Change Management in Higher Education Department (HED), Government of the Punjab

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INTRODUCTION

The public sector in Pakistan has witnessed waves of reforms since its early days. The nature, magnitude and duration of different reform efforts have changed over time but with passage of time the talk, if not actual action, has become a custom. Today debate about reform is a norm and not exception. The social sector especially education sector has its fair share of reform efforts. It is argued that agenda is increasingly influences by the international donor organisations, with varying degrees of political ownership. The grandeur of such reforms often overshadows the reforms undertaken at small scale through in-house initiatives. However, one may argue, the process and essentials of change management should be the same for any such endeavor to be successful.

This case is one such example whereby initiative was undertaken by the head of the organization. The case is about Higher Education Department (HED) of the government of the Punjab. The newly appointed Secretary faced a system of arbitrariness in posting and transfers of the lecturers and professors due to availability of skewed information and 'clerk capture', as he called it. He wanted to bring merit and transparency in posting and transfers and ultimately in all aspects of Human Resource Management (HRM) by introducing an IT based solution.

The key question is whether the essential factors for effective change management are applicable to small size reform as well?

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

For the purpose of analysis, framework developed by Sergio Fernandez and Hal G. Rainey has been selected[1]. They agree that this area is very well documented as research in abundance has been conducted on various related aspects. They have identified the points of consensus among the researchers related to change management. It is argued that identification of consensus points from the multitude of research conducted on this topic can lead to testable propositions for future researchers.

After considering many models and frameworks, they are able to find clear similarities not only among these models and frameworks but also among the empirical studies supporting them. They conclude that the change leaders and participants should be cognizant of eight (8) factors for effective change implementation:

1.   **Ensure the need**: to envision and convince others about the need of change. Dissemination of information among all stakeholders is important.

2.   **Provide the plan**: to develop strategy and action plan for implementation of change. Clarity and specific goals are crucial points.

3.   **Build Internal Support for Change and Overcome Resistance**: to identify the potential reasons for resistance to change. Methods to overcome resistance may include urgency of cause, compulsion and threats, rewards, persuasion, bargaining, and employee empowerment. The compulsion and threats can be counterproductive too.

4.   **Ensure Top-Management Support and Commitment**: Champion of cause for change. A skillful leader can be that champion. Cooperation of political executives. Need for continuity of leadership.

5.   **Build external support**: Support of political bosses and key outside stakeholders. Political bosses can be helpful in provision of legal framework and resources, if required. Changes requiring less implementation time and less resources have more chances of success.

6.   **Provide resources**: More often than not the change requires additional resources, redeployment of HR and reorganization.

7.   **Institutionalize change**: Need to incorporate the change in the office routine and policies. Monitoring the implementation process is important to assess the degree of adoption of change.

8.   **Pursue comprehensive change**: implementing systemic change in the sub-systems as well but with a cautious approach. Starting with high visibility element of change may be helpful for later changes.

Finally they caution that process of change is not linear as advocated by some researchers.

A Case Study of Change Management in HED, GoPb, while introducing automation of Human Resource Management and Monitoring System

BACKGROUND

Higher Education Department (HED) Government of the Punjab (GoPb) deals with all public sector degree colleges, commerce colleges, Boards of Secondary and Intermediate Education, and all 'general' universities in the province of Punjab. There are a total of 560-degree colleges, 160 commerce colleges, 29 and 24 universities in the public and private sector respectively. HED essentially functions as 'government' for these universities and acts as an interface between the Governors (Chancellor), the Chief Minister and Provincial Cabinet (the 'Government') on one hand, and the universities on the other. The public sector colleges are directly under the administrative control of the HED. There are around 21000 teaching posts in the public sector degree colleges in Punjab; and in August 2017 about 18000 lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors and professors were working against these posts. Out of these 18000 officers, about 10000 were female, and the remaining, male teachers. Thirty-six (36) subjects are taught in the public sector colleges in Punjab; and each teaching post in each college of any grade has been assigned a subject. As such, there is no free-floating grade-free and subject-free post in any college at any time. According to the Rules of Business, all colleges in the province are legally situated within HED's attached department, Office of the Director, Public Instruction (Colleges), (DPI (Colleges)), Punjab. This office has a Director Colleges in each Division and a Deputy Director in each district in the province.

