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Autonomy of HR Practices in Pakistan: A Study of Provincial Autonomous Bodies

Abstract

Creation of autonomous bodies backed by New Public Management is not a new phenomenon in Pakistan rather is a notion opposing traditional bureaucratic structure and system in Pakistan. Therefore, there is a strong tendency that either this system would be resisted by bureaucracy, or it would be changed in a way that would support the current status quo. Normatively, these bodies should have autonomy in their functions, including human resource management functions. The purpose of this research study is to assess the human resource autonomy and find out the differences in these HRM practices between parent department of Information & Culture, Government of the Punjab and its respective provincial autonomous bodies. Qualitative research design was used to analyze the data collected through in-depth interviews with the key respondents. Results of the study indicate that at provincial level specifically at the autonomous bodies of Department of Information and Culture, Government of the Punjab, the international trend of agencification has not yet fully achieved its most important intended goal of having autonomy, specifically in its human resource practices.

Keywords: *New Public Management, agencification, autonomous bodies, HR practices*

Introduction & Background

New Public Management, as a public-sector reform approach started from 1980s onwards. It is among the most remarkable international trends in public administration. Based on the values of efficiency and effectiveness with the introduction of business sector approaches in public sector; the NPM guided reforms originated in developed countries and were adopted to such a degree that they seem to present a model of reform that can be transferred along national

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boundaries. Any management reform can be considered successful if it produces cheaper, more efficient government, with good quality service delivery, autonomy in terms of management and more transparent policies & processes (Pollit & Bouckaert, 2004).

Developed countries practiced partial privatization, major changes in the administration of public expenditure, and major restructuring of their central bureaucracies while many developing countries also implemented features of the NPM agenda (McCourt & Minogue, 2001, p. 6). Agencification is one of the NPM type reforms. According to Van Thiel & CRIPO (2009), agencification means formation of semi-autonomous organizations that work at arms' length of the government, to carry out public tasks such as regulation, service delivery and policy implementation in a relatively autonomous way. They have less hierarchical and political influence on their daily operations and have more managerial autonomy. Numerous countries with distinctly varying contexts are following agencification of the public sector. According to Zahra and Jadoon (2016) structural arrangements are important aspect as they affect autonomy of such agencies including their performance. The notion of 'agencification', or distributed governance, is a central element of NPM and perhaps its most commonly implemented policy proposal. Interestingly, the different understandings of agencification in varying contexts reveal that public management ideas having same principles can be practiced in different ways, accepted for different reasons and result in various consequences. Agencification can have different definitions and characteristics but the basic idea is the same; agencies should have some autonomy. These meanings and characteristics can further be molded according to the different contexts and countries in which they are practiced (Moynihan, 2006).

Decentralization and autonomy are highlighted within NPM and according to Hondelghem, Horton & Farnham (2006) the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports that the introduction of HR practices is at the heart of the reforms targeted at increasing the responsiveness of the public service. Reform strategies are rooted in system of norms and administrative practices. These reform strategies are formed more by what already exists than by the anticipated model of public administration. Therefore, reforms become path-dependent that refers to the range of policy choices available for administrative reformers (Peters & Pierre, 1988).

Agencification in Pakistan

The creation of autonomous agencies became popular from 1980s onwards, after the advent of New Public Management. As discussed by Jadoon, Jabeen and Rizwan (2012) the term 'agency' in a generic sense includes any organization although attached to a specific ministry yet having some operational autonomy. Agencification is not a new phenomenon in Pakistan. Since 1980s, the number of autonomous agencies increased in Pakistan and the existing agencies have been invigorated. Pakistan is no exception to this universal trend but promoting efficiency in the public sector was not the only reason behind it. Rather privatization, regulation, service delivery, embezzlement and corruption also provided the basis for creation of these autonomous agencies (Rizwan & Jadoon, 2010).

Federal agencies are divided into two categories including attached departments and semi-autonomous bodies/autonomous bodies/corporations (Pakistan Public Administration Research Center 2007a, 2007b). According to National Commission for Government Reform report (2008) autonomous bodies have a board of directors that would be independent; led by a chief executive that would be reporting to the board. Regulatory, operational, corporate, research & development and quasi-judicial functions would be performed by these autonomous bodies.

