

Executives versus Managers

The recent emphasis on government decentralization and public sector reform raises a number of important questions regarding the capabilities of our civil service in embracing the upcoming changes and adapting to a different form of public management that sets new requirements for the required characteristics of senior civil services employees. The characteristics in question are not related to the basic schooling or university educational qualifications or requirements of civil servants but rather to the concept of differentiating between the roles of '*executives*' and '*managers*' within an organizational structure and the many important differences between such roles:

- Executives are conceptualizers; Managers are problem solvers.
- Executives are proactive; Managers are reactive.
- Executives create a vision; Managers focus on short term goals.
- Executives have a personal attitude towards goals; Managers do not.
- Executives stress values and commitment; Managers stress coordination and control.
- Executives emphasize change; Managers emphasize maintenance
- Executives do the right thing; Managers do things right.

Jordan's e-government program represents a good case in mind to highlight the impact of such differences. The outgoing team at the Ministry of Information & Communications Technologies (MoICT) commanded full authority on the planning, design, specification and implementation of Jordan's e-government program. This unconditional authority was not tied to any responsibility or accountability related to the program's progress, success or shortcomings as the case may be. The program is now in its fifth year without any tangible e-services in sight. The reasons are many; either too many executives with no managers, or too many managers with no executives but most importantly a classic case of delegation of authority without accountability or responsibility. Let us hope that the new team at MoICT adopts a more practical and innovative approach.

The general situation of our civil service is no exception. The bulk of civil servants have neither the required authority nor the necessary level of responsibility relevant to their job functions. The deep rooted hierarchical bureaucracy of the decision-making process actively discourages creativity and innovation. In most cases, decisions are taken as a reaction to a sequence of recommendations from lower level bureaucrats all the way up to the senior bureaucrat in charge.

US President Lyndon B. Johnson once said: "Our problem is not to do what is right, our problem is to know what is right." The sad part is that in most cases we know what is right, but for some reason prefer not to do it.