The new secretary Higher Education Department (HED), Government of the Punjab

assumed charge in August 2017. When he arrived at his office on his first day, he was quite surprised to see at least three dozen men and women waiting to see him. He found out that about 90% of these were officers of his department, mostly lecturers and assistant professors, and were there to see him regarding their transfer applications. As per official practice, their applications were marked to the concerned Deputy Secretaries for further processing and putting up cases. After the trend continued for many days, he was further intrigued and started to study the posting and transfer system in vogue in the department. He found out that the system was rife with inefficiencies and maladministration, suffering from arbitrary decision-making and 'clerk capture'. It required a major overhaul.

It was in this backdrop that the new secretary decided to introduce automation to the HR management in the HED generally, and the process of transfers of HED's officers, particularly.

IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUE

The secretary's inquiry and examination of the existing transfers & posting system revealed the following facts:

1.   The competent authority to transfer BS 17 and 18 officers of the department was the Secretary HED. Chief Minister had delegated power to transfer BS 19 officers in HED to the Secretary; while for BS 20 officers, Chief Minster was the competent authority.

2.   Their transfers from any college to any other within the province were centralized in the HED; the Secretary would decide all transfer cases in his competence (i.e. upto BS 19), while he would move a Summary for the Chief Minister in case of BS 20 officers.

3.   For a typical transfer from College A to College B, for say, a BS 17 lecturer, she would have to follow the following steps:

a.   Make an application to the Principal of College A seeking a no objection certificate regarding her requested transfer;

b.   Make an application to Secretary HED requesting transfer to College B, from College A;

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c.   The Secretary would mark the application to the Additional Secretary, who in turn would mark it down to the Deputy Secretary and Section Officer;

d.   Section Officer would write a letter to the DPI (Colleges), or the concerned Director Colleges or Deputy Director seeking indication of a vacant post of same grade and subject. In certain cases, he would write direct to Principal of B College seeking vacancy position. There was no set criterion to determine or predict whether in a given case, the letter would be written to an office in the field formation or direct to the Principal of College B. It would depend, practically, upon the Section Officer's mood on that particular day, or for that matter, how much he wanted the applicant officer to be facilitated.

e.   The applicant would take the letter personally, would go around all offices concerned, get the vacancy position and bring the letter back to the Section Officer;

f.   After the NOC from College A and vacancy position at College B are at hand, the Section Officer would put up the matter for the Secretary's orders whether to transfer the officer or not.

g.   In case of a clear vacancy, i.e. a vacant post of same grade and subject as the applicant's, the Secretary would mostly allow the transfer;

h.   Arbitrariness would creep into those cases, where there was no clear post available. In some instances, the request would be denied straightaway, whereas in others, subject or grade, or both, of a vacant post would be changed in order to accommodate an applicant.

4.   According to the notified transfer policy of HED, no transfer could be made unless a clear vacant post was available in the destination college; nonetheless, the policy provided exceptions in the shape of wedlock-based and hardship-based transfers. The policy defined relatively clear criteria for cases under the wedlock-based transfers, but was open-ended and allowed subjectivity in cases that 'purportedly' fell in the hardship-based category.

Having understood the process in practice in the HED, the secretary sat down with the Special Secretary, Additional Secretary, DPI and the concerned deputy secretaries. He, with their help, analyzed the existing situation and deduced as follows:

1.   In the absence of a streamlined process to receive, process and dispose of transfer applications, no one exactly knew how many officers had requested for their transfer, at any given point of time.

2.   In addition to wedlock cases, most request were for transfers to big cities. Additional pull factors towards the cities and larger towns would be better educational facilities for children and potential for extra moneymaking activities like private colleges and tuition.

3.   Transfer was not a norm in the HED, and all transfers in HED would be consent and request based.

4.   The whole process for a transfer case was found to be suffering from clerk-capture. It was a state of affairs in which clerks and other officials had captured the running of a process inasmuch as it was they who would determine the agenda for their officers, by deciding which cases to put up and when, while having complete control over information regarding pending cases. This capture is complete when the quantum of information is so large that the decision makers and officers cannot even verify the facts presented to them; and when the number of cases (transfer requests, in this case) is so large that the officers cannot keep track of individual cases and insist on their being processed and put up expeditiously.