These agencies have been created in an administrative system which has weak political institutions, but old and strong colonial bureaucratic structure and traditions that work in centralization of power and management. In these circumstances establishment of autonomous agencies is a notion opposing traditional bureaucratic structure and system in Pakistan. Therefore, there is a strong tendency that either this system would be resisted by bureaucracy or it would be changed in a way that would support the current status quo (Rizwan & Jadoon, 2010). Normatively these bodies should have autonomy in their functions including Human Resource Management Functions. Ideally, they should have their own HRM policies separate from their parent department matching with their basic services, mission, vision and core values. If that is not the case then purpose of these autonomous bodies is not being practiced in its real sense.

Therefore, this research paper aims to investigate whether agencification and creation of autonomous bodies facilitates implementation of independent HRM practices from their parent department as well as the underlying reasons behind the current situation. For this purpose, Department of Information & Culture along with its autonomous bodies is selected from Government of the Punjab, Pakistan for an in-depth analysis of the issue under study.

Department of Information and Culture

As part of Government of the Punjab this department was established in 1999. The department defines its responsibilities as reflecting government activities that impact the public, therefore, providing an accumulative impression about government policies (“Information and Culture Department, Government of The Punjab,” 2017). It has following autonomous bodies:

- Lahore Arts Council
- Punjab Council of the Arts
- Punjab Institute of Language, Art & Culture
- Lahore Museum
- Bahawalpur Museum
- Punjab Journalists Housing Foundation
- Bab-e-Pakistan Foundation

Research Question

This research aims to find out the differences in the HRM practices between parent department and their respective autonomous bodies at the provincial level as well as to assess the level of autonomy prevailing in them.

Hence, the research question is:

- *Do provincial autonomous bodies have their own HRM practices separate from their parent department, yes or no, and what are the possible explanations of the phenomenon?*

Literature Review

According to Pollitt & Bouckaert (2011) public management reform can be defined as, “deliberate changes to the structures and processes of public sector organizations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better” (p. 2). In many countries, the public management reforms were geared up by the basics of NPM. The NPM movement was remarkably adopted by a number of nations in their reform agenda and their basic strategies were similar (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011).

Agencification

According to Roness, Rubecksen, Verhoest, Verschuere & MacCarthaigh (2007), various international descriptions of agencies/autonomous bodies are available. However, their definition and functions vary according to a country's political and legal system as well as upon its national and organizational culture. According to Pollitt & Bouckaert (2011), mostly the central feature of public management reform is to make changes in organizational structure and they are aimed at improving performance. Creating agencies or autonomous bodies having senior management, performance targets, performance appraisals and improved working methods is one way to achieve the objectives of public management reforms. Staff is reassigned with proper training and improvement in performance is measured. Thus, we can define agencies according to Pollitt et al., 2004 as “public organizations which have greater autonomy than the ‘normal’ divisions and directorates in the core of the ministry” (p. 22). The term greater autonomy refers to freedom of decision making with respect to personnel or financial management.

It is interesting to note that opposed to acclaimed theoretical improvement in performance and efficiency of agencies, research shows the current performance of such entities are actually not up to the mark. Overman and Van Thiel (2016) after undertaking systematic comparison of agencies' performance in 20 countries conclude a negative effect of the process of agencification on efficiency and output of public sector contradictory to acclaimed economic benefits of agencification. In public administration, a complex relationship exists between autonomous agencies and parent department. We study in theory that agencies have a significant amount of autonomy. However, things can be quite different in practice due to many reasons; for example, departments hold a bureaucratic mentality and may treat agencies as being lower in rank. According to Rommel and Christiaens (2007), literature has shown a gap between

the formal and factual autonomy of agencies. As can be observed in some cases, autonomy can be hollowed out by ministers and departments due to both structural and contextual factors that can cause distrust between autonomous bodies and their parent departments/ministries. Standard operating procedures continue to prevail and resemble the hierarchical norms of pre-agency status (Pollitt et al., 2004). Another reason can be failure of political context to adapt adequately to new situations (Rommel & Christiaens, 2007). Critics refer to a paradox that is common for NPM reforms, caused by conflicting views on autonomy between its underlying theories, named as paradox of autonomization. This means that real autonomy is merely a myth and increase in autonomy leads to increase in external control (Rommel & Christiaens, 2007).

