny state of Gorkha, Prithvi Narayan Shah was able to become the illustrious monarch of ‘Greater Nepal’ encompassing Terai, hills, valleys and mountains by dint of his sagacity, exceptional courage and spartan determination. The unification of Nepal was beset with the basic problem of administering the conquered territories with a diversity of languages, cultures, traditions, ethnic characteristics, etc. In fact, though Nepal was unified politically, these diverse basic strands still had to be woven systematically in a politico-socio-economic national pattern generating a strength and unity. There was no difference between public and military services. Just as several higher positions in the public service were occupied by military personnel, so also public service personnel-from ministers to treasurers had to lead the war in the battles. Corruption was indeed unknown especially at the higher levels of administrative hierarchy. 11)
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offices</th>
<th>Functions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Muluki Adda</td>
<td>Looking after the public service administration.</td>
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<td>2 Kitab khana</td>
<td>Maintenance of the records of all public and military personnel,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Certifying for the payment of salary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Hajiri Goshwara</td>
<td>Taking note of attendance of government servants,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Report prepare about job performance by the government servants and submission to the Maharaja Prime minister.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Drably Kosh</td>
<td>Dealing with pension and provident fund of military personnel.</td>
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<td>5 Darshanbet</td>
<td>Collection of especial levies from army personnel when appointed.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2.5 Rana Administrative System

Rana Era started from 1846 to 1951; the first Rana prime minister was Jang Bahadur Rana. He was innovated an unprecedented peculiar polity, suited to his own interest and that of his family. The Rana personnel administration had to manage two types of the personnel. (1) members of the Rana oligarchy. (2) ordinary public servants. The members of the Rana oligarchy were the Rana Family members called ‘rollwalas’ (12) included into the ‘roll of succession’ which regulated their appointments, promotions, etc. The final authority for the recruitment, transfer, promotion and dismissal of all government employees was reserved by the Maharaja Prime Minister himself. Reason and logic were not considered at all in the personnel administrative system. During the later phase of the Ranaism, pay scale was determined on the basis of educational qualification of public servants. (13)

During the early period of Ranaism, the government functionaries used to be assigned lands officially called jagir in lieu of their salary. Chandra Shamsher started paying partly in cash, and Juddha Shamsher introduced payment of salary in cash. The office hours were fixed for 10 AM to 4 PM during the time of Bhim Shamsher. Similarly, Chandra Shamsher announced every Sunday the government holiday. The personnel administrative system developed by the Ranas was feudalistic in nature and was geared largely to fulfill the interest of the ruling families. The central level offices involved in personnel administration and their functions are listed in Table 1.

2.6 Present Administrative System

In Rana period, as mentioned in the previous pages, only some aristocracies and well-wishers of Rana dynasty could access the public service. Ordinary people were left frustrated and to reduce this, the then government started “Application Bureau” for recruiting capable person by open competition. For the first time, public service system was established for land administration, collection of land revenue, maintenance of law and order, and dispensation of justice. After Rana regime, Kings directly administrated in Nepal. Under the Royal administration Nepal has divided administratively into fourteen zones. Head of the zonal office were directly appointed by His Majesty Government. Every zone was further divided into a group of districts and the districts were then assigned cities and villages under for administration and developmental activities. However, District and Village were formed as a governance system to enforce governance from centre government to local level. From 1951 to 1990, there were minor changes in processes related to selection of district and village representatives. But strong centralization without good governance frustrated the people in rural area because of the inefficient service delivery. Top down programs and policies came from the central level to the local level. Government employees were just accountable to their managers and political masters but not to the local people. Consequently, people felt the lack of transparency and accountability in the government activities.
Discontent of people because of bad governance system resulted into political demonstrations and for the first time there was a very strong students’ movement against the direct rule of the king. Within a decade this movement by a group of students turned into a full-fledged political battle and the king had to capitulate before the public. As a result, the institute of monarchy refrained from direct administration and allowed elected representatives to run the administration. In other words, the monarchy preferred to remain as a constitutional monarchy. Newly elected political parties started running the governance system from 1990. In 1991, first ever democratic constitution was promulgated with clear-cut stipulation of the monarchy as a constitutional one. However, even with ushering in of new political dispensation, there was little change in the governance system. In 1990 democratic government abolished zonal administration to decrease the influence of central rulers in local areas. But, this had little impact on the system of governance as well as administration. During Kings’ direct rule, most of the public servants were related with or selected on the basis of proximity to the royal palace and in new dispensation they were selected on the basis of their closeness to the political parties in governance. As a result, from 1990 onwards, most of the public servants including chief district officer (CDO), local development officer (LDO) as well as heads of regional and zonal branches of various other services function under the politically appointed zonal officers. This has made the public servants vulnerable to political pressures. Table 2 below depict political changes and administrative units of Nepal (Table 2).