5.   There was no office in HED, which could present real time accurate information regarding who was posted where. Similarly, no one knew how many posts of which subject were vacant in which college. This information would be obtained on case-by-case basis from the principals concerned. No vacancy position was available.

6.   The system was not definite and predictable. In certain cases, people would get transferred to the place of their choice without any vacant post available; and others' cases would keep lingering on for months despite there being a vacant post. In certain instances, if a clear vacant post was available, merely putting up a file of a 'choice' candidate by the section's staff before others, would determine who would go where.

7.   The whole process, just like the most of the public sector, was 'applicant driven', as the applicant had to follow his case himself. There were complaints and reports of corruption too, at all levels. There were also numerous complaints that

money was extracted from officers as they sought NOCs and vacancy positions from colleges.

8.   The process of appointing new appointees on their first posting was equally problematic. The department was expecting some 2000 new appointees from the Public Service Commission during the first half of 2018. In the absence of any consolidated data regarding vacant positions, there was no set formula for their placements. Usually, and historically, the department would rely on proposals by the DPI's office, which in turn, would be based on sketchy information and arbitrary work by the clerical staff.

The secretary also came to know that at least two attempts had been made in the past to prepare a digital database of all human resource in the department; one, in 2004 and two, in 2010. Regrettably, once prepared, these databases were not kept up to date, and despite their being still available, were outdated and obsolete. Upon inquiry, it was reported that when the secretaries got posted away, the emphasis and pressure on the staff to keep punching in all notifications and updates regarding individual officers waned; and therefore, the database started to get outdated.

SOLUTION

The secretary, in consultation with his team, developed the following solutions that he called principles:

a.   The HED needed, as a matter of necessity, a digital database of all of its human resource, particularly the teaching staff;

b.   Arrangements should be in place to ensure that the database is duly and promptly updated. Ideally, it should reflect an exact and accurate picture, in real time and not be dependent on diligence of a computer operator to punch in notifications already issued;

c.   Regarding the transfer requests, a one-stop-shop may be established, which shall be sole point of interaction between the Department and the officers who request a transfer.

d.   A predictable, objective and transparent system for transfers and postings should be put in place to ensure that officers are treated fairly, in order of some merit and in a dignified manner.

e.   No recourse be had to any resource outside of HED. No new post should be created and no assistance should be sought from any other department. This was found necessary, at least in the initial stages, to ensure speedy progress.

IMPLEMENTATION

Following steps were taken regards the database of all teaching staff of HED.

a.   First of all, the databases prepared in 2004 and 2010 were dug out and examined. In terms of data, they were nearly obsolete. There were technical issues too, since the platforms used for preparation of these databases had since become old; and in 2017, more robust and advanced platforms were available.

b.   The secretary, therefore, decided that they should develop a management information system (MIS) ab initio.

c.   An interesting debate ensued after this decision. A group of officers in the secretary's team maintained that an exhaustive census should be held and the data regarding all service matters of officers should be included in the new system; and the system should then deal with not only transfers and postings, but also disciplinary proceedings, promotions, annual confidential reports, salary and pension matters etc. The secretary, however, decided that initially, the system should be kept very simple and lean; and insisted that in the first phase, only that data should be collected and punched into the MIS, which was essential to decide and execute transfers and postings. At a later phase, other particulars of officers could be collected and fed into the MIS.

Accordingly, work on two aspects was initiated forthwith concurrently. One, a census of all officers of HED was conducted. For this, a ban on all transfers, charge assumption and relinquishment in pursuance of a transfer order already issued, was imposed. Two different forms were designed; one of these sought seventeen (17) items of factual detail about an individual officer, and the other form was a consolidation cover sheet, to be signed and attested by the Principal of the college. The Principals were given one week to complete these forms and return these to HED through their Deputy Directors and Directors. The latter were instructed strictly to follow the deadlines and ensure accuracy of data.

Two, since the secretary had decided not to rely on other departments or to go for

making a new project formally, local resource within HED was searched. It transpired that the IT Section of BISE Faisalabad had very good human resource, which had developed many a software in-house. The Chairman of the Board was instructed to depute two of his best programmers in HED, Lahore, who were tasked to develop the database and basic structure of the MIS.

