

## Does Administrative Culture Replicate Dominant Societal Culture? A Study of the Nepalese Public Administration<sup>∞</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

A number of studies have shown a close relationship between national or societal and organizational cultures (Jamil, 1998; Hofstede, 1991; Tayeb, 1988). Cultural theorists have concluded that individuals are conditioned by native culture long before they enter organizations. In this respect, individuals' perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and mental programming are heavily influenced by domestic cultures (Nelson and Gopalan, 2003: 1115). As a consequence, the behavior and culture of organization, i.e. interpersonal relationships within and outside organization as well as decision-making is affected by societal culture.

Given the close relationship between culture and interpersonal relationships as well as decision-making, one would expect that these aspects are well investigated and analyzed in details by theorists. Although, analyses of these relationships abound with regard to private organizations (Hofstede, 1991; Tayeb, 1988), this is not the case with regard to public organizations. This aspect should have got due attention given the fact that public organizations more than other organizations are likely to be more influenced by the context within which these function. Since legitimacy and responding to citizens' demands and needs are the foundation on which public organizations operate, one would expect that these aspects are properly focused and analyzed. Given the paucity of studies in analyzing public organizations along cultural dimensions, this article draws heavily on the works of Hofstede (1991), Putnam (1975), and Trompenaar (1993).

According to both Hofstede and Trompenaar, culture is like layers where the outer layers are more superficial and consist of heroes, rituals, and artifacts. At the inner most lies the core of the culture which distinguishes a group of people from another group of people. Hofstede has termed the artificial layers as "practices" which according to him vary more within nations. These are organization cultures and are particular for a given organization and distinguish organizations from one another within a nation. On the other hand, the inner most circle is termed by Hofstede "value" which is the core culture and vary more across nations. In order to show variation in national culture, Hofstede studied how the core cultural values of

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employees of a multinational company operating in more than 40 countries vary according to four cultural dimensions. These are power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, and femininity versus masculinity. Similarly, Trompenaars defines cultures as the way people solve problems and there are three problems – time, nature, and human beings. People's relationship to these three problems defines culture. While both Hofstede and Trompenaars studied private firms, Putnam studied how civil bureaucrats in Britain, Germany and Italy varied according to "classical" versus "political" dimension.

This article is an exploratory study. It, first, maps the administrative culture of Nepal. More specifically, the paper highlights the values and norms dominant among Nepali bureaucrats. In this regard, the article focuses on three relationships: a) relationships among bureaucrats within the bureaucracy, b) interface between bureaucracy and politics, and c) relationship between bureaucrats and the common citizens. Second, to what extent this culture reflects dominant Nepalese culture. Is administrative culture in Nepal isomorphic with national culture? Has the Nepalese bureaucracy developed a distinct culture independent of the national culture? As argued earlier, such a relationship is important to unearth why people in a particular organization behave the way they do and how decision making reflects norms and values in which decision makers are socialized into.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY**

There are both theoretical and practical reasons to map administrative culture. The theoretical significance is to shed light on to what extent Nepalese bureaucracy is engulfed by the environment within which it operates or has it developed a culture of its own by setting its own boundary distinct from the environment. According to the population ecology school, environment selects those organizations that serve the environment best. The survival of an organization is, therefore, a question of support from the environment. The more the support an organization gets from the environment, the more legitimate the organization becomes and hence more the likelihood of survival. In this regard, more so for a public organization, that an organization conforms to the dominant forces in the environment. According to March and Olsen (1991):

Institutional survival depends on creating norms and values about how an institution should be run. An institution survives because its structures, processes, and ideologies match what society finds appropriate, natural, rational and democratic. In this conception of history, the role of politics is to match the institutions to social, economic and technical environments. Changes in the environment also produce changes in the political system. As a result new coalitions and interests are formed.

Is this the case that may be said of the Nepalese bureaucracy that it conforms to the norms and values of society?

From a practical point of view, if administrative culture in Nepal is severely constrained by national culture, the question that may arise whether it is possible at all to reform bureaucracy in order to inculcate modern values. In the age of globalization and open market economy, to what extent a bureaucracy like the Nepalese one needs to be redesigned or even reinvented to adapt to the changes that are taking place globally. Nowadays with the trend of New Public Management becoming a reality for many bureaucracies around the globe, there is greater expectation that bureaucracy requires to operate not only democratically but also according to market mechanisms with high emphasis on cost reduction, better service provision, greater

accountability, and more transparency in policy making. A better understanding of bureaucracy's modus operandi and its values are necessary if the right remedies for administrative development are to be chosen.

## **UNDERSTANDING CULTURE**

There is no single answer or definition of culture. The many definitions and concepts of culture have aroused confusion and controversy among scholars as to the precise meaning of culture. Kroeber and Kluckholm (cited in Tayeb, 1988: 42) cited 164 definitions of the term culture back in 1954. To give a brief illustration of this diversity, some define culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group of people from another" (Hofstede, 1991: 5), or "as a set of historically evolved learned values, attitudes, and meanings shared by members of a given community" (Tayeb, 1988: 42), while for some others culture refers to "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system.....by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life" (Geertz cited in Kane, 1991: 68), or culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions in a group" (Schein, 1997: 12). There is a tendency to use culture as an across-the-board explanation for all human actions and behavior. It should be no surprise that there is also variety in its application to organization studies. Such evaluation requires reflection on the ways the culture concept informs us about organization.

In the context of organization, culture affects behavior and interpersonal relationship by giving vision of the world and models of actions of what is legitimate and standard (Bang, 1990: 91). In order to understand how culture affects organization members' life, behavior and relationships, the various approaches to link culture and organization can be grouped into two major dimensions: "Culture is what organization has" and "Culture is what organization is" (Jorgensen, 1989; Meek, 1988; Schein, 1985; Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984; Smircich, 1983, Pettigrew, 1979).

### **1) Culture is what organization "has"**

This perspective argues that every organization develops its own cultural values and practices on the basis of its objectives, clients and consumers, and structure and functions. As a result, culture in a school is different than culture in a hospital. Similarly, culture in a public organization is different from organization culture in a private organization. Culture, according to this perspective, can be changed, manipulated, or altered to make the organization effective in achieving its objectives. In this regard, leadership plays a crucial role. Technology, structure, interpersonal relationships, and goals of an organization are the results of leadership. Leadership is concerned with the "creation and management of culture" (Schein, 1997: 1). There are better or worse cultures, stronger or weaker cultures, and that the "right" kind of culture will influence how effective organizations are. According to Edgar Schein (1997: 15):

Culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin in that leaders first create cultures when they create groups and organizations. Once cultures exist, they determine the criteria for leadership and thus determine who will or will not be leader. But if cultures become dysfunctional, it is the unique function of leadership to perceive the functional and dysfunctional elements of the existing culture and to manage cultural evolution and change in such a way that the group can survive in a changing environment.