The abolishment of zonal system in Nepalese public administration was not carried out because of it functioned against the tenets of good governance. Rather, it was abolished for political reason because the zonal head used to be appointed by the King himself. So, it was abolished to give a symbolic message to the people that the new government is the democratic one. Having done away with the zonal system, a new system was necessary and it was created with Ministry of Local Development (MoLD) as a focal agent. So, in new system, village committees collected the local needs through wards and sent to district and district sent to the Ministry of Local Development (MoLD) and National Planning Commission (NPC). As compared to previous system, it was better, at least in principle, because, local needs now started to go directly to the centre without any hindrances in zonal level. However, many remote districts still felt that there was a gap between the centre and local bodies. To fill the gap between the centre and regional government, Nepalese government introduced decentralization and self governance through the acts and regulations so that districts and villages could function efficiently.

### 3 District Level Administration

There are altogether 75 districts in Nepal. Because of the altitude variations and geographical diversity, all districts have their own characteristics. For example Kathmandu district include metropolitan city with the high population

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**Table 2  Layers of the government in different period**

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<tr>
<td>City/Village</td>
<td>City/Village</td>
<td>City/Village</td>
<td>City/Greater Village</td>
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<td>Ward</td>
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density. However, Manang district in Himalayan region consists of only few villages. However, for these diverse regions and districts, there is one common feature amongst them. And this is related with the selection of officers for developmental and administrative activities. As discussed before, all the districts in Nepal have officers who are selected and dispatched from central agency. Though the government of Nepal introduced decentralization act and promulgated the same after a couple of revision, yet the government officials are being recruited by PSC. MoLD is responsible for regional development, so the ministry dispatches one local development officer (LDO) to every district and one planning and administrative officer as per necessity. But, both these gazetted second class officers are the ones selected centrally. Moreover, even for sections such as account, procurement, registration and dispatch sections in a district development office, the positions are filled with staffs selected by the national commission.

In 2002, there was nominal participation of people in development planning process because of non-election of new office bearers. Forced by political instability due to insurgency, the elections were postponed. Because of this, LDO, a public servant, is made responsible for running district level developmental activities. However, recent political change based on politics of consensus has made it possible for local participation in developmental activities. But, the shortcoming of this political consensus by the all party meeting is that it selected only the party representatives. And there are no elected representatives.

The basic local government body having direct contact with the people in Nepal is definitely a village body. But, even here the staff selected by the district for the village may not necessarily be one of the local inhabitants. It has been observed that the staffs for hilly regions are selected from Terai regions and the staffs of local bodies in Terai hailed from mountainous region. Central selection and dispatching has time and again resulted into unfamiliar staffs which has affected the competence of the staffs in essential local bodies like village bodies.

The administrative systems in Nepal needs to be based on rule of law, in this democratic era, and at the same time the public service systems in district as well as village level should be modern and people centered. As stated in chapter 1, accountability is one of the key elements of good governance. It is imperative to make public officials answerable for government behavior and responsive to the entity from which they derive their authority. Accountability also means establishing criteria to measure the performance of public officials, as well as oversight mechanisms to ensure that the standards are met. But many villages in almost all districts so called VDC secretary are not in duties for long time.\(^5\)

VDC Chairman who sent by the Ministry of Local Government, want to work near their hometown or accessible village near district headquarters. Below is the on field survey outcome of Baglung district.