Autonomous bodies/agencification in Pakistan

There are few researches done about autonomous bodies and more specifically about their human resource autonomy in Pakistan. Jadoon et al. (2012) divides evolution of agencies in Pakistan into four periods each having its own development policy. First period of agencification started after independence of the country from 1947 to 1971 under 'development administration' paradigm. Second phase started from 1972 to 1977 private sector enterprises were replaced by public enterprises under nationalization policy. Third phase from 1977 to 1999 under 'development management' paradigm, underwent wave of privatization guided by NPM model of public administration reform. Fourth phase of agencification in Pakistan from 1999 to 2010 emerged with the objective of improving service delivery and regulation under 'development governance' paradigm. According to Rizwan and Jadoon (2010) after 1980s, Pakistan had also gone through public management reforms including creation of autonomous bodies influenced by the notion of NPM and since then the number of autonomous bodies have raised. The existing agencies are also going through restructuring. The basic purpose behind creation of these autonomous bodies is to enhance efficiency and service delivery in the public sector of Pakistan. Other than that, various reasons including corruption, deregulation, autonomy and privatization provided basis for this trend.

Rizwan and Jadoon (2010), state that it should be kept in mind that these autonomous bodies were created in a political system having weak administrative institutions and well embedded bureaucracy with typical colonial and bureaucratic mindset which can most probably only appreciate centralization of power and decision making. Hence, autonomous bodies with NPM type approach would probably be resisted by the bureaucrats or it would be made to fit in a path-dependent way in order to keep status quo intact. Autonomous bodies have independent legal status having proper management like board of directors/governors and director/chief executive. As far as their autonomy is concerned, they have autonomy regarding operational decisions but the strategic decision making is done after the approval of concerned ministries.

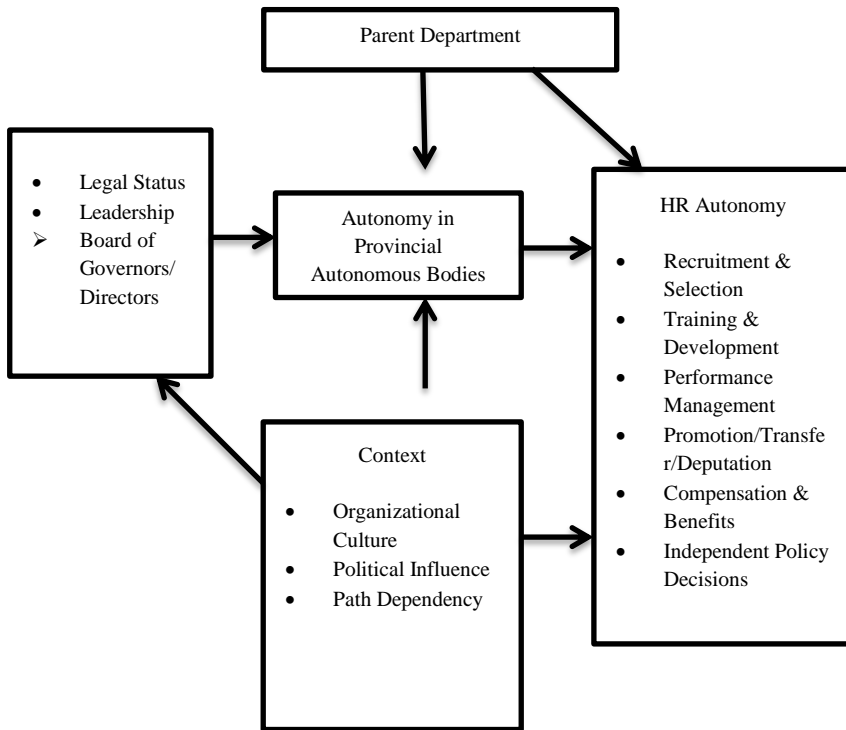
Human Resource Autonomy in Autonomous Bodies

According to Roness et al., 2007 the concept of autonomy is frequently used while studying public sector. Autonomy is often taken as the decision-making power of an agency i.e the extent to which an autonomous body can take

decisions independently. Managerial autonomy includes autonomy related to human resource practices like recruitment, training & development, performance management, compensation and promotions etc. Pollitt et al., 2004 says that the important aspect of the studies is the variation regarding the working and the type of working relationship between the autonomous body and its parent department. This view of autonomy opens a debate that how much autonomy should be given to autonomous bodies and how their parent departments should control or manage them.

Current situation of agencies and their HRM autonomy in Pakistan as discussed by Zahra and Jadoon (2016) shows that an independent legal status of an agency doesn't guarantee the actual autonomy being practiced, as board of governors may have some operational HRM autonomy in day to day matters but lacks financial and policy autonomy.