Organizations are conceived as an instrument to achieve prescribed goal and in this respect the concern is "how to organize" individual action effectively that suits best to the demands of the organization. According to this instrumental view, human action derives from desires and beliefs. This view holds that if it is possible to identify the link between beliefs and desires on the one hand and action on the other, then it is possible to change human action to achieve a predisposed organization goal. It is based on the causal principle that: To the same causes, the effects are always the same. According to Harris and Moran (1991: 110):

Since culture is a human action, it is subject to alteration, depending on time, place or circumstances.

## **2) Culture is what organization "is"**

This perspective, in contrast to the previous one, argues that organization culture is isomorphic with national culture and may not be changed at will by the leadership. According to this perspective, culture is the product of negotiated and shared symbols and meanings, it emerges from social interaction. Culture, according to this approach, manifests itself in the shared sets of assumptions, beliefs, and values that are held by members of an occupational group (Geertz, Louis, Van Maanen and Barley, cited in Jones, 1983: 454). In this regard, shared values and beliefs, and interpersonal relations in organizations are mere reflections of their viable combination that take place in the society. The society prescribes and legitimizes "what should be" organization's and its members' behavior not the leadership or management strategies. This perspective embodies a diverse range of theories such as societal, political, and national cultural theories. The common line of argument in these theories is that culture matters for individual as well as organizational behavior. Organization culture reflects broader societal values and is, in fact, a society in miniature format.

The arguments in these two perspectives are similar to what Hofstede argued that "practices" such as heroes, artifacts, rituals vary more among organization within the national boundary. On the other hand, the core culture "values" develops in individuals in the families, in early childhood, in neighborhood, schools and organizations. As a result, core culture reflects societal culture and organizations' members within a nation share common cultural values and, hence, organization culture varies more across nations.

The major difference between these two perspectives is the argument about the source of organization culture. According to "Culture is what organization has", the source of organization culture is the leadership who designs and redesigns culture to affect the behaviour and interpersonal relationship of organization members. On the other hand, according to "Culture is what organization is", the source of culture is society which gives organization members with vision of what is "good" or "bad", "ugly" or "beautiful", and so forth. However, whatever the sources of organizational culture, the main function of culture is to provide organization members with models of the world, how the world should be, what would be the nature of interpersonal relationships within and across organizations, and whom to trust and rely upon. In short, organization culture is values, norms, and attitudes of organization members manifested through interpersonal relationships within the organization and how they relate to the environment.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ADMINISTRATIVE CULTURE?

Administrative culture in this article means taking studies of organizational culture one step further by incorporating politics in the conceptual framework. Missing from the theories of organization culture - in its typologies or dimensions - is the role of politics. Contemporary studies of organization culture are mainly concerned with organizations' internal context, e.g. employees' work related attitudes, organization structure and management systems (Schein, 1997; Harris & Moran, 1991; Hofstede, 1991; Tayeb, 1988). Most of these studies deal with private organizations and as such the question of politics has not been a major interest to their inquiries. Such an approach is inadequate to understand public organizations where politics plays a major role in shaping public administration and its relations to society. Therefore, a study of administrative culture has to incorporate not only the internal context of public administration such as bureaucrats' attitudes towards work and their place of work, but also the external context, i.e. bureaucracy's relationship to politics and society in general. In conceptualizing administrative culture, a "dialogue" between cultural theories and theories of politics, is therefore, of vital importance.

Therefore, in order to understand bureaucratic attitudes, interpersonal relationships, and bureaucrats' roles in the political context of Nepal, three relationships are focused in attempts to capture dimensions of administrative culture. These relationships are based on cultural values and norms about administrative practices (Jamil, 1998).

- a) Political responsiveness or relationships between politicians and administrators.
- b) Cohesion or sources of internal authority and control.
- c) Social responsiveness or relationships between society and administrator.

The dimensions of political and social responsiveness deal with bureaucracy's relationship to the external environment. The dimension of cohesion is concerned with bureaucracy's relationship to the internal environment, i.e. relationship within the bureaucracy. A conceptual framework of administrative culture comprises the following:

## EXTERNAL CONTEXT

### Political responsiveness

Bureaucracy's relationship to politicians and their attitudes to politics vary across societies. Robert Putnam's (1975) analysis of bureaucratic responsiveness in Britain, Germany and Italy highlights civil servants' attitudes towards both politics and citizens and how these in turn determine their tolerance for politics. His analysis identified two types of bureaucratic attitudes: *classical and political*. Whereas the classical bureaucrat is "procedure-oriented" or "rule-oriented", the political bureaucrat is "problem-oriented" or "program-oriented". The former believe that public issues should be resolved through adhering to some objective and standard criteria of legality and technical practicality. Since the administrators view them as "non-partisan", their judgement, therefore, is "impartial" and "objective". The classical bureaucrat distrusts or keeps a distance to institution of politics, such as parliaments, parties and pressure groups. They may blame the political leadership for introducing irrational criteria into the implementation of policies for a rational development and for twisting administrative matters to prevent decisions purely on merit (Jain, 1990: 38). "Political

interference" is a constant irritant that is seemed to demoralize the whole bureaucracy. Therefore, they may feel more at home in an ordered, less conflict ridden world of a benevolent autocracy than in a conflict ridden pluralist democracy.

The "political" bureaucrat represents the opposite syndrome. They are much more sympathetic to pluralistic conception of the public interest. Political bureaucrats consider political influence on policy making as legitimate. Their everyday life is characterized more by bargaining and compromise rather than following rules and routines.

Bureaucratic responsiveness to social needs and public demands would vary markedly on the basis of their orientation to the world of politics (Putnam, 1975: 121). Classical bureaucrats would rely more on impersonal rules and rarely on public demands for making judgements, whereas the political bureaucrats would rely more on public demands. While the classical bureaucrats may emphasize standard and universal application of laws, the political bureaucrats may adopt a "public choice" approach by organizing a variety of organizational arrangements to provide different goods and services. While in the first instance, the bureaucrats may be detached from the general citizens, in the second instance, the danger is that of patronage and favor.

Associated with the concepts of classical vs. political bureaucrats are the concepts of "neutral vs. responsive competence" (Aberbach and Rockman, 1994: 461). Neutral competence is defined as the "ability of [government officials] to do the work of government expertly, and to do it according to explicit, objective standards rather than to personal or party or other obligations and loyalties" (Kaufman cited in Aberbach and Rockman, 1994: 461). Responsive competence on the part of civil servants denotes political bias in decision making. A classical bureaucrat is more likely to display neutral competence in making decisions. In contrast, a political bureaucrat may display more responsive competence and may take decisions based on party loyalty.