Baglung district is 10 hours drive (250 km) far from Kathmandu. There are 59 villages in this district, but only 52 districts have village secretary. One secretary is responsible for two or even three villages. It is impossible to provide quality service in this situation. Just opposite of the decentralization, they does not visit their appointed village, but work at their respective district headquarter. Villagers should come to the district headquarter to get basic administrative service of local government such as registration of demise or birth, certificate of residence, official document attestation and so on. Baglung is a hilly district so that villagers come along a day or more than that to receive these services.

The lack of a bridge between inter governmental relation is one issue; previously zonal government played certain role on it. Second issue is the lack of accountability in public servant. They are accountable to their ministry not to the local people. To avoid this situation, establishment of the local public service system is important because public employees dispatched to village by the central government have not been able to fulfill the local needs. To fill up the gap between the regions, decentralization of the administration is important.

### 4 Public Service System

Public Service Commission (PSC) was established in Nepal on 15 June 1951. In 1952, an administrative reform
commission was constituted to streamline the public service, but remained on ad hoc basis. The Public Service was formalized with the passage of the Public Service Act 1975 and the Public Service Rules 1975. After the historic popular movement of 1989, an Interim government was formed headed by Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. The Interim Government in its policy guide-line has stated that pressure from no quarter shall be brought to bear upon the PSC in order to enable it to carry out its task of ensuring equal opportunity for all the Nepalese citizens to enter the public service according to their merits and without any discrimination. At the same time steps would be taken to do away with such anomalies like nepotism and favoritism which result in undesirable and irregular appointment, transfer and promotion of the employees.\textsuperscript{19} During the Interim period, the Constitutional Reform Commission drew up the Constitution of Nepal, 1990, which was put into effect in November 9, 1990. Part IV, Article 101 of this Constitution has set up a PSC consisting of a Chairman and other members as may be required.\textsuperscript{19}

Interim constitution of Nepal (2007) has envisaged the PSC as an independent constitutional body. So, it is expected that functioning of PSC will take place without any political interference. But, given the practices prevalent in Nepal, it is difficult to achieve by mentioning it in the provisions of constitution of Nepal. Almost at all levels of Nepalese public services, favoritism is being practiced based on proximity to political parties. Nepotism and kinship are other instances that helped to provide appointments while sidelining meritorious candidates. PSC of Nepal has presently five regional and nine zonal offices throughout Nepal. Regional and zonal offices merely functions as regulatory bodies without any say in making decisions. The public service system is broadly classified into technical and non-technical areas. Public servants for Economic policy, engineering service, agriculture, health, legal service, foreign service, general administration, forestry, education are selected based on these two broad categories. An anomaly in Nepalese public service relates with capital centric decision-making. For example, public servants appointed in Terai region are generally selected from Kathmandu and they are unfamiliar with local language and customs. Moreover, they have difficulty in maintaining rapport with representatives elected in local bodies. This has led to a demand that public servants in the region must have some kind of proximity or affinity with the region.

PSC is itself a constitutional body therefore; the organizational design of the Commission is specified by the constitution. Nepalese Constitution does not fix the number of the members. In Article 101 of the Constitution, Nepal shall have a PSC consisting of a Chairman and other members as necessary. At the present, under the constitutional provision of Article 101, the Commission is composed of a full time Chairman and five other members. All members of the board including Chairman are full time office holders. All the decisions and policy formulations regarding the Commission are made by the Commission itself. For example, finalization of examination, preparation of questions, and selection of examiners and recommendations of candidates selected through examinations are done by the Commission. The Commission meets frequently and at least twice a week on a regular basis.

Each member is assigned with the responsibilities of supervising the functions of one division of the Secretariat of the PSC as a link person between the Commission and its Secretariat. The Secretary who is appointed by the Government of Nepal is the executive head of the Commission. Presently, the Commission is providing the following advice to the Government.