Theoretical Model of HR autonomy in provincial autonomous bodies



In this model autonomy in provincial autonomous bodies and HR autonomy are taken as dependent variables and parent department, context, legal status and leadership are taken as independent variables. Autonomy in provincial autonomous bodies is directly affected by the parent department because it determines the level of autonomy to be given to it. Parent department's policies and decisions play an important role in defining the extent of autonomy to be enjoyed by the autonomous agency.

Legal status and leadership also play an important role and affects overall autonomy as well as human resource autonomy. Legal status through the act of autonomous body, explains why it was formed, its objectives, policies, and the extent of powers or autonomy it can exercise. Leadership of an autonomous body plays a vital role in determining the level of autonomy of human resource practices. Leadership consists of board of governors/directors including bureaucrats, non-bureaucrats and ministers. Leadership determines and approves the policies and practices of autonomous body. If leadership plays a strong role, autonomous body can enjoy a considerable level of autonomy.

The context of a country and its administrative system are essential factors that determine the level of autonomy and specifically human resource autonomy. Context includes organizational culture, political influence and path dependency. Organizational culture carries informal norms which can support or resist the concept of autonomy. Political influence varies from country to country but its increased involvement in a department and its autonomous bodies can affect the human resource practices negatively. Path dependency is a major factor affecting autonomy as it can sabotage the true essence of autonomy by helping the forces of status quo to remain intact in an organizational culture.

Thus, autonomy of an agency is determined by its parent department, legal status, leadership and context. All these factors affect the human resource autonomy of an agency. Human resource autonomy consists of the level of autonomy in basic human resource practices of an agency. In this study, these practices include recruitment & selection, training & development, performance management, compensation & benefits, promotion/transfer/deputation and the formation of human resource policies.

In recruitment & selection autonomy regarding determining size of staff, appointment procedure etc is included while training & development include practices regarding need based training and development of employees' performance management covers the process of staff evaluation. In compensation & benefits autonomy regarding determination and change of level of salary is studied. It also focuses on practices regarding promotion/transfer/deputation in autonomous bodies are also studied. Lastly autonomy regarding human resource policy including independent policy decisions and the self-selection of instruments to be used in these policies are studied.

Research Methodology

Considering the nature of this study the research methodology adopted is qualitative as in qualitative research the researchers pursue understanding of social interactions and processes in organizations; with a readiness to be flexible and to

follow where the data leads them. Qualitative research is usually concerned with a situation or event that takes place within a single organizational unit (McNabb, 2008). The purpose of this research is to find out how autonomous the provincial bodies of Information & Culture Department are with respect to their HRM practices and why is it so.

Research design

In this study, a combination of explanatory and descriptive design is used. Descriptive design is used to describe certain phenomena or processes and explanatory design further explains the reasons behind the current situation (McNabb, 2008). Hence, the level of autonomy prevailing in autonomous bodies of Department of Information & Culture is explained through descriptive design. The explanatory research design also helps to provide explanation of factors affecting the autonomy of the agency under study.

Research approach

According to McNabb (2008) case study approach is considered as frequently used approach in public administration research as case studies are used to gain better understanding about certain processes in an organization. In this study one department of Punjab Government i.e. Information & Culture, has been selected to conduct the research. Thus, it can be called a case of Information & Culture Department, Government of Punjab, to study the extent of HRM autonomy in its autonomous bodies.

Research methods for data collection

The research methods/techniques that will be used for data collection in this research are in-depth interviews conducted through a questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions from the respondents. Other data sources would include legal framework of the selected autonomous bodies in the form of acts of parliament and the HRM policies of autonomous bodies and their parent department.

Population & sample

Population of this study is all provincial autonomous bodies in Punjab. Sample for the purpose of research is one department in order to consider the in-depth study requirement because there is dearth of research on this subject. The department of Information & Culture of Punjab government has been selected as a case in point.

Sampling techniques

For in-depth interviews from Information & Culture Department and its autonomous bodies, key respondents were selected through non-probability, judgmental and convenience sampling keeping in view the time and money resources as well as the respondents' availability and knowledge regarding the topic under study. The respondents including director, executive director, additional secretary or the secretary of the concerned department consist of senior management and bureaucratic level of grade 18 and above.