However, in recent years bureaucrats have been overly politicized by the political masters in a number of developing countries including Nepal. In the name of establishing democracy, bureaucrats are deliberately separated between those who show allegiance to the party in power and those who belong to the opposite camp. As a consequence, neutrality, competence, and merit which are the strongholds of bureaucracy are often disregarded to favor the loyalists and punish the disloyalists. In the tug of war between different political patronizations, the bureaucrats are caught in dilemma. A common practice among bureaucrats is to support the party in power to secure promotion, important posting and smooth career of civil servants. This may lead to cracks in the institution of bureaucracy as a universal rule oriented and citizen responsive institution. Further, this may also facilitate conflict of interests among bureaucrats vying for lucrative posting and promotions and, thereby, compromising universal principles and neutral code of conduct. This, of course, has serious consequences for bureaucracy in the form of degradation of moral, low motivation, less responsiveness to citizens' demands and needs, and low transparency.

### **Social responsiveness**

Bureaucrats' relationships with citizens are categorized as "elitism" versus "egalitarianism". An elitist bureaucrat maintains a distance from citizens. Common citizens are perceived as inferiors. However, an elitist bureaucrat may also behave like a father figure expecting to be respected: he knows best and citizens are expected to follow his directions. An "egalitarian"

bureaucrat considers citizens as equals with an ability to choose between alternatives. Citizens may be considered as partners in carrying out reform programs.

An egalitarian administration may develop universalism in administration that may dispense universal rights usually manifested in impersonal application of rules. This is what Weber termed a rational-legal form where an administrator's decision is based on clear and specific rules and not on his arbitrary or capricious whims (Scott, 1992: 38). At the other extreme, elitism may lead to clientelism where those who have the access to bureaucracy are the ones to receive benefits from it. A clientelistic culture may lead to nepotism and favouritism whereby cajoling and personal relationship are vital for getting favour from the bureaucracy. In such relationship, those within the group and with "right" connections are favored and those outside of the group are left out. As a consequence, those who are left out constantly may develop fatalistic attitude because those who are higher up in the hierarchy always decides for them.

In recent years, the emergence of market-oriented models of public administration has led to changes in administrative attitudes in many Western nations, e.g. the view of citizens as "customers" with choice opportunities (Politt, 1990). In contrast, in many developing nations, administrators often consider citizens as "subjects" who are expected to show "creeping" behavior, i.e. deference and obedience to administrators. An elite culture in bureaucracy may view citizens as subjects who need to be looked after by the bureaucrats. In contrast, an egalitarian culture may view citizens as customers or consumers with equal rights and benefits.

## **INTERNAL CONTEXT**

Especially Hofstede have developed concepts to characterize the internal context of bureaucracy (1991, 1980).

### **Cohesion**

In this dimension, the major concern is with how people in an organization relate to other members and their tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity.

#### **a) Power and Authority Relation in Organizations:**

According to Hofstede, *power distance* is defined "as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1991: 28). It is largely concerned with the relationship between superior and subordinate in the organization. An organization characterized by a large power distance is hierarchic with a marked dependence of subordinates on superiors. In a hierarchic organization, decisions are taken at the top and those down the hierarchy are expected to carry them out. In contrast, an organization characterized by a small power distance is more egalitarian and prefers consultation between boss and subordinates in decision-making. Superiors are more accessible to juniors and the organization structure is decentralized with a flat structure. There is interdependence between boss and subordinates, and the workplace is characterized by collegial atmosphere and power sharing (Tayeb, 1988: 44).

In a hierarchic society, status and ranks are associated with ascription such as family background and belonging to higher caste. On the other hand, less hierarchic society honors those who perform well. Performance is the major criterion for recognition and honor. If an

organization is dominated more by ascriptive culture, power and status become more important than capability and performance. Here, ‘who told’ is most valuable than ‘what he told’. While achieved status refers to **doing**, ascribed status refers to **being** (Trompenaars, 1993:92). In an ascribed administrative culture, a senior or higher official may not entertain arguments by juniors even how valid these arguments may seem to be. They prefer their subordinates to obey and carry out their orders without raising question. In turn, subordinates do not prefer to take any initiative to solve a problem, rather they just follow orders that come from the top. As a consequence of status orientation, administrators may always have a tendency to expand their organization in terms of number of staff and authority irrespective of appropriateness and relevance.

Achievement- oriented organizations justify hierarchy on the basis of one’s knowledge. On the other hand, ascription-oriented organizations justify their hierarchies by “power-to-get-things-done” (*ibid*). In ascription oriented administration, promotion is based on seniority. Whilst achievement oriented organization promotion is based on the basis of performance of employees.

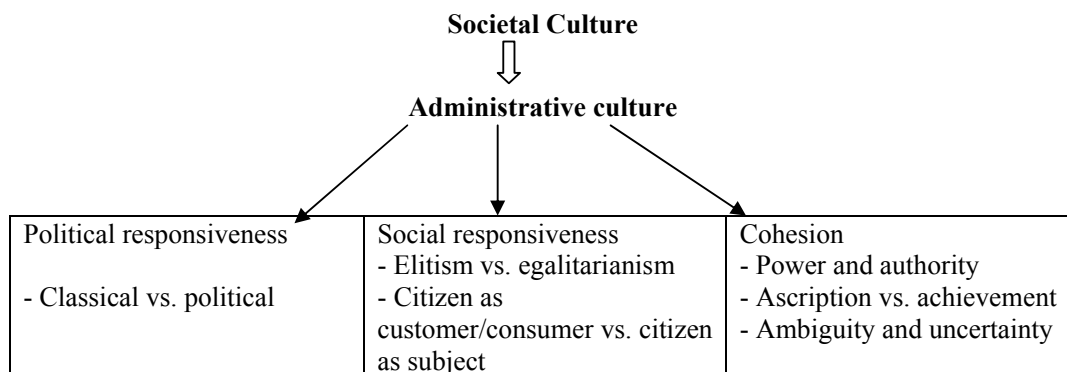
Ascribed culture may even promote corruption. In fact, power, status, resources are more valuable than morale, capability, achievement and performance. Moreover, those with higher positions usually misuse the official resources for their personal use. They fail to distinguish between official and private life.

#### **b) Ambiguity and Uncertainty**

Tolerance for uncertain and ambiguous situations may vary from one society to another. This affects the behavior of individuals in the face of uncertainty and the use of mechanisms to cope with this (Hofstede, 1991: 113; Tayeb, 1988: 45). A strong uncertainty avoidance or low tolerance for ambiguity among organization members increases the likelihood of greater use of rules and regulations (more centralization and formalization) in organizations, and decreases the likelihood of taking risks. Risks may involve breaking or bending rules and regulations. Conversely, in societies with a greater degree of tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty one might expect to see a lower degree of formalization and job definitions in organizations.

The above theoretical discussions are hypothesized in the following figure:

Figure 1: Analytical framework:





## METHODS OF ENQUIRY

This article is based on a questionnaire survey of 86 bureaucrats drawn from different ministries occupying different positions. The questionnaire was designed to cover the dimensions of administrative culture discussed above. In the absence of previous surveys of administrative culture in Nepal, the items in the present survey were partly designed by the authors and partly adopted from the works of Robert Putnam and Geert Hofstede.