(a) On matters relating to the laws defining the terms and conditions of the public service.
(b) On the principles to be observed while appointing or promoting to any public service posts, or while taking departmental action against any of its incumbents.
(c) On the suitability of the candidate for inter-cadre transfer or for inducement into the public service from non-government services.
(d) On the permanent transfer or promotion from a post requiring no consultation with the commission to one which does.
(e) On the matter of taking punitive measures against any public servant.

(f) Matters relating to the departmental punishment to any public servant.

Later, revisions to the initial legislation covered such issues as promotion and retirement. In May 1998, the Public Service Act was amended by Parliament as follows.

(a) protection of public servants against arbiter transfer

(b) changes in the system of promotion and performance evaluation

(c) a provision that wage-based and contract based staff are to be eliminated

(d) a provision that deputation and temporary assignments are not to be more than three months

(e) provisions regarding annual salary increment retirement, pensions, life insurance and training for public servants.

The amendment is intended to instill confidence among the public service cadre and to enable them to carry out their duties with greater transparency and without political interference.\(^{17}\) The Present public service in Nepal is governed by the Present Constitution of Nepal.\(^{18}\) The Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 has designated the PSC as an independent constitutional body. The Commission is involved in selecting meritorious candidates required by the Government of Nepal for various vacant posts of the public service. The continuity of PSC has never been hindered since its establishment. As per Article 125 of the Constitution, there shall be a PSC Nepal. The Commission consists of a Chairman and Members as may be required. The Chairman and members of PSC are appointed for 6 years. Although Nepal’s public sector is not large in size, its productivity is low. A number of studies describe the public service as being politicized, inefficient, and ineffective.

The Administrative Reform Commission Report 1992 noted that, “the morale and incentive of the public service is at low ebb”. According to the report, the decision making process is “riddled with too many layers,” the accountability of the public service “has not yet been determined and established,” and authority has not been properly delegated. Any effort at increasing the productivity of Nepal’s public service will have to grapple with three fundamental problems: political instability, political interference, and an inadequate remuneration and benefits package. During the past ten years, Nepal has had ten different governments. During this period, hundreds of parliament members were able to become government ministers. This high rate of turnover has had profound implications for lower level bureaucracy.

The Nepalese public service includes ten services: Administrative Service; Agriculture Service; Economic Planning and Statistical Service; Education Service; Engineering Service; Forest Service; Health Service; Judicial Service; Miscellaneous Service and Parliamentary Service. It does not include the military and police forces or public enterprises. The total size of Nepal’s public service is 94,105 people, or approximately 0.57 public servants per hundred populations, which is relatively small by developing country standards.\(^{19}\) In 2005/06, personnel expenditures comprised approximately 17.7 percent of the total Government budget.\(^{20}\) Breakdown of the personnel expenditures are as follows. General administration 13.8 percent, Revenue and Economic Administration 0.91 percent, Economic Administration and Planning 0.90 percent, Administration of Justice 0.84 percent and Foreign Services 1.23 percent. So, the total public service expenditure can be derived to be 17.71 percent.\(^{21}\)

The functions of Public Service Commission are to conduct examinations for the selection of suitable candidates to be appointed to various public service posts. Government shall not make decision for permanent appointment to any position in the public service, which carries the benefit of pension except in consultation with the PSC. Government is required to consult with PSC on matters concerning the laws relating to the conditions of service of the public service, the general principles to be followed in the course of appointment, promotion and departmental action concerning the public service or positions.

Likewise, matters concerning the suitability of any candidate for appointment to a public service position for a period more than six months, matters concerning the suitability of any candidate for transfer or promotion from one
service to another within the public service or any other government service to the public service, the permanent transfer or promotion of any employee, working in any position of an organization which is not required to consult with the Commission on matters of appointment, to any position for which consultation with the Commission is required, matters relating to departmental actions against any public servant are within the purview of PSC. According to the regulations, every year, the PSC shall submit annual report on the works it has performed to Prime Minister. Prime Minister shall cause such report to be laid before Parliament. The central secretariat of the commission has three divisions and each division consists three sections. The three divisions are as follows.