With census forms at hand and the MIS ready in about two weeks, arrangements were made for input of data. This was a one-time exercise, which amounted to entry of data in about more than 300,000 fields in the database. Yet again, the secretary resorted to local resource mobilization. A temporary IT center was set up in Government MAO College, Lahore. Thirty desktop computers were borrowed from MAO College's and Islamia College's computer labs. Each of the forty colleges in Lahore was asked to lend one key punch operator for three weeks. The charge of the whole operation was given to one of the Senior Data Analysts working in the SPMU of HED, who was interviewed and selected by the secretary. Additional Secretary (Establishment) of HED was made overall incharge of the 'project'. One of his primary tasks was to iron out any administrative problem as the operation went by.

After the data had been entered, in order to ensure its accuracy, all entries were printed out of the database college-wise, and sent to Deputy Directors across the province to have these verified by the Principals concerned. They were asked to highlight any mistakes, mistypes or missed information. Certificates were called from the Principals and Deputy Directors regarding their personal satisfaction about the data and corrections made.

The corrected printouts were received back in about ten days from all districts, along with signed certificates by the Deputy Directors and Principals of colleges. At the time, there were twenty-two (22) section officers working in the HED. The corrected printouts were divided amongst them equally, and they were directed to personally sit along with the KPO and have all corrections made in the database.

After all the corrections had been effected, under the supervision of Section Officers, another round of sending printouts, and having these vetted by the Deputy Directors and Principals was executed. This showed that the data on HED's MIS was 99% accurate.

In this manner, in about eight weeks from the decision and initiation of work, the

secretary had managed to have a database of all officers and teaching posts of HED, vacant as well as filled, containing all the necessary information required to decide transfer applications. The database could tell, for instance, how many posts are vacant in a particular college or a district; which colleges in the province have vacant posts of lecturer in Psychology, or for that matter, professor in Physics.

Setting the System Free from the Need to be Updated

The next question before the secretary was finding a way to ensure that the database, which at a particular time, accurately reflected the on-ground position of HED's teaching HR, *always* remains updated and accurate. His team suggested that something needed to be done about the old method of sending a copy of transfer notifications and orders to the MIS Operator, who would then punch in the details into the database.

Experience with previous databases told that with time, notifications started to get misplaced, or fatigue set in and the operators just didn't enter the data. It was, therefore, decided that rather than issuing orders and then entering these into the database, let the orders themselves be generated by the MIS. That way, as the MIS would generate a transfer order, it would automatically update itself. In other words, the system would first update its data and would produce a bar-coded system-generated transfer order.

The programmers were roped in and tasked to build this functionality into the MIS, i.e. the system's ability to generate orders and notifications regarding all actions that change the status of posts and/or personnel in the database. Further, the system was also equipped to generate charge relinquishment and assumption reports, as a result of transfer orders generated by the system. Instructions were issued to the field formation to use only the system generated charge report and not the earlier ones that were manually prepared. The Deputy Directors and Principals were issued login and passwords so that they could access the system, generate and print a charge assumption and relinquishment report, in compliance of a transfer order that the system had earlier generated. The secretary got conducted many test runs of the system, which worked well. This measure was aimed at further 'entrenching' the MIS and to force the officers in the HED to use it, and thereby, keeping it updated and accurate in real time.

Outside Help Sought … And the Outcome

The secretary thought of another way to 'entrench' the MIS into the HED's operations. To ensure that every change in posts in colleges and their incumbents must not escape MIS, he approached Finance Department and requested them to issue instructions to their District Accounts Officers that the Accounts Office must not entertain a request for issuance of Last Pay Certificate (LPC) or 'change' of salary after charge assumption, UNLESS the request is accompanied by HED's MIS-generated charge assumption and relinquishment reports and system-generated transfer / appointment orders. The secretary wrote a letter to Secretary, Finance Department, followed by a personal call on to the Secretary Finance and a couple of meetings with the Special Secretary, Finance Department. The secretary believed that if Finance Department cooperated in this endeavor, the MIS would get very firm grounds to stand on sustainably; since for LPC and salary, people would have to generate charge reports through the system, which would only be possible if the System had earlier generated the transfer orders – thereby ensuring that the MIS stays updated in real time.