The method of data collection was based on interviews. The selection of respondents was done on the basis of snowball technique. However, attention was given to interview bureaucrats belonging to as diverse ministries/directorates as possible in order to obtain a holistic mapping of administrative culture.

Table 1: Percent distribution of respondents according to the following categories. N = 86.

	%		%		%
<b>1) Sex:</b>		<b>2) Age:</b>		<b>3) Education</b>	
Male	91	25-32	26	Ph.D.	01
Female	09	33-40	39	Master	78
		41-56	35	Bachelors	21
<b>4) Type of education:</b>		<b>5) Type of job:</b>		<b>6) Position:</b>	
Liberal arts	11	Technical	07	Undersecretary and below	81
Commerce-social science	84	Administrative	93	Joint secretary and above	19
Pure science	05				
<b>7) Career (years in service):</b>		<b>8) Training from abroad</b>		<b>9) Social background: (Fathers' occupation)</b>	
1-10	41	Yes	55	Govt. functionaries (gazetted)	19
11-18	29	No	45	Govt. functionaries (non-gazetted)	16
19 and above	30			School/University teacher/Army/Police	06
				Self-employed (businessman)	01
				Landowners/	01
				Farmers	54
				Other	3

Note: 1) Total number of respondents = **86**, 2) Total number of ministries, divisions, directorates, and departments = **18**.

From the above table, a typical Nepalese bureaucrat is a male, highly educated in the fields of commerce and social science, have some kind of training abroad, and who comes from a rural (farmers) background. So it can be concluded that the Nepalese public administration has deep roots in villages where most of the bureaucrats come from. This may also mean that

traditional norms and values are likely to be strong in the bureaucracy with emphasis on hierarchy, ascription, and rank and status.

In addition, around twenty citizens were interviewed about their experiences in getting services from the civil service. The respondents were asked about the basis of decision making by bureaucrats that they have sought for. We also asked the same question to the bureaucrats in order to get a comparative picture of the basis of decision making in bureaucracy.

Further, secondary data were collected from the Nepalese Public Service Commission who is responsible for the recruitment of civil servants to the bureaucracy. The nature of data collected was about the religious and caste compositions of the bureaucrats.

### **CULTURAL FABRIC IN NEPAL**

Unlike many western nations where corporate and market values are deeply rooted in society as, e.g. in the USA, this may not be the case in Nepal. Nepal is the only Hindu monarchy in the world. Therefore, Hindu customs, values, and traditions are deeply ingrained in society and nurtured in different institutions of state as well. Caste system is an integral part of the social structure and divides people into different ranks and status. Memberships in these caste structures are permanent and one cannot move from one caste to the other. This social hierarchy ranks the Nepalese along an axiom of purity and pollution. Under this, Brahman, Chhetri and Vaishya are considered to be ritually purifying whereas Shudra, the lowest caste is considered to be ritually polluting.

According to Sharma (1977), in Nepal, this system has not only been practiced socially but also institutionalized legally. This system was codified in the national legal code of 1853. The code further insists the Nepalese to discriminate among them on the basis of caste. This code provided more privileges to the higher caste in social economic and legal aspects. This legal provision remained for more than a hundred years up to 1963. However, the constitution of 1963 abolished all types of discrimination on the basis of caste, but caste and social discrimination on the basis of this is still predominant in Nepalese society.

In a society where caste system is a mode of life, people believe that they are born in contexts, i.e. in different social hierarchies and these contexts are permanent social order and to a large extent determine their life from cradle to grave. Caste system gives more prestige, more privilege, and higher status to higher caste people and lower status to the lower caste people. Society is divided on the basis of different occupations. Most of the artisan work and menial jobs are either assigned to the lower caste people or they inherit. On the other hand, people by virtue of their belongingness to higher caste and ranks are assigned with decision making and rule setting tasks such as priesthood, officials, etc. Thus, a Brahman, the highest caste, is usually respected, obeyed, and listened to by the people of lower castes. In a social structure, where decision making authority rests with higher echelons of society, fatalism and fatalistic attitudes are common. People down the line of hierarchy believe that their life and fate are decided by decisions at the top.

Caste system is strictly hierarchical where those belonging to the higher caste dominate over those belonging to the lower castes. Collectivistic values and attitudes are quite common in this system leading to clientelistic relationships. In the civil service, *Chakari* and

*Chaplusi*<sup>+++++</sup> are, therefore, widespread and its ramifications are noticed in most of the interpersonal relationships in the bureaucracy. These are, therefore, “lubricating oil” for the members of the administration to develop intimate relationships with higher authorities who can provide them with favourable returns.

Another prominent consequence of membership to appropriate social groups is ‘*Afno Manchhe*’ (one’s own people) (Bista, 1991:56). This culture discriminates between people on the basis of family kinship, caste and social relations. The question is to what extent *chakari*, *chaplusi*, and *afno manche* influence decision making in the civil service and, hence, the delivery of public services?

In order to substantiate the above discussions on social values in Nepal, we asked the respondents to what extent they agree to the above illustrations of cultural values in Nepal. Their responses are presented below.

Table 2: Dominant socio-cultural values in Nepal as stated by the bureaucrats. Percent who agreed completely and partly. N= 86.

	Those who agreed completely and partly (%)
Nepalese society is based on hierarchy and caste system	94
People higher up in the social hierarchy enjoy more privileges in socio-economic and political matters than those down the hierarchy	94
Nepalese society is patriarchal where men are more privileged than women	93
Nepalese people believe in fate	90
Social recognition is more based on family and caste background than “real” quality of people	89
“Do not argue with seniors”, “respect seniors”, and “follow orders from seniors without raising questions” are the basic social values of Nepalese society.	80
There is a common feeling among the Nepalese that the country is ruled by those who have the grace of God.	52

The question that was asked: “We would like to map the dominant socio-cultural values of Nepalese society. Below we have listed some statements which may reflect Nepalese socio-cultural values. To what extent would you agree or disagree with these statements. Please rate them on a scale from 4 to 1, where 4 represent “Agree Completely”, 3 represent “Agree Partly”, 2 represent “Disagree Partly”, and 1 represents “Disagree Completely”. In the table above, only scales 4 and 3 are combined and presented.

The responses from the bureaucrats support the discussions above about socio-cultural values existent in Nepalese society which are hierarchic, caste oriented, differentiated rank and status, unequal distribution of privileges and amenities based on family and social

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<sup>+++++</sup> *Chakari* and *Chaplusi* mean flattering and pleasing the boss for getting certain benefits from the system (Shrestha, 1980:36).

backgrounds. The question that may arise at this point is to what extent these values impinge on bureaucracy and influence decision making? Or has the bureaucracy managed to develop a culture distinct from the dominant socio-cultural values in Nepal where professional norms and service provisions are major objectives?

In order to map administrative culture existing in the Nepalese bureaucracy, we asked the bureaucrats to highlight on their relationships within and outside the bureaucracy.