Unit of analysis

Autonomous bodies of Information & Culture Department are taken as unit of analysis for this research study.

Findings

For the purpose of analyzing Human Resource Autonomy of the provincial autonomous bodies of Information and Culture department, Government of the Punjab, in-depth interviews consisting of open-ended questions were conducted. Interviews from the parent department and autonomous bodies were taken to analyze their HR practices and the level of autonomy they enjoyed. The respondents interviewed were public officials employed in the autonomous bodies and parent department. A brief summary of the findings is being presented about the selected areas of human resource practices in autonomous bodies before discussing the level of HR autonomy these bodies actually enjoy.

Administrative relationship and autonomy of Human Resource policy

In all autonomous bodies, there exists a chief executive body named as board of directors or governors. This board has different composition in different autonomous bodies but it usually includes Secretary of the parent department, Minister of the respective ministry, Chief Minister of the province and sometimes Member National Assembly. The acts of autonomous bodies were made before they were constituted with the goals and objectives clearly written in them. If the autonomous body wishes to make some changes it will go through a process of approving it by its respective board and then getting it passed by the respective authority which promulgated it which would be the Provincial Assembly. As far as their human resource policies are concerned they are made and passed by the board in collaborative meetings including Finance and Planning Department of the Punjab government.

Autonomy in recruitment & selection/appointment practices

Chief executive/director/chairman of the autonomous bodies is appointed according to their act and the usual practice is that the Chief Minister of Government of the Punjab is the appointing authority. According to the acts, the strength of staff of these autonomous bodies has been mentioned but the decision-making body changes for grade wise appointments. Recruitment of the staff from grade 17 onwards is done through advertisements and Federal Public Service Commission. The recruiting authority is the board of the autonomous body while from grade 1-16 the authority is the director of the body but it may vary from one autonomous body to another. The staff is usually regulated according to the civil service rules but it may slightly vary from one autonomous body to another.

The recruitment practices being followed in the parent department consists of a recruitment policy of Punjab Government which is also called contract appointment policy. Other than that, the appointments in grade 17 and above are done through Public Service Commission. Esta code, which is compendium of rules, regulations and policies devised for civil servants, is being followed here.

Autonomy in training & development practices

The usual practice being followed in the autonomous bodies is that the parent department informs the autonomous bodies about the availability of training opportunities and seats and then autonomous bodies nominates their employees for training if they can be spared from their regular duties. Autonomous bodies can recommend their employees for training to the parent department. There is no such concept of training need analysis. Only one respondent from the Lahore museum said that they try to practice it but faces many difficulties in convincing the parent department about their needs of specialized training of employees.

In parent department, there is an announced policy of training of Punjab Government. According to which training is must prior to the service and for promotion training course is also must. This implies on civil as well as non-civil servants. Training and development practices in the department are centralized. Services & general administration and planning & development circulate different models of trainings in the departments. Then officers are nominated from Information & Culture Department. The donors and partners also facilitate in trainings. In Information & Culture Department not much donor funded projects are offered but they make partnership with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); not by taking funds but rather requesting for help.

Autonomy in performance management system

Goals/objectives of the autonomous bodies are documented, they are involved by the parent department in the process and the performance is evaluated by the autonomous body as well as the parent department. In all autonomous bodies, the tool for performance assessment is Performance Evaluation Report (PER) which was previously named as Annual Confidential Report (ACR). For performance assessment of the employees this system is used by all the departments of Punjab government.

There is no as such difference between performance assessment of civil servants as well as non-civil servants. Feedback is given for good or bad performance in the form of appreciation or show cause notices. Performance of the head of the autonomous body is assessed by the board of governors/directors, Chairman BOD or Secretary Information and Culture. In parent department, periodic meetings for assessing performance quarterly or at least twice a year is a mandatory requirement. The performance assessment tool is PER (performance evaluation report) as listed earlier.

Compensation & benefits system in autonomous bodies

Autonomous bodies cannot change the basic pay scales and level of salary that the provincial government has determined while secretary of the department said that Administrative Secretary has the authority to give honorarium (one month's salary) once a year on the basis of performance. If want to give more than that, Administrative Secretary makes recommendation to the government. Same procedure is followed for the autonomous bodies. Some autonomous bodies have more revenue generation than others but none claimed that it is enough to cover their expenses.

