

Civil Service Reform: Effectiveness of Supervision System in Nepal



✉ Lakshman Kumar Pokharel*

Abstract

Literally, supervision means overseeing the job performed by others in a professional way. It teach people about the methods of performing, helping them to perform better and observe the results. Supervision possesses characteristics of both inspection and investigation and it has educational aspects as well as it plays consultative role too. Supervision in the administration takes place at top level, middle level and first line supervisor level. Based on different environmental conditions and need of the organization the techniques of the supervision also differ and it include prior approval from centers, set service standards, approval for recruitment, getting reports regularly, regular inspection at regular time interval and so on. There are different reasons of adoption of supervision system in the administration. It includes at each level of the hierarchy he must make arrangements of supervision of the job to be performed and to achieve results. Moreover, the workers on the front line often need guidance and advice in doing their job. Renis Likert is admired as the pioneer of introducing human relations approach in management. He classified supervisor as job centered and as employee centered. Job centered supervisor ensures performance of assigned tasks and maintenance of prescribed standard and to some extent he is authoritarian in nature. Where as employee centered supervisor demonstrate concern with human aspects of subordinate and always emphasis on effective team building for high task performance and he is basically a democratic type. Despite the heavy efforts from government there are still some genuine problems exists in the civil service of Nepal. Some of the identified and unresolved problems are process oriented, high cost of the service and beyond the reach of deprived people, maintaining high ethical standards , showing strong commitments of the implementation , developing mutual understanding among the bureaucrats and conformity with prevailing law . Even though there is ample organizational and legal system for sound supervision system. But supervisor of Nepal's civil service seldom delegates his authority and never shows belief in the subordinates and they are mostly job

* Mr. Pokharel is associated with Revenue Investigation Department, Hariharbhavan, Kathmandu, Nepal.

centered and authoritarian in nature. Complaints against the public official and audit objection raised by the auditor general of Nepal can be taken as indicators of the effectiveness of the supervision system. These indicators show ineffectiveness of the system. The supervision system can be made effective by formulating separate law, relate supervision report with placements, transfer, promotion and providing any privilege to the staffs, supervision report should be effectively implemented , high level authority must delegate his routine administrative power to the subordinate and they should give more time to study the actual situation of the district level office and regularly inspect or review their performance as well as review the implementation of the on-going projects ,contracting out of the activities to be performed by the district level office and give full authority to the office chief to decide reward and punishment to his subordinates ,adopt performance based and regular salary system, encourage the honest staffs, strong commitments in implementation of the approved policy and programs, raising feeling of self confidence among the staffs, develop mutual understanding in civil service and stop administrative activities adverse to the prevailing law.

Meaning of the Supervision

Supervision, the word is made up of two words **super** and **vision**. **Super** means excellent and **vision** means visualization. Literally, supervision means overseeing the job performed by others in a professional way. Thus it may be defined as directing and guiding the work of subordinates by their supervisors. It is the process to teach people about the methods of performing, and helping them to perform better and observe the results. In other words supervision may be taken as extension of the leadership.

Margaret Williams defines supervision as “a process by which workers are helped by a designated staff members to learn according to their needs; to make the best use of their knowledge and skill , to improve their abilities so that they do their job more effectively and with increasing satisfaction to themselves and the agency “.

There are so many people who think supervision is similar to the inspection and investigation. Inspection is technique of supervision and it is considered as a part of the process of supervision. Where as investigation is a non routine operation and take place when there is wrong doing on the part of the subordinates or the field office. However supervision possesses characteristics of both inspection and investigation and it has educational aspects as well as it plays consultative role too.

Supervision at Different Levels

Supervision in the administration takes place at different levels. The role of the supervisor varies according to its level. The levels of supervision are as follows:

- **Top Level**: It is concerned with setting general rules and regulations. Departmental chief is regarded as top level supervisor and he is responsible to supervise subordinates under the department. This type of the supervision is important because performances of the field level offices are based on the set rules and regulations.
- **Middle Level**: Division Chiefs are the person who supervises at middle level. They supervise work of first line supervisor. This supervision is very important because it guides how effectively plans, programs and policies of the organization are actually implemented.

- **First Line Supervisor:** Office superintendent are first line supervisor. It involves physical observation and guidance of work in the field. This type of supervision affects the productivity in the field.