(a) Examination and Recommendation Division
(b) Policy-Regulation, Complaint-Advice, Administration and Inspection Division
(c) Testing Methodology, Research, Curriculum and Publication Division

Beside the central Secretariat, PSC started to decentralize its function through zonal office. The Zonal Offices of the Commission were established in 1971. In accordance with the plan for strengthening PSC 1973, regional offices of the Commission were also established in December 1973. There are five regional directorates; Eastern Regional Directorate, Dhankuta, Mid Regional Directorate, Kathmandu, Western Regional Directorate, Pokhara, Mid Western Development Region, Birendranagar, Far Western Development Region, Dipayal. There are some important functions of PSC; such as, Advertisement of Vacancies, Curriculum Development, Question Moderation, Examination Procedures, Coding, Copy Checking, Result Publication, Interview, and Recommendation and so on. Apart from the constitutional responsibility, the Commission, following the PSC (Working Procedure) Act, 1991, the Rules framed and Directives issued under this Act, performs such other tasks as may be necessary deciding on complaints of the candidates, relating to promotion, offering advice on matters relating to departmental action, supervision of the specified working procedure in cases where delegated authority was exercised and determining educational qualification for different posts.

4.1 Existing Legal Arrangements

The PSC is a Constitutional body; hence its establishment, composition, scope, duties, functions and authorities are specified in the Constitution of Nepal. The existing constitutional provisions cover the following arrangements.

(a) Establishment of the PSC and provisions of Chairman and members.
(b) Criteria for the appointment, removal and suspension, and terms and conditions of service of chairman and members of the PSC.
(c) Functions, duties and authorities of the PSC.
(d) Provision of delegation of authority by PSC to its own official and government organizations.
(e) Provision of promulgation of laws and by laws for the elaboration of functions, duties and work procedures of the PSC.

Beside the constitution, there are other two main legal provisions regarding the functions of the PSC,

(a) PSC (work Procedures) Act 1991
(b) PSC (work procedures) Rules 1993.

4.2 Process of Selection

The PSC conducts examinations for selection of candidates as per the PSC (Procedure) Act, 1991 B.S. using one or more methods of selection from open competitive written and practical examination, Selection, Interview and, any other methods adopted by the Commission. Each of the main activities of the PSC is further described in this section in terms of a sequential order so as to illustrate how the work flow of the PSC takes place within the PSC.

Written Examination: This is obviously the main activity of the PSC. There are number of sub activities within it to be
Table 3  Process of conducting written exam, scoring and interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process of Conducting Written Examination (A)</th>
<th>Process of Scoring Objective Test (B)</th>
<th>Process of Conducting Interview (C)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collection of subject wise number of</td>
<td>Collection of coded answer sheets</td>
<td>Preparation of bio data of</td>
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<tr>
<td>application forms</td>
<td>from the written examination section</td>
<td>candidates to be interviewed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation of question papers</td>
<td>Solving controversies (if any) on</td>
<td>Collect police reports on moral</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderation of question paper</td>
<td>the questions or answers</td>
<td>character of the candidates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Determine of exam centre and required</td>
<td>Checking of the answer sheets by the</td>
<td>Conducting of interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>manpower for conducting exam</td>
<td>first examiner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct of written test</td>
<td>Rechecking of the answer sheets by</td>
<td>Collect individual scores from each</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the second examiner</td>
<td>interview board member and keep</td>
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<td>Collection of answer papers</td>
<td>Preparation of a mark sheet and</td>
<td>total scoring</td>
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<td>section in sealed envelop</td>
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<td>First coding of the answer papers</td>
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<td>Second coding of the answer papers</td>
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<td>Checking/scoring of the answer papers</td>
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<td>Tabulation of the scores and preparation</td>
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<td>Approval and publication of result of</td>
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<td>Supply of written test scores to the</td>
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<td>interview section on the result day</td>
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Source: PSC, Central Office, Kathmandu, Nepal

performed in a sequential order. It starts from the action for preparation of question paper and ends with the supply of scores of written test to the interview section on the result day. See Table 3 (A).