## ADMINISTRATIVE CULTURE IN NEPAL: DATA ANALYSIS

### INTERNAL CONTEXT

#### a) Power and authority relations

Power and authority relations measure the extent to which there exist egalitarian and democratic norms in Nepalese bureaucracy. If values and norms in Nepalese bureaucracy reflect dominant social values, we would expect a high power distance in which decision making authority may rest with those at the top. Those in the lower hierarchy may have little say in the decision making process. The following table reveals the interpersonal relations in Nepalese bureaucracy.

Table 3: Power and authority relations in Nepalese bureaucracy. Percent distribution N=86.

#### Describes the way my organization works

In my organization	Describes completely and fairly well %
Decision is made after consultation with concerned subordinates.	38
Subordinates are ready to give suggestions and arguments when superiors ask for these.	73
Superiors and juniors consider each other as equals.	20
There are equal access to and control over organizational resources to all organizational members.	10
Any argument and suggestions provided by the subordinates are listened to by superiors	33
Subordinates, usually, provide counterarguments if they do not agree with their bosses.	15
It is common belief among personnel that knowledge and skills are based on hierarchy.	60
Organizational rules and regulations apply equally to every personnel regardless of one's personal connections with higher ups.	37

The question that was asked: "Public organizations may have different kind of characteristics in terms of interpersonal relationships and working styles. Below we have listed some traits which may prevail in public organizations. In your views to what extent these statements describe the ways your organization really operates. Would you rank them on a scale from 4 to 1 where 4 represent

“Completely”, 3 represent “Fairly well”, 2 represent “Partly” and 1 represents “Does not describe at all”. In the table above, only scales 4 and 3 are combined and presented”.

From the above table we observe that power distance is quite high in Nepalese public administration which means that decisions are seldom made in consultation with subordinates; there is a high gap between seniors and juniors since they are not considered as equals; organizational resources are not equally distributed among organization members; it is quite rare that seniors listen to what juniors suggest and juniors hardly argue if they disagree with their superiors; there is a strong belief that knowledge is hierarchical and organization rules and regulation are not universally applied.

The aspect of power distance may be further highlighted if we focus on to what extent Nepalese bureaucracy emphasize ascription in contrast to achievement.

#### **b) Ascription vs. achievement**

Is Nepalese bureaucracy characterized by ascriptive or performance based criteria in evaluating candidates with regard to promotion, reward, and posting? Ascriptive oriented culture is based on group or caste belongingness, religion, family background, regionalism, lobbying and cajoling. In this culture, favour is bestowed upon by some higher authority on the basis of close proximity to the incumbent. Chakari, Chaplusi and Afno Manche are strong mechanisms for getting undue favour and privilege. Sometimes, such culture compromises neutral and professional standards and, thereby, promotes corrupt practices. On the other hand, achievement oriented culture is based on professional and neutral standard of performance in which individual skill and capability are the major criteria for decision making. Such culture may reduce uncertainty among organization members as regards to their salary benefits, promotion and posting since these are based on universal standard and performance criterion.

Table 4: Ascription vs. achievement in Nepalese bureaucracy. Percent distribution N=86.

<b>Describes the way my organization works</b>	
<b>In my organization</b>	<b>Describes completely and fairly well %</b>
Reward and punishment system are tied with one's real achievement.	18
Recognition is based on personal achievement rather than position.	31
Marks on performance appraisal are based on one's performance.	31
Marks on performance appraisal are based on “Chakari”.	60
One can get any kind of benefit from organization if “afno manche” is there	68

The question that was asked was same as in table 3.

Table 4 clearly reveals that Nepalese bureaucracy is strongly characterized by ascription as opined by the respondents. Performance appraisals, rewards and punishment, recognition, and

benefits are highly dependent on *chakari* and *afno manche*. These indicate that professional rules and codes of business with regard to employees' career and achievements are based on narrow group interests and personal connections. The stronger these informal networks are the easier it is for one to bypass formal rules and regulations in order to obtain benefits from the system. The system is, therefore, biased to those with strong group, family, and caste affinities.

### c) Tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty

This dimension measures the extent to which Nepalese bureaucracy is characterized by flexibility, openness, innovations and initiation from those in the lower echelon of the hierarchy. Less tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty refer to the degree to which behavior in an organization is guided by rules and routines. The higher the preference for rules and routines, the higher is the degree of uncertainty avoidance, and the lower is the degree of flexibility in performing a job. In settings of this type, uncertainties and ambiguities are considered as threatening and are handled by designing more rules and routines to achieve stability and predictability. The statements (in tables 5 and 6) measure uncertainty avoidance norms. Uncertainty avoidance is a feature of a hierarchic society and may likely to be stronger in Nepalese bureaucracy.

Table 5: Tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty in Nepalese bureaucracy, Percent distribution, N=86.

#### Describes the way my organization works

In my organization	Describes completely and fairly well %
Subordinates are innovative and responsible while discharging their duties.	32
Section chiefs have flexibility and freedom to make decisions concerning their sectional goals and objectives.	37
Bureaucrats give more focus on results than process and rituals.	25
In order to help common citizens, organization members are willing to bend rules and procedures.	35

The question that was asked was same as in table 3.

Table 5 reveals the fact that the Nepalese bureaucracy is somewhat characterized by a high degree of uncertainty avoidance which means that there is a low tolerance for ambiguous and uncertain situations. The bureaucrats in the survey responded that they emphasize on process more than on results, that subordinates are not much innovative, have less flexibility to make decisions and they hardly bend rules and procedures to help common citizens. In short, bureaucrats live in a world designed by their superiors. They carry out their responsibilities by the book, i.e. on the basis of clearly laid out rules.

In order to substantiate our findings, we further asked the bureaucrats to assess their place of work on an individual basis. How they characterize their own place of work? In the above table (table 5) we asked how the organization works, but in table 6, we asked how they would characterize their work from an individual perspective. The results are shown below.

Table 6: Tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty at the individual level in Nepalese bureaucracy, Percent distribution, N=86.

<b>In my place of work</b>	<b>Describes my position Completely and fairly well %</b>
I have much discretion as to how I carry out my duties.	38
I have enough room to innovate and introduce change in my place of work.	32
I wish my superior would tell me more directly whether or not I am doing a good job.	79

The question that was asked: “Below we listed some statements that may highlight your place of work. We would like you to reflect on these statements. When it concerns your own position in your place of work, to what extent would you say that the following statements describe your position. Would you rank them on a scale from 4 to 1 where 4 represent “Completely”, 3 represent “Fairly well”, 2 represent “Partly” and 1 represents “Does not describe at all”. In the table above, only scales 4 and 3 are combined and presented”.

The responses in the table above reveal the same picture that there is less discretion, not enough room to innovate, and would highly prefer directives from superiors whether one is doing the job in the right manner. All these reactions from bureaucrats at the individual testify again that bureaucrats’ life is characterized by low tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. Now the question that may come into mind is whether this high uncertainty avoidance culture is a reflection of the dominant culture in Nepalese society.