Interestingly, after a few weeks, the Finance Department responded *informally* and *unofficially*, and regretted the HED's request. As to reasons for not acceding, FD maintained that they had taken up the matter with District Accounts Officers, and that they had collectively responded that it would not be possible for them to adopt this new system in respect of only one department, and that they could do this only if all departments switched to computer-generated transfer orders and charge reports!!

The secretary, though disappointed by this response, was quite relieved to see that his earlier strategy to develop the MIS by mobilizing all resource from within HED and not seeking cooperation from any other department was in perfect order; and perhaps that was one major reason why he could manage to get things done.

Incorporating HRMIS into the Office Work Flows

While the MIS had been all set, two workstations installed in HED secretariat for operating the system, another question arose as to how to incorporate the MIS in the routine file movement in the HED. Normally, a file is initiated by the Section Officer,

which then goes on to the Secretary, through the Deputy Secretary and Additional Secretary. After the Secretary has approved a proposal, or given appropriate instruction, the file is marked down the same route until it reaches the section. The Section Officer issues the letter, notification or order accordingly. After the matter was raised by his officers, different options were discussed and detailed instructions regarding the use of MIS were issued by the HED:

1.   As a general principle, it should be understood that the recently developed MIS in HED is a database of all officers and all posts in HED at the moment; and as such, any order that causes a change in the state of these officers and posts shall have to be generated by the MIS, so that the database remains current and updated at all times.

2.   Report regarding assumption and relinquishment of 'charge' in pursuance of any order issued by the MIS shall also be invariably generated by the MIS system. No report prepared otherwise, even if authenticated by the concerned DDO / authority, shall be considered to be a valid report.

a.   For this purpose, the MIS Wing of HED shall issue login details for all the DDOs (essentially the Principals of all colleges and the DDOs in field formations) to use MIS to generate charge relinquishment and assumptions reports accordingly.

b.   It shall be the responsibility, fairly and squarely, of the DDO concerned to comply with this instruction.

3.   Within the HED, the following procedure shall be adopted to get the draft orders generated by the MIS:

a.   Whenever an order referred to in paragraph 2 above is to be issued by a section, the Deputy Secretary concerned shall mark the file down to the MIS Wing rather than the Section Officer concerned. The DS shall clearly direct the MIS to print a draft order and give details of what that order is to contain.

b.   The MIS Wing, after printing the MIS-generated draft, shall authenticate the draft with its stamp, the embossed seal and initials of the authorized official; place the draft in the file; state so on the Note Sheet and mark the file to the concerned section.

c.   The MIS Wing, in addition to printing the standard circulation list, shall also

include itself in the circulation so that it can later satisfy itself that the draft it printed has actually been subsequently issued. The MIS Wing, at any given point of time, shall be expected to report as to how many drafts it has generated and out of these, how many have actually been issued by the concerned sections.

d.   The concerned Section Officer shall, having received the file along with the draft order, shall sign and issue the order in the usual standard way, according to the Manual of Secretariat Instructions.

e.   The Deputy Secretary concerned shall be responsible for the implementation and compliance of these directions.

4.   No amount of urgency, administrative expediency, or even the MIS being 'down' or out of order at any point of time shall NOT be an excuse for any DDO in the field formation / colleges or any Deputy Secretary in the HED for not having followed the procedure prescribed in these instructions.

5.   In the unusual case of most emergent cases, for instance, where instructions from the Chief Minister's Office or the Chief Secretary require immediate compliance, any departure from the use of MIS system, shall be done only with the prior approval of the Secretary HED.

6.   Non-compliance of and/or failure to follow these instructions by any DDO / DS shall amount to misconduct and inefficiency in terms of Punjab Employees Efficiency, Discipline and Accountability Act 2006.

As can be seen, the secretary tried his utmost to cover all conceivable scenarios in which transfer or any kind of orders that could have been a bearing on the distribution of posts and personnel in the HED. The instructions even covered the emergent scenarios where in very exceptional circumstances, some orders have to be issued urgently, maybe during out of office hours and bypassing the normal approval channels.