Scoring of objective test component of the written test: The present written test includes a component of multiple-answer question. The scoring of this part of the written test is performed by the PSC officials themselves. The sequential order of sub-activities to be performed under this activity is presented in Table 3 (B).

Interview: Interview is only a part of total examination system. The sequential order of sub-activities to be performed for interview are presented in Table 3 (C).

In order to carry out selection process, the Commission publishes vacancy announcement for the concerned candidates in its weekly bulletins published every Wednesday as well as in the “Gorkhapatra”, a national daily. The Commission has also adopted an annual calendar of operation of its activities which incorporates all the details of phases of the selection process. The commission has adopted a system of “multi-blindness” in order to maintain fairness and impartiality in the selection. In this system, setting and moderation of questions, checking of answer sheets, conduction of interviews as well as result of written examinations and interviews are carried out in a manner that officials involved
are kept in anonymity to each other. The PSC maintains a pool of experts and specialists for the purpose of selection. They are assigned to the specific selection tasks in a confidential manner. The PSC has also initiated the process of screening for certain posts where numbers of candidates are high. The candidates have to get through the preliminary examination in order to appear in the main examination.

At present the commission has a chairman and five members. The Chairman presides over the meetings of the Commission, co-ordinates the activities assigned to its members & issues policy directives as required. The Secretary is the Executive head of the Commission Secretariat. In the Central Secretariat, there are three important divisions through which the entire function of the Commission is carried out. They are: Examination & Recommendation Division, Policy, Regulation, Complaints, Advice & Inspection Division and Testing Methodology, Curriculum & Publication Division (Figure 1).

5 Administrative Reforms

There were five administrative reform commissions from 1952 to 2008. In that year, the first of a series of administrative reform commissions was constituted to streamline public services. Public services were formalized with the passage of a Public Service Act of 1975 and the introduction Public Service Rules in 1975. A revised Public Service Act and Public Service Rules were introduced in 1993, and the act was amended by Parliament in 1993. Over the years, a number of studies have described the Public Service as being politicized, inefficient and ineffective. A 1992 Administrative Reform Commission made 116 main recommendations aimed at making the Public Service more efficient, results oriented, accountable, motivated and capable. Key proposals include the implementation of a 15 year development plan and 5 year rolling plan, a reduction in the number of ministers from 21 to 18, downsizing of the bureaucracy, placement of certain functions under autonomous authority, and the devolution of power to local bodies. Most of the recommendations have not been implemented, and other several problems have gotten worse. The number of ministries, for example has increased to accommodate and to maintain the unity within the party or with coalition partners. The bureaucracy has not been streamlined. While many laws moving towards decentralization have been
enacted and elections have been held for local bodies at the village and district levels, not much has been achieved in terms of extending local autonomy, with decision making remaining very much centralized.

The situation has not improved over the years, and in fact several of the problems have deepened. In 1998, despite some legislative change, the external funding community expressed its concern about the political nature of bureaucracy and the lack of action on many of the Reform Commission’s recommendations. Many laws including some form of decentralization were proposed in 1998, and elections have been held for local bodies at the village and district levels. However, not much has been achieved in terms of extending local autonomy, and decision making has remained quite centralized. In 1998, the local self-government bill was finally passed by parliament. By late 1999, the Government had indicated its intention to break this cycle of failed initiatives and to pursue a comprehensive reform of the public service. All political parties endorsed the importance of overcoming institutional weaknesses in public sector management as a significant aspect of Nepal’s efforts to break out of the poverty trap.