## **EXTERNAL CONTEXT**

### **d) Political responsiveness**

In this section, we map the relationship between bureaucrats and politicians. To what extent may said to be congenial working relationship between bureaucrats and politicians? Do bureaucrats consider politics in present Nepal as guidelines for making decisions or do they prefer to be aloof from them in order to introduce neutrality in policy making? Do bureaucrats feel that their neutral life is jeopardized by responding to political directives or do they feel that relationship with their political masters is crucial for successful career? The major emphasis of analysis in this section is bureaucrats, attitude and reaction to politics in Nepal.

Table 7: Relationship between bureaucrats and politicians in Nepal, Percent who agreed completely and partly, N= 86.

	<b>Those who agreed completely and partly %</b>
In reality bureaucrats run this country, not the politician	61
Nepalese politicians often serve their personal and partisan interests rather than welfare of the citizens	91
In order to act rationally in administrative decision-making it	62

is necessary to disregard political considerations	
Too often civil servants act according to their own judgement rather than the policies of the government.	48
Politicians should not interfere in those affairs which are the responsibilities of the civil servants.	82
For a higher civil servant it is as important to possess political sensitivity as professional expertise.	82
It is an advantage for the public sector as a whole if higher civil servants share the political views of their political masters/the government of the day.	63
Nepalese civil servants are not politically neutral rather they are affiliated with different political colors.	82

The question that was asked: “We would like to know your views about the relationship between bureaucrats and politicians. Below we have outlined some statements about this relationship. To what extent would you agree or disagree with these statements? Please rate them from 4 to 1, where 4 represent “Agree Completely”, 3 represent “Agree Partly”, 2 represent “Disagree Partly”, and 1 represents “Disagree Completely”. In the table above, scales 4 and 3 are combined and presented.

According to the above table, two-thirds of the bureaucrats feel that they run the country, not the politicians; they also opined that Nepalese politicians serve mainly their personal and narrow partisan interests rather than welfare of the citizens; the majority of bureaucrats feel that to act rationally, it is necessary to disregard political considerations and that politicians should not interfere with the responsibilities of the civil servants but at the same they feel it is necessary for them to possess political sensitivity and share political views of their masters; more than three-fourths of the bureaucrats are of the opinion that Nepalese civil servants are not neutral and have some kind of political affiliations.

From the above responses, the picture that we get about the relationship between bureaucrats and politicians is that Nepalese bureaucrats do not have a very positive attitude toward their political counterparts. They want to remain aloof from political influence, but at the same time feel that political sensitivity is crucial. Besides, the majority of the bureaucrats nurture political affiliation. This suggests that Nepalese bureaucrats have a dual attitude to politics. On the one hand, they are classical in the sense that they want to protect their place of work from political influence, but at the same time they feel that it is necessary to possess political sensitivity. At the same time, they are affiliated to different political colours in order to serve their own personal interests.

Democracy in Nepal has always had a short life and hence the relationship between bureaucracy and politics is far from congenial and has not developed into partnership. On the other hand, the bureaucracy, in the absence of democratic political process, has been more exposed to directives from the palace. Therefore, attitudes of bureaucrats to politics as found in our survey may not be said to be positive.

#### **e) Social responsiveness**

Social responsiveness measures the relationship between bureaucracy and citizens. Is the relationship characterized by elitist attitude on the part of the bureaucrats or is the



relationship an egalitarian one where bureaucrats and citizens interact on an equal footing? Are citizens considered as customers or are they considered as subjects with no choice opportunities?

Table 8: Relationship between bureaucrats and citizens in Nepal, Percent who agreed completely and partly, N= 86.

	<b>Those who agreed completely and partly %</b>
Bureaucrats consider themselves as servants of the people rather than masters	55
Bureaucrats dispense services to citizens on the basis of universal application of rules.	66
Citizens are considered as sovereign customer rather than passive service recipients	53
Public service is provided to citizens on the first come first serve basis.	65
Citizens are usually informed about how, when and from where to get services from public organizations.	70
Bureaucrats should be answerable and subjected to be punished if they fail to provide proper services to citizens.	71
All citizens should have the same opportunity to influence government policy.	67
Administrative decisions are better performed if civil servants maintain a distance from the ordinary citizens.	35
Citizens often search for personal connections and other sources before approaching public organizations for getting service	79
Personal connections, bribery and political influence are major sources of getting things done in public organizations	75
It is nightmare for the general public to get proper service from bureaucrats	51

The question that was asked: “We would like to know your opinion about the relationship between bureaucrats and citizens. Below we have outlined some statements about this relationship. To what extent would you agree or disagree with these statements? Please rate them from 4 to 1, where 4 represent “Agree Completely”, 3 represent “Agree Partly”, 2 represent “Disagree Partly”, and 1 represents “Disagree Completely”. In the table above, scales 4 and 3 are combined and presented.

The results show that Nepalese bureaucrats have a more positive attitude to citizens compared to their political counterparts. The majority stated that they consider them as servants and not masters of the citizens; two-thirds agreed that they dispense services to citizens on the basis of universal rules; the majority of them consider citizens as sovereign customer; around two-thirds responded that they provide services on the basis of first come first serve basis; more than two-thirds usually inform citizens about when and where to get services, that they should be answerable and even punished if they fail to provide services, and opined that all citizens

should have the same opportunity in influencing government policy. Further, they do not agree that maintaining a distance from common citizens lead to better provision of services.

However, it seems that collectivistic norms are quite strong in Nepalese bureaucracy. Citizens often search for personal connections to get services from the bureaucracy and personal connections, political influence, and bribery are the major sources of getting things done in public organizations. Further, the majority of bureaucrats stated that it is a nightmare for the common citizens to get things done at public organizations.

From the above, it may be discerned that the interface between bureaucracy and society is dualistic. On the one hand, they display egalitarian and friendly attitudes to citizens, but on the other hand, elitist attitudes where service provision is based on Chakari, Chaplusi, and Afno Manche, i.e. cajoling and group belongingness. This indicates that personal connections and cajoling coupled with bribery are important mechanisms for getting things done, if not it is a nightmare for common citizens to get any service from bureaucracy. Those who are left out of the group are destined to become fatalist where others decide their lives.

In order to further understand the interface between bureaucracy and citizens we asked some citizens about the factors most important for getting things done in the civil service. We asked only those citizens (N=20) who sought decisions from bureaucracy. The results are shown below.

Table: 9: Most important factors for getting things done in bureaucracy, Ranked by citizens.

<b>I can get effective and speedy service from public organizations through:</b>	<b>Ranked by citizens</b>
a) Influencing civil servants by using personal connections.	1
b) Bribing civil servants.	2
c) "Afno Manche"	3
d) Established rules and norms	4
e) Influencing bureaucrats through local politicians and elites	5

We asked the citizens: "We would like to know the factors that influence getting things done decision making in the civil service. Below we have listed some factors that may influence decision making concerning posting, transfer, promotion, and foreign trips in your organization. Please rank them from 1 to 5 where 1 stands for most important factor and 5 stands for least important factor.