The One Stop Shop

Regards the one-stop-shop, the secretary tasked the Deputy Secretary Administration to earmark a room on ground floor of HED Secretariat, to be used as a reception room for all applications by officers regarding transfer and other service matters. The room was equipped with two computers. Two lecturers were selected from amongst

the ones who wanted a posting in Lahore and were tasked to operate the 'One Window Office'. They started receiving applications while the ban imposed during the 'census' was in effect. The applications were duly logged manually on registers, and then their data entered into an MS Excel spreadsheet. By the time, the MIS system was up and about and technical and logistical snags ironed out, the One Window Office had received about 1500 applications for transfers and postings.

After having set up the One Window Office and MIS at hand, the secretary set out to put the system to operation by processing and disposing of all pending transfer applications. He constituted a committee comprising of Additional Secretary, Deputy Secretary and the Section Officer concerned. He tasked them to proceed as follows:

a.   Sort out all requests in order of 'destination post';

b.   See if there is a clear vacant post (same grade, same subject) in the destination college; if so, proceed further, and if not, regret the request;

c.   In case there are more than one officer desirous to go on the same post, the one who is senior shall be accommodated, and others regretted.

It is pertinent to note that as the transfer orders for any officer were issued, the system kept itself updating in real time. The committee could therefore decide and dispose of, on merit of seniority, about 1500 applications in three days.

After the initial backlog was cleared, the secretary notified a monthly calendar whereby on the second Monday of every month, all applications received during the last 30 days would be disposed of by the third Monday of the same month.

Extending the HRMIS to Fresh Applicants

Towards the end of first quarter of 2018, Punjab Public Service Commission started to send recommendations for appointment of lecturers and Assistant Professors in various subjects. The PPSC's recommendations are received grade wise and subject wise; for instance, in a single letter, it would recommend, in order of merit, fifty female lecturers of Chemistry, and so on. Using the MIS, the following system was adopted for the first placement of new appointees.

a.   All the persons recommended for appointment would be called at the same

time at one place; female appointees at the Auditorium of Government College for Women, Cooper Road, and male appointees at the Auditorium of Government Islamia College, Civil Lines.

b.   MIS generated lists of vacant posts from across the province would be projected on a large screen in the auditorium.

c.   The new officers would be made to sit in order of their merit; and one by one, they would be called onto the front to make their choice of station out of the vacant posts available.

d.   After the choice had been made, a system-generated posting order would be printed then and there and handed over to the officer. The system would automatically take that 'taken' post out of the available posts in the list on the projected screen.

Until June 2018, in this manner, HED issued first posting orders for about 1200 fresh appointees, according to merit, in a fair and transparent manner.

CHALLENGES

The above is a simple linear narration of a story. Albeit, the secretary and his team could accomplish what they aimed at in a short period of time, there were many a slips between the cup and the lips; and there were many hurdles that needed to be negotiated and worked around.

1. First, initially, most of the officers, particularly at the operational levels, the field formation and Section Officers and their staff, were convinced that the automation idea either would not work, or would collapse after its operationalization.

2. Initially, people did not take the whole effort seriously, in that the data provided was false and incomplete, perhaps just carelessly. Officers in the field, the Deputy Directors and Principals furnished wrong certificates regarding veracity of data. The secretary had to deal very sternly with the careless ones in the initial stages. At least two Principals and a Deputy Director were directed to leave their posts and report to Department. He ordered initiation of disciplinary proceedings too. Although, in all these cases, their explanations and personal hearings by The secretary and Special

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Secretary HED led to withdrawal of earlier orders in a few weeks, this sent a very clear message that the secretary meant business and that business was serious.

3. After the MIS started working, the Deputy Secretaries and Section Officers found new excuses to bypass the MIS and revert to earlier manual & paper-based system. At times, these excuses would be legitimate and at others, otherwise. For instance, HED had received recommendations for appointment of some 200 lecturers. The system required massive programming to be able to add these officers into the system and then appoint them on vacant posts. It was suggested that while the programming job is finished, HED might use the old procedure of manual processing and postings. The secretary put his foot down, made the programmers work day and night, withstood pressure to appoint the new officers, made them wait for about two weeks, and then got all placements processed and executed through the MIS.

4. After the MIS was operationalized, the devil that notoriously resides in the 'detail' came to life. The system was originally designed to transfer officers from one post to another, and to update its logs in real time. Many new situations and scenarios kept popping up during the first two months. For instance, initially there was no provisioning for keeping data regarding officers getting suspended from service, going on study leave, long leave and medical leave etc. The secretary showed patience, resilience and insistence in that he withstood pressure and kept people waiting until all these scenarios could be programmed into the MIS.