To signify top level commitment, the Prime Minister\textsuperscript{21} agreed to take an active role in the reform process and to chair the reform steering committee. The extent of decentralization that will result will depend on the central Government’s willingness to delegate authority to a lower level of government. There is substantial scope for devolution of power and authority from the centre, which requires not only new legislation but also effective compliance with legal provisions. At the same time, considerable efforts are needed to strengthen the capacity for policy, program, and project formulation and implementation, at both the central and local levels. Local self-government bill included political decentralization however it was not able to include local public service. The main reasons for the inability to implement the administrative reform commission (ARC) recommendations have been:

(a) Lack of political commitment and support to public service reform,
(b) Internal resistance to change,
(c) Lack of a strong institutional mechanism to initiate and monitor reform measures.

6 Challenges in the Changing Context

In Nepal, from 1951 when public service system was started, since that time many scholars and donor agencies pointed out various problems in Nepalese public services. As mentioned in the previous pages, during this period of more than half decade, many researches and studies were undertaken to reform the public service in Nepal including some policy recommendation by foreign aid agency and academic institutions. However the situation has not improved over the years, and in fact, several of the problems have deepened. Legislative changes happened time and again but the political biasness, inefficiency and ineffectiveness is still there. The recommendation says, PSC should be more efficient, results orientated, accountable, motivated and capable. In additions PSC should be non-partisan or unbiased and fair for all. But in reality, ordinary people are still facing multitudes of problem while dealing local authority. The change in legislative is equally important but the same time PSC should also be scientific and timely.

Nepal became a federal democratic republican from May 28, 2008. However the new government is yet to decide on the type of federalism to be introduced inside the nation. Previously under the Royal regime, government used to make policy and development plans for every five-year. In 10\textsuperscript{th} five-year plan, the then government clearly stated that, it would commit itself for decentralization for the national development as well as for introducing local public service.\textsuperscript{24} But during this plan, because of political instability, Nepal couldn’t move forward administratively. Many agendas decided earlier could not be implemented. As mentioned earlier, present constituent assembly (CA) has just decided that Nepal should be a federal state, but so far the various political parties have their own ideas and they have not been able to evolve a consensus for the model of federalism. It is believed that through the dialogues at CA about federalism, they will decide the responsibility and duty for various government levels.\textsuperscript{25}
Similarly, after setting the other levels of government along state or zone, districts and village level, CA will fix the range of authority, fiscal resources and work for the different levels of government. Therefore, the environment that surrounds the public service system in Nepal has changed remarkably. In addition, there are several issues to be changed in Public Service. For example, number of recruitment person is very low but there is a very high competition for a few seats also. In some cases, people have been required to undertake a test for eligibility for the advertised post. Because of this hindrance, many potential candidates or students who are studying abroad do not show their interest in public service. Because of lack of diverse representation caused by such system of selection, Nepal public service has remained centrally located with a cluster of citizenry only showing interest to join it.

After 1990s, voting rights were provided to all citizens who are 18 years old. But, bringing in youths of the country into political processes has still not been able to ensure good participation of people in developmental activities. The principle of participation derives from an acceptance that people are at the heart of development. They are not only the ultimate beneficiaries of development, but are also the agents of development. In the latter capacity, they act through groups or associations e.g. non government organizations (NGOs), consumer groups, women groups, political parties, and as individuals in media or voting. Development is for the people and by the people. NGOs and consumers groups can help the government as a useful ally in enhancing participation at the community level and fostering a “bottom up” approach to economic and social development.

Nepal introduced participatory election system. There are approximately 4000 villages, and each village consist 9 wards. In each ward, it is mandatory that there should be one elected female member. So, by this count, there are at least participation of 36000 ladies in local politics for policy making. It seems very much democratic and participatory. However, the flip side is that because of no-election since 1997, this figure has reduced into policy document only. As a result, presently in this interim period, participation in policy making is minimal.

7 Conclusion

PSC was established in 1951, it has a history of only 58 years. The institution itself is still young and it is essential to reform and restructure to meet the diverse public needs. With in these six centuries, some revolutionary reforms were performed in Nepal. However, almost all changes were political one. Nepal urges administrative change and reform in public service, because modernization in public service could attract capable human resources in public service and public sector. It is needless to say that without capable human resource in public service, government would never be able to implement the new and timely agendas in central or local level. PSC of Nepal has presently five regional and nine zonal offices throughout Nepal. Regional and zonal offices merely functions as regulatory bodies without any say in making decisions. The public service system is broadly classified into technical and non-technical areas. Public servants for Economic policy, engineering service, agriculture, health, legal service, foreign service, general administration, forestry, education are selected based on these two broad categories.