In the above table, the citizens ranked "personal connections" as the most important factor for decision making followed by "bribing", "Afno Manche", and "established rules and norms", and "influencing bureaucrats through local politicians and elites". Besides bribing, collective norms developed through personal connections and Afno Manche are important mechanisms for getting bureaucratic decisions in one's favour. Established norms and rules as well as local politicians and elites are considered less important factors by the citizens.

This suggests that personal connections, afno manchhe coupled with bribery are important mechanisms for citizens to get services from the bureaucracy. This also indicates that formal rules and universal application of rules are rarely applied in providing services to citizens.

In line with the question asked to the citizens (table 9), a similar question with almost similar alternatives were asked to the bureaucrats about the factors that influence decision concerning

their transfers, postings, promotions, and attending foreign trainings. The results are shown below.

Table 10: Most important factors influencing decision making (such as postings, transfers, promotions, and foreign trainings) in civil service, Ranked by bureaucrats, N=86.

In my organization decisions are, usually, made on the basis of:	Ranked by bureaucrats
a) Established rules and norms	1
b) Persuasion and lobbying (through politicians, seniors officials, elites)	2
c) “Afno Manche”	3
d) Relationship with superior developed on the basis of “Chakari”	4
e) Extra legal ways such as “bribing”.	5

Similar to table 9 except that bureaucrats were asked to rank the factors that affected decisions concerning their promotions, transfers, postings, and foreign trainings.

The findings show that bureaucrats are of the opinion that “established rules and norms” are the most important factor for decision making which means formal rules are the major criteria for bureaucratic decision making. The next important factor is “persuasion and lobbying”, “Afno Manche”, and “Relationship with seniors developed on the basis of chakari”. Factor such as “Bribing” is ranked the least by bureaucrats that affect decision making.

The findings show that in terms of factors affecting decision making citizens and bureaucrats rank them somewhat differently. While bureaucrats ranked established norms and rules as the most important factor, this is ranked by citizens as number four. While citizens ranked personal connection as the most important factor to get a decision in their favour, this is ranked by bureaucrats as number four. “Bribing” is ranked as number 2 by citizens while it is ranked the least by the bureaucrats. However, “afno manchhe” is ranked by both bureaucrats and citizens alike as number three important factor influencing decision making. This is because personal connections are important factors in the interface between citizens and bureaucracy. On the one hand, the bureaucrats maintain egalitarian and neutral attitude towards citizens but at the same time nurture personal connections developed through Afno Manche. This duality may reflect the socio-economic background of bureaucrats who mostly come from a modest village background of farming family. Collective norms are, usually, stronger in villages compared to urban cities.

### Administrative Culture in Nepal

- **Bureaucrats' internal and external relationships: An overall view**

The following table summarizes the results of the analyses carried out so far.

Table 11: A summary presentation of administrative culture in Nepal.

<b>INTERNAL:</b> 1) Power and authority relationships	A <u>somewhat high</u> degree of power distance (which means an acceptance of unequal relationship between boss and subordinates, a greater degree of hierarchism, a top-down decision making, organization resources are unevenly distributed, and knowledge is hierarchy based).
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	Highly ascriptive. Performance appraisals, rewards and punishment, recognition, and benefits are highly dependent on <i>chakari</i> and <i>afno manche</i> .
2) Tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty	A somewhat high degree of uncertainty avoidance. Subordinates are not much innovative, have less flexibility to make decisions and they hardly bend rules and procedures to help common citizens. In short, bureaucrats live in a world designed by their superiors. They carry out their responsibilities by the book, i.e. on the basis of clearly laid out rules.
<b>EXTERNAL:</b> 3) Relationship with Politics	Nepalese bureaucrats have a dual attitude to politics. On the one hand, they are classical in the sense that they want to protect their place of work from political influence, but at the same time they feel that it is necessary to possess political sensitivity. Besides, the majority of the bureaucrats nurture political affiliation.
4) Relationship with Citizens	A dual attitude. On the one hand, bureaucrats display egalitarian and friendly attitudes to citizens, but, on the other hand, elitist attitudes where service provision is based on <i>Chakari</i> , <i>Chaplusi</i> , and <i>Afno Manche</i> , i.e. cajoling and group belongingness. This indicates that personal connections and cajoling coupled with bribery are important mechanisms for getting things done, if not it is a nightmare for common citizens to get any service from bureaucracy.

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIETAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CULTURE IN NEPAL

### *Isomorphism?*

It is expected that organizational culture, more so in a public organization, follow the general contours of societal culture (Nelson and Gopalan, 2003:1118). The question is to what extent this may be said to be the case in Nepal. Is administrative culture isomorphic to societal culture?

In our discussions above of societal culture in Nepal, we found that caste system is a dominant factor in interpersonal relationships, which categorizes people into different social hierarchies. Therefore, hierarchy is a way of life in Nepal and those who belong to the higher echelon of hierarchy, usually, decides for those down in the social hierarchy system. Such a system develops narrow collectivistic norms where those in the same group bestowed upon with favors and privileges, and those who are left out become fatalistic. Cajoling, lobbying (*chakari*, *chapalusi*) are strong mechanisms for getting things done. Power distance is, usually, high in such a system where those at the top decide for those at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Social norms and values are elaborated, protected, and defended by those at the top and those at the bottom follow such norms with little room for innovation and flexibility.

These norms of Nepalese society were found to be highly represented in Nepalese bureaucracy. In the relationship between and among bureaucrats, we found that power distance was high and a high degree of emphasis on ascription for assessing performance compared to professional standard for judging performance. There is a high degree of

uncertainty avoidance norm prevalent in Nepalese bureaucracy with little room for the bureaucrats to manoeuvre. Group norms are strong which isolate groups from each other leading to uneven and biased distribution of public goods. Fatalism and distrust are natural consequences of such narrow group interest.

In their relationship to the external world, we found that bureaucrats as a group intend to protect their place of work from undue political influence. They distrust politicians but at the same nurture political affiliation and are politically sensitive to wishes of the political masters. However, their social responsiveness is more positive with friendlier attitudes and relations to society compared to their political counterparts. Even in this responsiveness, collectivistic norms are crucial in getting things done in public organizations. The friendly relations to society may be a result of democracy that has been in practice for some years in Nepal coupled with international pressure to make the bureaucracy transparent, accountable, and responsive to the people. However, with the return back to complete monarchism and coup de tat from the palace to monopolize all powers in the hands of the king, it would be interesting to follow the development of administrative culture in Nepal, especially with regard to politics and society.

Further, in order to substantiate the close proximity between societal and administrative culture in Nepal, let us see the religious and caste composition of bureaucrats in the civil service as a whole and in higher positions. To what degree different religions and castes are represented in bureaucracy?

Table 12: Religious background of civil servants selected in the periods from 1997/98 to 2002/2003, Percent distribution and absolute numbers

Religion	1997-1998	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003
Hindu	97	99	98	96
Buddhist	2	0	1	3
Others*	1	1	1	1
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total numbers	2471	727	309	3559

Source: Public Service Commission, Nepal.