THE OUTCOMES

In broad terms, outcomes of the use of MIS were as expected. It induced efficiency, speed and transparency into the system. A simple transfer application could now be disposed of in about ten minutes, either with regrets, or with a printed transfer order / notification. Officers of HED would not have to run from pillar to post, from colleges out in the districts to offices in DPI Office or HED, since all the information that was required to decide their matter was only a few clicks away. This restored dignity and respect of the officers.

MIS also made the whole system objective and predictable. Any officer could now go to HED or DPI office and check if his desired position in vacant or not. He could find out if his request would bear fruit. This made the whole process very fair and transparent. Further, since at the time of decision, all applications for a particular vied-for post, say in a large college in a large city, could be considered at the same time, it was easy to observe merit, i.e. seniority, in posting the senior most contender to that post. This brought about fairness and equity in the system, which was non-existent before.

In a way, the MIS empowered all the well-meaning and well-intentioned persons; officers as well as officials. Now, there was no dependence on the reports and NOCs by the field formations and colleges any more. It reduced the workload and waiting time for the applicants as well as the ones who ran the system.

Nonetheless, in its own peculiar way, introduction of the MIS had a 'disempowering effect' on all tiers of the department. The secretary, even if he had wanted, could not arbitrarily transfer an officer to a post that was not there; or erratically against a post of another subject or grade. Even if he did so, the system would log his action and this information will remain there for all to see, for all times to come, which could potentially be cited as precedent to put pressure on him and other officers. At lower tiers, the officials could not 'game' the system anymore.

Introduction of MIS brought newer ways of corruption. At least one incident was reported in which someone contacted few applicants for transfer and sought money for facilitation. Although this person was later apprehended through police and got arrested, his modus operandi was pretty simple. Anybody having access to the MIS could now find out in minutes if a particular transfer request is tenable or not; in the former case, he was in a position to blackmail the applicants, having full confidence that their request would ultimately be approved anyway. Previously, since the information regarding posts and vacancies was scattered in different offices, and was not accessible to one office off the cuff, it was difficult to predict beforehand as to the outcomes of particular transfer requests.

In the end, it is pertinent to mention that five months after the secretary had left HED, he was pleased to learn that the HRMIS he developed at HED was still being operated and used heartily; albeit the department had seen two more Secretaries in this short while!

LESSONS

The secretary learnt quite a few lessons during this exercise. Firstly the technology and automation is the key to solving most of the issues with the public sector. This is particularly true of long and tedious processes, involving many steps spanning many offices. Introduction of Information Technology can cut processes short, make decision making transparent and quick while ensuring fairness to the persons concerned.

Secondly, proper communication with ultimate users in the initial stages can be useful in showing to them that the new solutions would be beneficial and convenient for them. That way, their ownership and motivation can bring about innovations smoothly and swiftly. Informing people, whose matters are going to be dealt with by the new solutions and systems, is equally important. In this case, had the secretary disseminated information regarding the MIS and how HED's officers' transfer requests would be handled, it would have helped in many ways. It would have prevented blackmailing of transfer applicants by those who had ready access to the information stored in the MIS.

Thirdly, as discussed above, introduction of technology empowers and disempowers in its own ways. These implications should be carefully studied beforehand and all stakeholders should be brought on board. If this is not done, as these implications unveil in due course, people may start losing interest and ownership of the new systems and applications may wane.

Fourthly, ideally, the staff that had previously been working in offices and running old paper-based manual processes, should be cut down; and put to use elsewhere. This is necessary for making the change permanent and sustainable. The old staff not only causes redundancies, but also generates a temptation to relapse to the older methods. After automation has set in, the old staff should be posted out; and only the skilled staff be retained, or new officials may be posted to manage the old processes in new ways.

Fifthly, although larger endeavours cannot be initiated without formal planning, documentation and going through the processes of PC1s, administrative approval and complicated procurements, it is advisable to identify a low hanging fruit, if at all

it is possible. Thinking big but starting small, and then developing on the smaller achievement, maybe by using formal channels and processes, is more practical and quicker way to induce change and bring about innovation. Had the secretary opted for going for a large database project, by the time he would have got the PC1 approved and funding arranged after obtaining Chief Minister's approval, he would have been transferred out of HED before the completion of recruitment of staff or procurement of equipment (July 2018).

