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Civil service training in the Macau Government

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The civil service of Macau faces unique challenges as it continues to transfer from a colonial bureaucracy administered by Portugal to the post 1999 system of 'special autonomy' within China, whereby the territory will administer much of its own affairs until 2049. Traditionally, Macau's civil service was characterised by a rigid ethno-linguistic hierarchy, with Portuguese nationals occupying its executive positions and middle management reserved for the Portuguese-speaking mestizo community to the exclusion of the ethnic Chinese who were and remain Macau's most populous demographic. More recently, leading up to and following the transfer of Macau from Portuguese to Chinese rule, Macau's civil service has undertaken a threefold process of 'localisation', which aims to slowly reorientate its personnel, language and law to better reflect the territory's contemporary cultural and political reality. Significantly, Portuguese-speaking civil servants have undertaken Chinese-language instruction, with Chinese-speaking civil servants being taught Portuguese. This chapter first gives a historical background to these changes, before outlining the various instruments of the Macau civil service, and how they have developed since the handover. It finally explores the process of civil service training within the territory, which has undertaken significant institutional and cultural change both before and after Macau's return to Chinese rule. The chapter concludes by emphasising

the current trend of heavy investment in civil service training—increasingly conducted in mainland China—something which further underlines Macau’s unique position.

Macau is a tiny peninsular enclave on the southern coast of China with a total land area of just 30.3 sq km. According to the Macau Statistics and Census Bureau, in 2013 Macau had an aggregate population of 607,500, and its government had 29,598 civil servants, including both permanent and contract staff—a high ratio of one civil servant for every 20 citizens.

From the mid-sixteenth century until 19 December 1999, Macau was a Chinese territory under Portuguese administration. During this time, it developed a Portuguese-oriented judicial and administrative system with a strong emphasis on legal-administrative roles and rules consistent with the *Rechtsstaat* tradition of government. After 1999, Macau became one of the two Special Administrative Regions of China alongside Hong Kong. Once Macau was back under the sovereignty of China, the Central People’s Government appointed Macau’s administrative leader, known as the Chief Executive, after an election. The *Sino–Portuguese Joint Declaration* signed in March 1987 guaranteed that Macau would operate with a high degree of autonomy until at least 2049—that is, 50 years after the transfer. The policy of ‘one country, two systems’ divided government responsibilities between China and Macau: the Chinese Central Government assumed responsibility for the territory’s defence and foreign affairs, while Macau controlled its own legal system, police force, monetary system, and customs and immigration policies.

Civil service structure

Since Macau’s handover, the Chinese Central Government has exercised the authority to appoint the Chief Executive of Macau. The Chief Executive is elected by a committee whose 400 members are nominated by corporate and community bodies. The Chief Executive is assisted by five policy secretaries (portfolio holders), who assist the Chief Executive in formulating and implementing policies and in administrative affairs, among other duties. The five policy secretaries look after the portfolios of Administration and Justice, Economy and Finance, Security, Social Affairs and Culture, and Transport and Public

Works. Under the management of these secretaries, each portfolio consists of government directorates of services, departments and divisions. The most senior officials within a portfolio are the directors of the directorates, with middle-level officials heading departments and divisions.

Macau's civil servants before the 1980s were mainly of Portuguese and Macanese, rather than Chinese, origin;¹ the former occupied all the most important political and senior civil service positions, while the latter occupied the middle-level civil service positions. The Governor of the colony (a post similar to that of Chief Executive) was appointed by the President of Portugal and the appointee was always of Portuguese extraction. Thus, these Portuguese administrators came with almost no understanding of the local culture or the traditions of the people of Macau, so many of the government policies they promulgated were not adapted to the preferences or needs of the citizens. During this time, the ethnic Macanese occupied the crucial middle-level civil service positions because they served as the language bridge between the governing Portuguese and local residents, who were mainly Chinese. Chinese residents were rarely appointed to senior civil service or even middle-level positions. Usually, ethnic Chinese were assigned to work in the security forces in positions such as police or fire officers, or alternatively they served as low-level clerks or office servants. Paradoxically, although Chinese residents in Macau generally had higher educational qualifications than the Macanese or Portuguese, their inability to speak Portuguese usually prohibited them from reaching higher civil service positions.

Civil service reform from 1999

Much was to change, however, after the transfer of sovereignty back to China in 1999. In fact, many changes in the reorientation of Macau's government and to the composition of its administration can be traced back earlier, to the signing of the *1987 Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration*. The new government committed to developing an improved relationship with the citizenry, and it implemented many policy measures designed to suit their needs. In contrast to the situation

1 The term 'Macanese' refers only to mestizos of Portuguese and Chinese descent, not to those whose parents are both ethnically Chinese.

in the 1980s, now all Chinese residents were able to gain government employment and it was not uncommon for them to rise to the higher ranks. At first, many Chinese residents with university degrees were recruited into the government as senior technicians but were later promoted to managerial positions. The majority of these Chinese civil servants were recruited through a special program initially organised by the Macau Portuguese Government, in which they were sent to Portugal for one or two years to study Portuguese.