Nepalese public service relates with capital centric decision-making. For example, public servants appointed in Terai region are generally selected from Kathmandu and they are unfamiliar with local language and customs. Moreover, they have difficulty in maintaining rapport with representatives elected in local bodies. This has led to a demand that public servants in the region must have some kind of proximity or affinity with the region. It is necessary to revise the public service system of Nepal in the shape suitable in the age. Nepal is going to introduce auto promotion system. This is being advocated for because of lack of enthusiasm in public servants due to non-promotion. Newspapers have carried reports on retirement of public servants from the same posts they have joined. So, to present this type of administrative insensitivity, people have talked about the system of auto-promotion. But, this system is also fraught with dangers.
Auto-promotion is likely to further boost inefficiency and incompetence because the public servants may consider timely promotion as their rights. Instead of discharging duties, they may linger on the post till they get promotion. So, this auto promotion system is no different from earlier system where promotion is either delayed or done on the basis of nepotism or favoritism.

Instead of an auto-promotion system, the PSC must opt for a merit based system. Every public servant will be assessed on time to time basis and they will be awarded certain points. If they meet the threshold limit of the points, then they would be automatically promoted to the higher level. So, this type of merit system should be introduced in public service for the quality service.

There is one national administrative staff college for the education and human resource development but it is not enough. Government should enhance the capacity of public servant by giving training both theoretically and practically. Moreover, the training should also include concepts such as local culture, local language and local sensitivities. Given the level of activism shown by various ethnic, and cultural groups in present day Nepal, it is likely that inhabitants may prefer someone who understand them. So, it is imperative that there should be an additional college or training institute which educates the public servants about linguistic and cultural sensitivities of Nepalese.

There has been different change in political sector in Nepal but minimal changes in administrative reform sector. Though the regime change have taken place with the promise of changing the quality of service, yet no successive government have been able to bring about a change the quality of service. This is because of the bureaucracy and the administration moving along the same line. Without revamping the bureaucracy and making it directly responsible to people, political power alone can never do anything in Nepal. So, for this purpose also, it is necessary that Public Service Commission stand as a constitutional body and shield itself and its procedures from governmental or political intervention.

Computer based record is very important to modernize the service delivery. It not only improves the quality of service but also makes the services available to people in minimal time. However, in Nepal, most of the government offices and public servants have remained slow in appreciating this virtue of Information Technology. This is partly due to inertia of non-computer generation and partly due to lack of driving force on the part of the government to use IT as a tool for governance. However slow may be this process, we can be optimistic that in future we have to go for computer based records and data management only.

Notes
2) Hyden and Court 2002: 2.
6) Tika Ram Sharma, Nepalma Rajparamara Ra Sahityik Rooparekha, pratibha Prakashan (Kathmandu, 2031 VS), p. 34.
7) Iman Sing Chemjong, op.cit., p. 114.
8) Jagadish Chandra Regmi, Prachin Nepalko Rajnitik Itihas, Royal Nepal Academy (Kathmandu, 2035 V.S.), pp. 189 and 200.
10) Jayant Mulmi the Chief Minister used to look after the Royal palace affairs.
12) The rollwallas were the holders of higher ranks in military and public administration.
16) At present, the number of the appointed members is five.
19) India has 1.0, Pakistan has 1.5 and Sri Lanka has 4.5. public servants per hundred.
20) Average personnel expenditures are 20 to 25 percent in other developing countries.
21) Economic survey of FY 2006/07 page 17.
23) Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, who was sworn in as prime minister on 15 April 1998, initiated public service reforms when he first took office as PM (1991–1994).
25) There are 10 subject wise committees in CA and State restructuring committee is responsible to give concrete agenda about the layer of government, centre, state and village etc.