

POLICY BRIEF

# Building World Class Civil Servants



A candle ceremony for a group of civil service trainees in the Republic of Korea. Photo credit: K-Developedia  
*The Republic of Korea has been a leader in training government officials to be catalysts of economic development.*

## Introduction

The Government of the Republic of Korea established a civil service training plan that reflected the needs of economic development policies.

By law, the Ministry of General Affairs (MOGA) was required to establish an annual education and training plan and convey it to the heads of government ministries, agencies, and training institutions.

MOGA, in its annual plan for education and training of government officials, reflected in the plan the major policy decisions of the Cabinet. In particular, training programs were newly developed or aspects of existing programs are reorganized accordingly.

The Planning Program is a case in point. This program was opened to teach skills and techniques in planning to government officials working at planning offices in central ministries and agencies. This program supported the offices of planning and coordination established by the military government in central government ministries in 1962 in their efforts to effectively implement the First Five-Year Economic Development Plan

Another example is a series of courses on new managerial techniques for midlevel officials added by the Central Officials Training Institute (COTI) to existing programs in 1967.

The courses included: the Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT); the Critical Path Method (CPM); the Operational Research (OR); and the Program Planning and Budgeting System (PPBS)—all were very useful for establishing development policies. At that time, the government of the Third Republic needed to foster competent officials who could conduct planning tasks to prepare for the Second Five-Year Economic Development Plan.

Even though the government lacked the necessary facilities and systems, it still provided advanced courses on managerial and statistical techniques to mid-level officials.

Thus we can view such training as preemptive or concurrent—a strategy to equip midlevel officials with the advanced knowledge and techniques they would need to design and execute development policies.

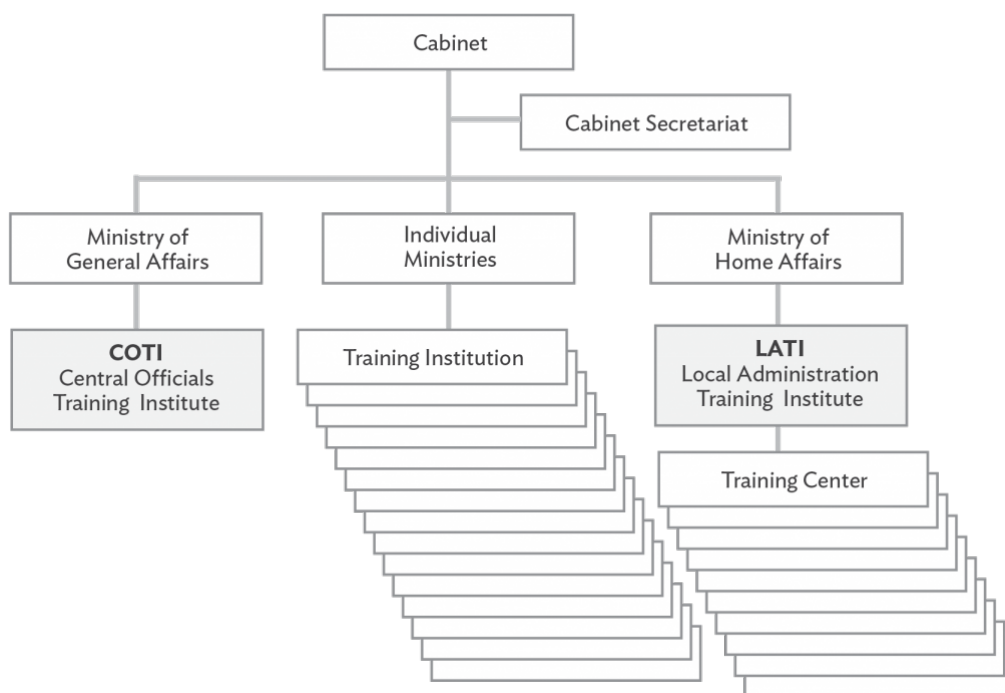


Figure 1: Civil Service Training System. Source: K-Developedia



## by Options

### Reason for failure of training program in developing countries

In the 1980s and 1990s, much research was conducted on the outcomes of capacity building for government officials of developing countries. The researchers found that in general, training activities focused on skills and knowledge transfer do not ultimately lead to performance improvements in governmental organizations.

The reasons for this failure were identified as the following: demotivating organizational cultures; the underutilization of qualified people at management level and in organizations overall; ineffective communication, lack of professional norms, and weak teamwork; and the brain drain to the private sector.

This does not necessarily mean that training focused on skills, knowledge, and technology transfer is not important for the capacity building of government; it rather indicates that something more is required in order to see real performance improvement in government. Although it is impossible to fully apply the Republic of Korea's experience to developing countries, several implications can be drawn from the country.

### Training first, assignment later

Policymakers in underdeveloped countries who are pursuing national development should prioritize civil service training. Government organizations play important roles in underdeveloped economies where civil society and the private sector are relatively weak. The Government of the Republic of Korea stipulates that government officials newly employed or due for promotion attend training programs before assignment. Appropriate training is provided preemptively to ensure that job responsibilities at each stage of development can be carried out accurately and effectively.

### Establishing legal and institutional frameworks

One reason for the success of civil service training in the Republic of Korea is its solid legal and institutional foundation. The government enacted and revised laws concerned with civil service training and training institutions from the beginning. The institutionalization of legal and organizational frameworks has provided a solid foundation for continuous civil service training in the country.

### Bridging government policy and training

The Korean training system which bridged government policy and training contents maximized the effects of training on the capacity development of government officials. It also raised organizational capacity by utilizing and integrating the accumulated capacities of individual officials to the greatest effect.

### Public service ethics training

The Republic of Korea emphasized public service ethics training for government officials as well as