In the negotiations over the *Joint Declaration* and to ensure the smooth transfer of Macau to China, the Chinese Government requested that the Macau Portuguese Government start a process of 'localisation' in Macau. Before the handover, the localisation process was called the 'Three Localisations'—that is, the Localisation of Law, the Localisation of Civil Servants and the Localisation of Chinese as the official language. As a result, many training courses were conducted for existing civil servants to prepare for the future, and new recruitment strategies were adopted.

One of the major training exercises in which the majority of civil servants participated was language instruction in their non-native tongue. The Macau Government sent Portuguese-speaking civil servants to Beijing to learn Mandarin while Chinese-speaking civil servants were sent to Portugal to learn Portuguese.

Due to the desire of the Portuguese administrators to maintain control of most positions within the judicial system until the handover to China, the Portuguese Government of Macau did not invest in much Chinese-language training for the judiciary. And yet, one non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation, the Associação Promotora da Instrução Pós-Secundária de Macau (Macau Association for the Promotion of Post-Secondary Studies), carefully selected high-performing students from Chinese and English-language high schools to receive training in Portugal as bilingual legal professionals. Thus, when the handover occurred, the new government had a sufficient number of local judges and prosecutors to fill the void left by the departing Portuguese judiciary. This was the reason some of the judges and prosecutors were initially younger and less experienced than their counterparts in comparable countries. In 2003, to improve training and as a way of increasing the number of legal professionals, the Macau Government established the Legal and Judicial Training Centre (CFJ).

The Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau

Responsibilities and training programs

Before the establishment of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (Serviços de Administração e Função Pública, SAFP) in 1983, each public agency carried out its own training. After the establishment of the SAFP, the training was organised centrally through the Recruitment and Training Department (RRF) of the SAFP. This department was responsible for all aspects of human resources in the civil service, including recruitment and training.

The responsibilities of the SAFP were to:

- study and propose policies for administrative reform
- establish appropriate guidelines to facilitate and monitor the implementation of policies
- develop and coordinate the government's central management of its human resources policies, especially regarding recruitment, training and retirement
- investigate and develop better procedures for performance evaluation
- establish forms of e-government and promote information technologies.

Training courses organised by the SAFP mainly targeted the routine functions of the civil service, such as administrative procedures and the implementation of the law in different contexts. Hence the content of the training courses was drawn largely from the administration of Macau's Basic Law, together with some judicial and administrative practices developed by Portugal. The training provided by RRF has focused on practical knowledge for frontline civil servants, including citizen-oriented delivery, appropriate behaviour in dealing with clients and how to administer efficiently and effectively.

Some courses were organised in accordance with an agreement signed between Portugal and Macau to provide short- and long-term training in Portugal as a means of enhancing the professional knowledge of civil servants as well as allowing them to learn new techniques.

Macau also began organising training courses with the European Union to broaden the perspectives of civil servants and enhance their international vision and understanding.

The teachers and presenters of the courses conducted in Macau were primarily high-ranking civil servants such as department or division heads of a relevant bureau. However, university academics as well as judges and prosecutors were also enlisted to teach and make presentations. The presenters of the courses held in Portugal (and some other European countries such as Belgium) were a mixture of experienced civil servants and private consultants.

In 1987, the Macau Portuguese Government issued another statute to regulate and enhance the functions of the SAFF. The new law enlarged the organisational structure of the SAFF and changed the name of the RRF to the Centre of Training for Public Administration (CFAP). CFAP's functions included organising an annual program of civil service training courses to meet the changing needs of Macau, and establishing and developing cooperative relationships between government departments and private organisations as well as between departments and Portuguese and other foreign actors, with the aim of arranging high-quality professional training activities.

Reforms to the SAFF

In 1994 the Macau Government again rearranged the organisational structure of the SAFF, mainly due to the promotion of localisation as a result of the pending transfer of sovereignty to China and to meet the needs of modernisation and the management of its human resources. The CFAP was replaced with a specialist Division of Training, which operated under the management of the Department of Human Resources.

Language training continued to remain a priority and received much government investment. After Macau was returned to China, the new Macau Government came to realise that Macau could play an important international role as a platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. To improve its capacity in this role, in 2010 the SAFF started a program to train translators and interpreters in second languages. Trainees first had classes in Macau, and then were sent to Portugal and Belgium to undertake linguistic and cultural immersion.