Autonomy in promotion/transfer/deputation practices

Promotions are less performance based and more seniority based in autonomous bodies. Criteria are same that has been given to them and in case of deputation, Secretary Information & Culture can appoint anyone on deputation. Transfers can be made within the institution like from one wing to another. The parent department is informed about the departmental practices as promotions is on seniority basis. Deputation is according to the deputation policy of the Government of the Punjab, as outlined in the Esta Code. They autonomous department cannot send anyone on deputation on their behalf but can transfer employees. Within the department, Secretary Information & Culture can transfer an officer up to grade 18 in Department of Information and Culture according to the Esta code. There is a difference between government servant and civil servant. Government servants get promotions etc within their attached departments and autonomous bodies through decision of their promotion committees. Civil servants are appointed through an act of civil service and they have their own rules.

Factors affecting HR autonomy of autonomous bodies

Most of the autonomous bodies were of the view that they do not enjoy much autonomy in their policies and practices and they should be granted more autonomy than that which is prevailing currently. Parent department had a contradictory view that autonomous bodies are enjoying sufficient level of autonomy. They do things according to their rules, following policy of Government of the Punjab but parent department do not interfere in it. Some respondents said that having HR autonomy in autonomous bodies would facilitate in improving performance and it should be there but interestingly few respondents did not support it including the parent department. According to the parent department standardization should be there but autonomous bodies can make their own rules and nobody stops them as according to the law pertaining to autonomy of such bodies; they are fully empowered to make their HR policies and practices.

Political regime and interests of ruling elites sometimes affect the performance of the autonomous body while political instability affects everywhere. Parent department's view was that that since autonomous bodies are created for flexibility in performing their duties and their laws and by-laws always facilitate that flexibility so these political disturbances and the environment overall; which is affecting everybody is also affecting them. However, Secretary of the department stressed many times that it depends on how strong the Board of Directors is; if BOD and leadership are strong then there can be no impact of these things on HR autonomy.

There is a bureaucratic culture in Department of Information & Culture of the Punjab Government. Autonomous bodies have their hierarchy and they also have to follow the chain of command. Traditional bureaucratic culture does affect HR autonomy because one cannot follow the reward policy or policy based on one's performance. On the other hand, respondents from the parent department remarked that existence of more technical people makes the bureaucratic regimentation weaker. Yes, there was traditionally a bureaucratic culture that was prevalent in the department; however, after the autonomous departments that

bureaucratic culture has given way to a rather flexible, open and organic culture prone to enhance efficiency and improve governance.

Most of the respondents were of the view that contextual, institutional and cultural factors also effect the HR autonomy of such bodies. Pressure groups within the autonomous body and parent department can affect autonomy. Most important, as stressed by most of the respondents, is the leadership of the autonomous body that has a most significant effect on autonomy. Simply important is that the stronger the BOD and leadership, the more autonomy is ensured. Parent department was of the view that contextually autonomous bodies can deliver better than the attached departments but as far as the cultural aspect is concerned, parent department should keep a close watch on the performance of the autonomous bodies in order to better achieve the set objectives. Concept of agencification is backed by New Public Management. If one wants to implement such things, it should be speedy but our processes take too much time. NPM practices are not yet fully implemented and there is a need for such implementation. Almost all of the respondents negated that there is political interference in policy making in autonomous bodies. Respondents from the parent department stated that civil servants in autonomous bodies cannot be dictated; at least they are not dictated in regime operating in year 2012.

According to many respondents, autonomous bodies should be self-supporting but they are not rationalized rather dependent on parent department and Punjab Government in many administrative matters so essence of autonomy is not being followed. Parent department negated that domestic requirements are not fulfilled in autonomous bodies contradictory to respondents from the autonomous bodies who said that domestic requirements are definitely in consideration in their autonomous bodies.

Discussion and Conclusion

After discussing the situation of human resource autonomy prevailing in the autonomous bodies of Department of Information & Culture, Government of the Punjab, the basic purpose of this study was to find out whether provincial autonomous bodies have autonomy of human resource practices when compared with parent department or not. The above analysis of the situation of selected human resource practices of the autonomous bodies suggest that the concept of agencification or autonomous bodies has not been implemented in its true form in Pakistan; at least not at the provincial level. The HR autonomy these autonomous bodies have is minimal. In their executive boards, there are members from parent department, sometimes some members of provincial assembly and usually headed by the Chief Minister of the province. All the major policies of human resource management are determined by the Government of the Punjab and the Parent Department which is Department of Information & Culture in this case.