Furthermore, supervision can be divided into line and functional supervision. Line supervision is control exercised by persons in the hierarchical line of command. Functional supervision is the responsibility of staff personnel and it has advice nature.

Techniques of Supervision

Supervision is technically a very tough job because among the 6 Ms of the management man is very difficult to handle. **Samuel Johnson** about the quality of the man says "**The true measure of a man is how he treats someone who can do him absolutely no good**". Therefore, it is said supervision is not merely a process; it consists of technical nature too. Therefore, based on different environmental conditions and need of the organization the techniques of the supervision also differ. The major techniques of the supervision are as follows:

- Prior approval from superiors/centre before taking major decisions by subordinate / field office.
- Set Service Standards to the people working in the organization.
- Approval from centre to appoint staffs.
- Getting reports regularly.
- Inspection at regular time interval
- Formulating work plans for specific projects.
- Formulations of the manuals.
- Formulating codes of conducts for the staffs.
- Regular meetings or discussion with the staffs with the motto to identify or solve the problems.

Why Supervision

Top executive in an organization can not personally oversee the work of all employees. At each level of the hierarchy he must make arrangements of supervision of the job to be performed. It is necessary to ensure successful implementation of policies and program and to achieve results. Moreover, workers on the front line often need guidance and advice in doing their job. It achieves coordination of the activities of workers at various levels and confers policies and general plans into work plans.

Renis Likert and Supervision Model

Renis Likert is a social Psychologist, who belongs to United States of America (USA). He established research centre at the University of Michigan in 1946. He is admired as the pioneer of introducing human relations approach in management. This approach emphasizes the importance of people in creating, operating and influencing in organization. Renis Likert and his associates carried out extensive research in management field in different organization in USA. After extensive research they propounded three distinctive concepts pertaining to supervision, management systems and dynamics of interpersonal relationships.

Renis Likert classified supervisor into two categories as job centered and as employee centered.

Job centered supervisor ensures performance of assigned tasks and maintenance of prescribed standard. This type of supervisor has little confidence in his subordinates and allows little freedom to them. He is to some extent authoritarian in nature. Where as employee centered supervisor demonstrate concern with human aspects of his subordinate and emphasize effective team building for high task performance. This type of supervisor allow its subordinates free working environment and he is basically concern with better results. He is primarily democratic in nature.

Supervision System in Nepal

Supervision system in Nepal can be judged from following angles and perspectives.

Government's Efforts

Despite the heavy efforts from government side to reform civil service of the country, there are still some genuine problems exists in the civil service of Nepal. Some of the identified and unsolved problems are:

- Administration is still process oriented
- Service provided by the government is still beyond the reach of needy people
- Service provided by the government is still cost high in comparison with service provided by the private sector.
- Maintaining high ethical standards in the civil service
- Strong commitment in implementation of approved policy and programs.
- Developing mutual understanding among bureaucrats in the civil service for successful implementation of the plan and program.
- Stop any kind of the administrative activities adverse to the prevailing law of the country.

Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007)

Tenth plan consists of separate national policy in Governance, Development Administration, and Human Rights sector. The objectives of this plan in this sector is to make public administration, competitive, economic, transparent, service oriented, result oriented, accountable to make people feel governance and facilitate to alleviate poverty, sustainable economic and social development.

The plan has spell out following strategies to achieve the aforementioned objectives:

- Enhance financial efficiency of bureaucracy.
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation system of the development policy, program and projects.

Among many, the policy of tenth plan is to achieve the objectives and adopted strategies to strengthen monitoring and evaluation. But it failed to chart out any specific policy emphasis to strengthen supervision of the subordinates and field offices.

Supervision System

Nepal's civil service is adopting following types of supervision system:

- Supervision of the subordinate based on civil service acts and rules 1992

According to the civil service Act supervisor has to evaluate performance of his subordinates once a year. This performance evaluation report is used for promotion, nomination to the higher study, reward and punishment. There is provision in the Act that supervisor needs to monitor the performance of his subordinates constantly but in actual sense this is not happening and performance evaluation is becoming just a formal procedure which has no meaning to the evaluator as well as to those evaluated. Therefore it is seen that except in personal reason all staffs get equal evaluation marks from his supervisor.