In 2009, a decade after reunification, the Macau Government promulgated another new law, to regulate the recruitment and career development of civil servants. All civil servants, including permanent and contractual staff, were brought under the same service-wide human resource management procedures. In addition, some occupational categories such as senior technician and assistant technician were to be recruited only through a central recruitment process organised by SAFP instead of under the authorisation of each bureau. This important and complex task became the exclusive responsibility of the SAFP. To fulfil the task smoothly, in 2011 the government further enlarged the purview and organisational structure of the SAFP, making it a significantly larger training agency. There were substantial increases in the number of important positions at all levels: the number of sub-directors was increased from two to three; a further three department heads were added, taking their total to nine; the cohort of division heads was more than doubled, from eight to 17; the number of senior technicians was almost tripled, from 40 to 110; similarly, the pool of technicians went from nine to 39; and the number of assistant technicians increased from 24 to 40. The main reason for such a substantial increase in the size of the agency was its increased responsibility for the delivery of civil service training and for central recruitment of senior technicians and assistant technicians.

The SAFP still operates within the portfolio and under the management of the Secretary for Administration and Justice and reports to that secretary. The current departments within the SAFP are:

- Department of Organisational Performance and Operations
- Department of Civil Service Training
- Department of Legal Affairs
- Public Information Centre
- Department of Language Affairs
- Electoral Affairs Division
- Language and Documentation Division
- Administration and Finance Division
- Public Service Welfare Division
- Personnel Recruitment and Selection Division
- Training Coordination Division

- e-Government Planning and Infrastructure Division
- e-Government IT Development Division.

In contrast to the previous system, according to the new law, civil servants who are promoted to a higher grade must have completed 80 hours of training courses, which may consist of either courses run by the relevant SAFF department in Macau or courses taken at overseas institutes. After two or three years, civil servants are expected to have undertaken another 30 hours of compulsory service-wide courses organised by the SAFF to be promoted to another higher grade; in fact, the SAFF recently expanded its organisational structure to deliver these training services. The Department of Human Resources was also renamed the Department of Civil Service Training, while the Division of Training is now known as the Division of Training Coordination. Today in Macau, any civil servant can register to attend any training course. Priority for course places is usually given to those civil servants who are recommended by their bureau to study the specific course or to those whose tasks are particularly related to the course.

In addition to these training courses and workshops, the Macau Government has adopted a policy of rotation for top-level officials. Since 2000 the government has followed a strategic policy of transferring top-level officials horizontally between bureaus to give them management and leadership experience in different fields, as well as encouraging communication between leaders and bureaus. This has become one of the main ways by which top-level officials receive practical experience in dealing with real problems, adding to what they have learned theoretically through training courses.

In 2000 the Macau Government signed an agreement with the Singapore Civil Service College (CSC) to collaborate in providing specialist training for Macau's top- and middle-level officials. These training courses have focused on policymaking and management skills, management development, the training of civil service tutors and other administrative topics. It is estimated that 3,000 officials and 70 local tutors have already participated in this training program.

In January 2011, the SAFF signed another agreement with the CSC, under which the college will assist the Macau Government in developing a strategic plan, and will also collaborate in the new

SAFP Training Centre, constructed in late 2011. This agreement also extended the 2000 agreement that assigned the CSC the task of assisting the Macau Government in training executive-level civil servants.

Conclusion

As economic and social development accelerates in Macau, demands from the citizenry for better and more responsive public services have increased. The new government has responded by being more activist in the provision of public services and in improving their quality, and as a consequence has expanded both the scale and the scope of its civil service training program. Clearly, the new Macau Government considers civil service training to be important in enhancing its capacity to deliver responsive, timely and courteous services. In the post-handover period, the government has taken on increased responsibility for funding training programs across all levels of the civil service. The government has accepted the full burden of covering the costs of all training centrally to ensure that Macau's civil servants pay nothing. This contrasts with the situation in some comparable Asian countries.

Increasingly since the handover in 1999, the Macau Government has prioritised the training of civil servants in Mainland China—and not only for language education and cultural immersion. Civil servants have also been sent to China to undertake courses such as diplomatic protocols, city and infrastructure planning in regional contexts, water management issues and financial and taxation matters. This training is already providing benefits for Macau's growth and development. As a result, despite being somewhat late in recognising the need for extensive civil service training (mainly due to Portuguese influence in its earlier forms of government), Macau has in recent years greatly expanded its commitment to training as a long-term investment in the future. It has recognised that such investment is necessary for the development of future capabilities and the management of public policies as well as for strengthening its international relationships.

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