According to Rizwan and Jadoon (2010) creation of the autonomous bodies revolved around two main reasons, i) international trend and ii) to provide a professional goal-oriented environment to the autonomous bodies. In this study, it can be seen that although the agencies were formed following the international trend mixed with local requirements but they were not being given the level of autonomy specifically human resource autonomy negating the concept of

autonomy itself. The policies and practices are still centralized and revolve around getting approval from the parent department and Government of the Punjab.

Now the questions arise that why is it so? For answering the second part of the research question, findings of the research model and theoretical framework devised before the data collection are much relevant. According to the model devised earlier the autonomy in provincial autonomous bodies is affected by various factors including the parent department, the legal status, its leadership in the form of its executive board, and the context which includes culture, political interference and lastly the path dependency. They all contribute to affect the human resource autonomy of an autonomous body.

According to the findings of this study parent department plays a vital role in determining the level of HR autonomy of its respective bodies. It can be said that most of the practices of parent department and autonomous bodies are alike. The legal status of the bodies is that normatively they should be autonomous but ironically in their acts their autonomy has been minimized by giving the discretionary powers to their executive boards in which the highest authority is of the parent department, Chief Minister or any representative of the province.

As far as the theoretical perspective is concerned; Public Choice Theory contributed towards the notion of independent agencies or autonomous bodies by introducing the market based efficiency enhancing principles in the public sector. Creation of these autonomous bodies is also for the improvement of performance and efficiency within their respective areas (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). Instrumental rationality was tried to achieve by the creation of these autonomous bodies which works on the “Logic of Consequences” that certain actions would provide the desired results ([Christensen, Lægreid, Roness, & Røvik, 2007](#)). Now the question arises that why the desired results are not being achieved i.e. why the HR autonomy is minimal in the autonomous bodies?

The answer lies in the ‘Cultural Perspective’ as discussed by Christensen et al., (2007) which tells us about the informal norms of an agency/autonomous body which can resist change. Now autonomy and specifically HR autonomy is a change that is being hindered by informal norms and culture of bureaucratic mindset added by the desire to centralize the power in the form of asking approvals for every major thing from the autonomous bodies by the parent department as they are present in the board of directors that is usually chaired by the chief minister of the province. These informal norms and mindset made some respondents from the autonomous bodies oppose the idea of more HR autonomy in their autonomous body.

Another theory explaining the situation is the ‘Path Dependency Theory’, according to which certain reforms didn’t achieve what they were aimed at because reform strategies are shaped into what already prevails in a system rather than the ones envisioned for (Pollitt et al., 2004). Reasons are the norms and practices that are embedded in an organizational culture. Same is the case in the autonomous bodies that they are called autonomous but doesn’t enjoy the level of autonomy they should be enjoying normatively.

To conclude, in provincial autonomous bodies of Department of Information and Culture, Government of the Punjab, the international trend of agencification or autonomous bodies has not yet fully achieved its most important intended goal of having autonomy specifically human resource autonomy.

Recommendations

Leadership in the form of board of directors can play a vital role in achieving as much autonomy as it can by barring the intervention from the internal and external forces. Context obviously plays a pivotal role in determining the autonomy. The institutional culture, political interference that hinder effective functioning of the autonomous bodies need to be removed and last but not least path dependency, that hinders the autonomous policies and practices of an agency/autonomous body need to be given way towards exploring new paths by encouraging open communication, dialogue, conversation and participation at all levels.

How can this situation be improved? The Leadership Theory in public sector (Christensen et al., 2007) with the findings of this study answers that question to a certain extent. In a country like Pakistan where international reforms are implemented in public organizations with informal culture with the desire to achieve the intended goals (Jadoon, Jabeen & Rizwan, 2012); the leadership of an organization or autonomous bodies can be influential in order to implement and achieve the real essence of human resource autonomy in autonomous bodies. Supported by the respondents that the more the leadership is strong, the more autonomy they can have in their HR practices and policies.

The desired results of agencification in the form of enhanced efficiency and effectiveness can only be achieved if the requirements of this model are fully implemented. While creating autonomous bodies the indigenous context, administrative culture and values should be kept in mind and policies and procedures should be made accordingly. Autonomous bodies should be given due autonomy by their respective parent departments for decision making and implementation of human resource practices if the true essence of autonomy is to be achieved.

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