- Supervision of the field office based on the government office inspection rules 1969

Government office inspection rule has been formulated for effective inspection and constant monitoring of the overall performance of the field office. But this system is also not effective and is used as merely a formality. Normally this approach is used to avoid cold in the capital city.

Thus we can say that even though we have ample organizational and legal system for sound supervision system in Nepal's civil service but the challenge lies on its effective implementation.

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of any system mostly depends upon modalities adopted to implement the system. Comparing with findings of the Renis Likert, our supervisor is not employee centered and is mostly job centered because our performance evaluation system is based on the performance of the employee. Moreover, Nepal's supervisors seldom delegate his authority and never believe their subordinates. Supervisor never discusses the problems encountered and solutions to face the challenges with his subordinates. Thus we can say that Nepal's supervisors are mostly job centered and authoritarian in nature.

The bitter experience of the Nepal's civil service is that those supervisors, who are supposed to evaluate and teach their subordinate in principle, use yearly performance evaluation system as a tool to make obey his inappropriate order. It is true that supervision in Nepal's bureaucracy is merely taken as a system that is important to show other as an ingredient of the civil service not as a practically implemented policy.

Theoretically, central level office has responsibility of periodic supervision of the field level office. But contrary to the theory Nepal's field level office considers supervision from centre as an extra financial burden to them. They knew that supervision from central office to the field level office simply as a formality not as an essential procedure. They take supervision as an event that happens once a year at the time of performance evaluation or at winter season when officials in the central office make tour to avoid cold in the capital city or in regional head- quarter.

It is a strange truth in the Nepal's civil service that each and every top level officials knew that even though supervisor do not find performance or achievement of the subordinate not compatible with set standards or the approved target but he has no role to play in his promotion, placements, transfers and foreign training or observation tour.

Higher authorities in the civil service instead of thinking to improve performance of their subordinates, they dwell in themselves on unnecessary day to day administrative activities

such as recommending or carrying out promotion, transfer and placements of the person whom he knows or recommended by those who knew him.

Nepotism and favoritism are most widely used apparatus in Nepal's civil service. Taking advantages of some deficiencies of administrative system some bureaucrats are benefited from these scepters, therefore many bureaucrats love to use it. In actual sense these needs to be treated as a disease that destroy life of whole administrative set up. Top brass of Nepal's civil service must refrain to use it and they should seriously think to act neutrally because one of the characteristics of the bureaucracy is to maintain impartiality as well as neutrality. However, the situation of Nepal's civil service is just opposite to what it should be.

In connection of analyzing effectiveness of supervision system in Nepal's civil service I would like to cite a story, which may be reflection of the real work situation for many bureaucrats in Nepal. The story is an event which starts when a minister in a certain ministry asked Director General of a department to provide specific vehicle for his use. The vehicle asked by the minister was given by the donor agency and according to the conditions of the agreement vehicle could be used in the project specific activities and without prior approval of the donor agency government can not use even for the official purpose of the ministry. The Director General told these facts to the minister but minister was reluctant to hear and understand the logic rather continuously insisted Director General to obey his order. When minister do not listen the facts then the Director General conveyed his inability to carry out his order unless donor agency approves the proposal. In reaction to refusal to carry out his order the minister changed the Director General and appointed new one. And newly appointed Director General provided him the vehicle for short periods. But the removed Director General suffered a lot in promotion, transfer and placements. This story can also be taken as a leading example of supervisor subordinate relationship and raises various questions about the soundness of the supervision system in Nepal. One of the questions is how such demotivated bureaucrats like the transferred Director General could effectively supervise his subordinates? How such newly appointed Director General who is simply appointed to carry out the order of the minister could develop good relationship with his subordinates? How the subordinate evaluate both Director Generals as a good supervisor? Will subordinate effectively carry out order of such supervisor?