Sixthly, this also shows the importance of reasonably durable incumbency on substantive positions in the public sector. HED somehow had been unfortunate for the last decade or so in having very short stints of its secretaries. The case at hand indicates that in order for a public servant to do something substantive and meaningful, and to take it to its somewhat logical end, he needs a reasonable tenure. The secretary could manage to translate his idea into reality only because he was there. The project would have been forsaken midway, if he were transferred in or before March 2018. After all, for a successor, it is always effortless to keep on using a facility or system that is already there, rather than taking ownership of something that is only under construction.

ANALYSIS

The case presented above is reportedly a success story. It can be analysed in the light of the analytical framework presented earlier. This analysis will provide good insights into the change management process adopted in the case and will help in determining as to what extent the eight factors were employed in the case under discussion.

1.   It is clear from the case description that the secretary was able to identify the issue and causes correctly and within very short time after he joined the department. This clear identification of issue helped him throughout the process. Another important factor is the fact that he involved other officers from the department as well in the process. However, after identification of the issue, it is clear that he did not disseminate this information widely. The information was shared internally. Though there is another aspect of this matter. Most probably this issue was a common knowledge. And at least as far as issue was concerned there was perhaps no need to disseminate the information widely.

2.   Clear action plan was developed and specific goals were set. The timelines were also very clear. However, the secretary did not compromise on the quality of information and took more time to get the information right. And here his judgement was accurate as correct information was the crucial element for success.

3.   This was a tricky point. Apparently, the secretary employed a mixed approach. He used threats, persuasion and employees empowerment to overcome resistance to change. He used his position of authority to threaten the corrupt elements and bring about compliance. But he also persuaded his immediate subordinates to help him in identification of issue, causes and solution. Then he empowered the field officers including all DDOs. Empowerment of employees is quite important and significant.

4.   In this case the secretary was the top civil servant of the department and champion of the change. His skilled leadership was one of the crucial factors for the successful implementation.

5.   The secretary did not try to win outside support in general. In one specific case he sought the help of Finance Department but failed. It is not mentioned in the case whether he attempted to obtain the support of political bosses or not. In fact, he was convinced that he should rely on himself and resources of the department to implement the change. His argument regarding long gestation period, in case he sought additional resources, was right. It also proves that changes which require short implementation time and less resources have more chances of success in public sector.

6.   It is true that additional resources especially in terms of qualified manpower were required. But he was able to muster up the resources from within the department and had not to rely on external resources. This was another crucial factor for the successful implementation of change. He had to resort to some redeployment of human resource, which proves the argument that some redeployment is not only essential but desired during transformation.

7.   Very importantly the secretary was able to institutionalise the change to a great extent. He issued instructions and policies to protect the change. More importantly he amended the business process to make it mandatory that only orders generated by the system were used and no manual orders were issued. By this one

significant change he ensured the integration of automation in office work and flow of files, which would have positive effect on the sustainability as well.

8.   His approach was to start small and then go for big change, which worked successfully. If he had gone for comprehensive change from the start, as was advocated by some of his officers, then even the implementation of posting transfers part would have been difficult.

CONCLUSION

The application of analytical framework on this particular case study confirms to a great extent what the research has already shown. That is if the eight essential factors are more or less followed, then chances of success are high. Secondly, it is also important to note that the essential factors are useful irrespective of the size of the change. In this case the change was relatively small though had a profound effect on the working of the department. It gives some peculiar insights in the working of the public sector. It indicates the importance of the chief executive of a public organization as a leader and champion of change. It also highlights the need of institutionalization of change. It showcase an often otherwise neglected area of empowerment of employees and its contribution in the success of the reform. Though this area needs further research to understand the dynamics in the context of public sector of Pakistan. Finally a word about sustainability. It will be premature to assume that the change is permanently institutionalized in the department as hardly one year is passed. However, the indications are good as the system was still running after the change of two secretaries, as reported by the secretary (narrator of the case). It may be useful to study this transformation again in 2-3 years' time.

References

[1] Sergio, Fernandez, and Hal G. Rainey. (2006). Managing successful organizational change in public sector. Public Administration Review, March-April 2006.