\* Others include Jain, Muslim, Christian, and others.

From the above table it is observed that most of the civil servants recruited in the periods from 1997/98 to 2002/2003 are predominantly Hindus and the candidates with other religious backgrounds, such as Buddhist is negligible.

Let us now observe the caste composition of civil servants recruited to the civil service in the same period.

Table 13: Caste background of civil servants selected in the periods from 1997/98 to 2002/2003, Percent distribution and absolute numbers

Caste Background	1997-1998	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003
Brahmin	68	76	56	53
Chhetri*	19	18	12	21
Newar*	5	2	8	6

Dalit**	0	1	0	1
Others***	8	3	24	19
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total numbers	2471	727	309	3559

Source: Public Service Commission, Nepal.

\* Chhetri and Newar are upper caste Hindu

\*\* Low caste Hindu

\*\*\* Others include Rai/Kirat, Sherpa, Gurung, Tharu, Magar, Tamang, Muslim, Lama, and Others

The caste background of civil servants selected in the periods from 1997/98 to 2002/03 indicates that the majority belong to the highest Brahmin caste. The other two upper castes Chhetri and Newar are also well represented. The lowest class Dalit's (formerly called Scheduled Caste) representation is very insignificant. On the other hand, those who belong to the other group (such as Rai/Kirat, Gurung, Tharu, Magar, Tamang, Muslim, Lama, and others) are quite well represented. The overall picture is that although the percentage of Brahmins recruited to the civil service has decreased to some extent, the percentage of Chhetri (upper caste Hindu) has increased over the years. The greatest increase in civil service recruitment has taken place among those who belong to the "other" category. However, it is the upper caste Hindus who dominate the civil service recruitment in Nepal as shown in the above table.

In order to illustrate the dominance of high caste Hindus in the higher echelon of the civil service, the following table presents the caste backgrounds of higher civil servants.

Table 14: Caste background of higher level civil servants, Percent distribution and absolute numbers.

Caste Background	Secretary ***** %	Population %	Joint Secretary %	
			Administration	Technical
Brahmin	74	13	73	43
Chhetri	16	16	7	15
Newar	10	6	18	28
Dalit	0	13	1	1
Others	0	52	1	13
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total numbers	38	227,369,34	148	136

Source: Department of Civil Personnel Record (1st Sept 2004)

The table above suggests that Brahmins are in majority in the positions of secretary and joint secretary (the highest positions in the civil service). They are followed by Chhetri and Newar. Dalit and other categories are not represented in the secretary positions. Dalit comprising around 13% of the total population in Nepal are also negligibly represented at the joint secretary level. On the other hand, the "other" category is represented by 14% in the joint secretary level but not proportionally represented according to their demographic

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\*\*\*\*\* In South Asia, the highest position in bureaucracy is called "secretary", followed by "additional secretary", "joint secretary", "deputy secretary", and "section officer".

composition which is around 52% of the total population. The Brahmins comprising only 13% of the total population in Nepal are overrepresented in higher civil service positions.

The tables (12, 13, and 14) suggest that civil service is dominated by Hindus and among Hindus, higher caste, particularly the Brahmins, dominate the civil service and is overrepresented in higher civil service positions.

What consequences these uneven representations have for the administrative culture in Nepal? Though recruitment in the civil service is strictly based on merit, the nature of social stratification allows only those in the upper castes to get access to required education and necessary information and, thereby, required qualification to enter into the civil service. And once they enter the civil service, *afno manchhe* is profusely used for further career development. This has serious consequences for interpersonal relationships and, hence, administrative culture. The caste composition of social structure in Nepal is the major factor for high power distance in Nepal. We observe the same level of high power distance in the civil service. This is coupled with high uncertainty avoidance. As a result, informal groupings and strong collectivistic norms develop that influence decisions within bureaucracy as well as decisions concerning citizens.

## CONCLUSION

In the article, we had two major purposes, a) to map the existing administrative culture in Nepal, and b) to analyze the extent to which administrative culture is isomorphic with societal culture. As regards to administrative culture, it was operationalized in to relationships within bureaucracy and its interface with the outside world. In interpersonal relationships within bureaucracy, it is characterized by somewhat high degree of power distance coupled with emphasis on ascriptive qualities. In their relationship to the outside worlds, bureaucrats have a dualistic attitude to politics. They also have a dualistic attitude to citizens.

With regard to isomorphism, administrative culture resembles societal culture and as a consequence group and collectivistic norms are strong and are essential for getting services obtained from bureaucracy.

The major findings of this study of Nepalese administrative culture is that it is characterized by high power distance, a large degree of uncertainty avoidance, preference for ascription rather merit, and a strong emphasis on group and collectivistic norms. What are the major implications of such administrative culture when it comes to instil professional attitude among bureaucrats in Nepal? What are the scopes for the application and exercise of formal, neutral, and rational laws and rules in the provision of public services?

Given the present characteristics of administrative culture in Nepal, professional norms are less entrenched in bureaucracy. What is important at present is ascriptive and large power distance. These are also the values which are held in high esteem in society. Therefore, the bureaucracy in Nepal is characterized by values which are representative of society. It is yet to develop values which may be said to resemble professional and modern managerial values. Similarly, we observe strong group norms achieved through *afno manchhe* and *chakari* which compromise universal application and neutral discharge of public services. Public services are the results of lobbying, personal influence, and often extra legal means.

In short, bureau pathologies are associated with such administrative culture giving more room for particularism, informal groupings for promotion, transfer and posting, disregard for merit

and emphasis on ascription, political affiliation in order to maximize narrow individual interest compromising bureaucratic neutrality and competence, and corruption. However, at the same time, it enhances group values and collectivistic norms crucial for maintaining harmony and familistic norms.

The question that may be raised about the probable consequences on administrative culture of the recent turmoil and mass upsurge in Nepal to curb the power of the monarchy and restore democracy. The restoration of democracy in Nepal if we analyze along cultural theories we might witness some changes in practices (as Hofstede has argued) or the upper layers (as Trompenaar has argued) of administrative cultures, i.e. changes in leadership, some rituals, and artifacts. The deep values, i.e. the core values might not be changed and would continue to influence interpersonal relationships within bureaucracy, and its relationships to politics and citizens. We may observe different constellations in interpersonal relationships in the form of different networks and groups, for example between bureaucrats, politicians and bureaucrats. However, hierarchy, particularism, and informal groupings are likely to be the major ingredients of administrative culture in Nepal and are likely to influence interpersonal relationships.

Our analysis is mainly done across the board without analyzing whether administrative culture vary among groups, e.g. those who work in different ministries, with different types of educational, family and economic backgrounds, and as well as according to their positions in the hierarchy. It may also vary according to the number of years in service as well as the number of years they have been either central or local level functionaries. We may have then found that administrative culture is not uniform and there are variations between and among groups when it concerns administrative culture in Nepal.

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