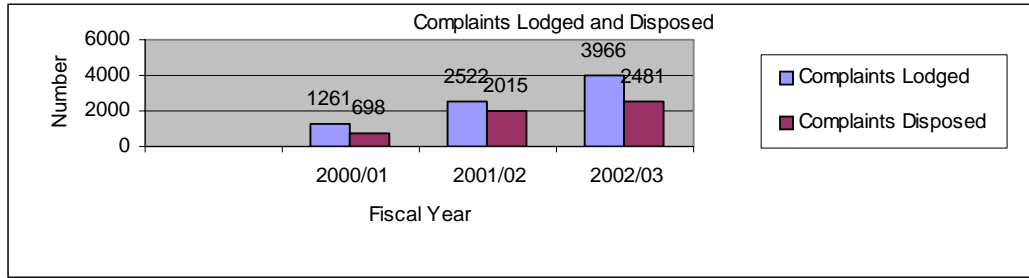
Indicators to Measure the Effectiveness

If we study above we find that government has taken some steps to make the supervision system effective. But the steps taken out by government are not sufficient. The sufficiency of government efforts to strengthen supervision system can be analyzed by using some indicators like trends of complain against the public officials and audit objections raised by Auditor General of Nepal. These two can be shown in as follows:

Complain Lodged in the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority

One of the indicators to measure the effectiveness of the supervision is complain lodged against the public officials. The number of complain against the public officials shows how effective the supervision of ministry, department and office in charge to the field office. It is believed that if the supervision from superior is effective, then complain against public officials must be less. Following table shows situation of complains against public officials.

Table - I

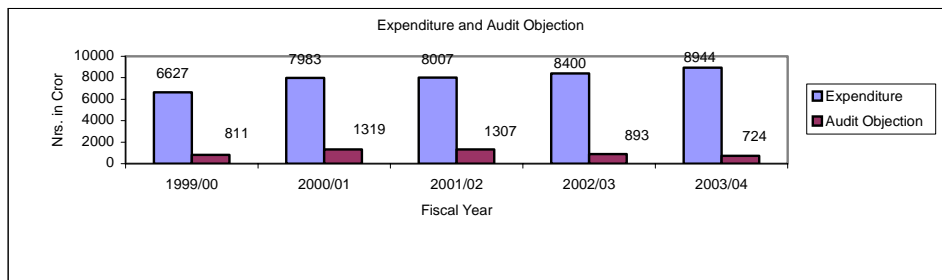


Above figure shows that in 2000/01 complain lodged in CIAA is 1261, where as in 2001/2002 and 2002/03 the number is 2522 and 3966 respectively. This show the increasing trends in complain against public officials. We can conclude by saying that increasing number of complain against public official means ineffectiveness of the supervision from the centre is also increasing.

Audit Objections Raised by Auditor General of Nepal

Another indicator, to measure effectiveness of the supervision system of Nepal, is the amount and trend of the audit objection raised by the auditor general of Nepal.

Table - II



Above figure shows that in 1999/00 the percentage of the audit objection is 12.24, in 2000/01 it is 16.52 ,in 2001/02 it is 16.32 in 2002/03 it is 10.63 and in 2003/04 it is 8.09. Audit objection reflects the irregularities incurred by government office which means non compliance of financial rules. This also means lack of inspection from centre.

Suggestions to Improve Supervision System in Nepal

It is said that every problem has solutions. Therefore, there are following steps which could be taken as guidance to strengthen the supervision system in Nepal:

- Formulate separate law for supervision and among other there should be provision in the law that supervision report must be related with placements, transfer, promotion and providing any privilege to the staffs.
- Supervisor must be made responsible for the overall performance of his subordinate.
- Supervision report writing and its implementation should be an inbuilt system in central level. Instead of involving in routine job like transfer, placements, of the staffs,

Secretary in the ministry must delegate his routine administrative power to the Director General of the department and he should give more time to study the actual situation of the department / district level office and inspect regularly or review their performance as well as implementation of the on-going projects.

- Contracting out activities to be performed by the district level office and give full authority to the office chief to decide reward and punishment to his subordinates. And such reward should be handsome amount and should be relate to the monthly salary.
- Adopt two type of salary system in the civil service of Nepal. First type should be for those, who performs the regular function and next type of salary system should be related with the performance. Performance based salary should be provided on the basis of supervisor report and target achieved. Government should formulate separate manual for performance salary system. The manual should be strictly followed and among many, there should be one provision that if some supervisor recommends performance based salary to his subordinates without following the provision of the manual and without achieving the target such act should be considered as corrupt practices and such supervisor should be punished on the basis of prevailing corruption control law.
- Encourage the honest staffs.
- Strong commitments in implementation of the approved policy and programs.
- Raising feeling of self confidence among the staffs.
- Develop mutual understanding in civil service.
- Stop administrative activities adverse to the prevailing law.

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