A Review of the Achievements and Policy Lessons of Public Management Reform in Five Anglophone African Countries

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Abstract
This paper reviewed the experiences of five English-speaking African countries in implementing public management reforms during the 1980s and 1990s. The paper focuses specifically on: (a) the underlying reasons for the adoption of the reforms; (b) the drivers of the actual implementation of the reforms; (c) their achievements and pitfalls; and (d) the general lessons that emerged from the reform experiences. The study adopted a systematic review approach, which involved an identification of key terms, screening and reviewing of extant relevant literature, and conducting comprehensive document searches. Screening the relevant documents for the study was based on its relevance to the study objective(s). The study finds that the issue of quality service delivery or social provisioning has only become a major focus of reforms in recent years. Also, the study revealed that it is difficult to design, complex to implement and even more difficult to sustain a new public management reform that guarantees the right outcomes and impact on service delivery in the long run. Capacity and experience in these areas are awfully lacking in the public services of the various countries. While strong, broad-based and sustained support, especially by both political and technocratic leaders are critical to the successful design and implementation of public management reforms, they are lacking in most of the countries. Also, weak or no incentives undermine ownership and commitment to reform by public servants. Persistence of strong vested interests against most drastic changes inherent in PSR is constraining reform success. Even so, there are promising results both in the design and implementation of reforms in the five countries.

Key words: Public management, implementation, Anglophone Africa, policy lessons

Introduction

This paper reviews public management reform experiences of five Anglophone African countries – Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia which have been implementing various public sector reforms since the 19980s and 1990s. Each of the countries is distinctive, yet all five have common threads running through them. Reform performance and achievements has varied across these selected countries; although they have all tried to implement similar reform programmes, the results or actual outcomes of the reforms have varied substantially. . The aims of this paper are to: identify the underlying reasons for the adoption of public management reform; identify and compare the achievements and pitfalls of the reforms; identify constraints to reform implementation; and, highlight lessons that other African countries can learn from the five country case study. The paper starts with a description of the method and procedure, followed by a sketch of the review of reasons for public management reforms, historical overview of reforms in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Study Methods

Following Grimshaw et al. (2004), this study adopted the systematic review approach which involves a number of steps, ranging from an identification of key terms, screening of the literature, review of secondary information and conducting comprehensive document searches. Screening the relevant documents for the study is based on its relevance to the study objective(s). Each document selected for review was abstracted and the data assessed based on relevance, scientific and empirical strength and quality. The selected studies were further stratified and examined according to: reasons for reform; drivers of reform; achievements and pitfalls of the reforms; and constraints to reform implementation.

Overview and Rationale for NPM Reforms

This section provides an overview of the conceptions of NPM and its transfer to developing countries. Minogue et al. (1995) assert that most authors see NPM as something akin to a managerial revolution; a paradigm shift from old assumptions about the state to a new entrepreneurial government, a force seeking to drive out the devalued currency of 'old public administration'. Essentially, NPM seeks to change ideas about the state, government and governance in general. According to Lane (2000), NPM offers a set of new ideas about how government can get its work done. NPM seeks to transcend a pure theory of bureaucracy (Lane, 2000), where constant 'de-bureaucratisation' is considered a primary task of 'good management'; and where management of public operations is not seen as the 'administration of law' but as 'administration of services' to effect desired outcomes. In brief, NPM seeks to inject private sector, market-oriented and entrepreneurial ideas and practices into the business of government. With particular reference to developed countries such as the UK, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, NPM has largely been a manifestation of the shift in global development thinking that favoured marketisation the privatisation of state-owned agencies (Lane, 2000), as evidenced for example, in the structural adjustment of programmes (SAPs) of the Bretton Woods Institutions.

More specifically, the application of private sector management strategies is seen as a way of curing traditional public administration of its 'bureau-pathologies' (Aucoin, 1990; Newman, 2002). It has also been argued that the tenets of managerialism have replaced the ethos of public service as the motivating principle for public service (Pollitt, 2000), and that it has become almost palpable to refer to the transformation of 'administration' as 'management' (Dunleavy and Hood, 1994). Hood (1991) outlined the following as essential characteristics of NPM:

- reducing bureaucratic rules;
- ensuring budget transparency and identifying the costs of inputs and outputs;
- using a network of contracts, rather than fiduciary relationships;
- disaggregating organisations and their functions, introducing purchaser/ provider institutions;
- increasing provider competition;
- increasing consumer power through enhanced scope for exit and redress.

The primary goal of new public management reforms is to make public services work better; and the main proposed strategy for achieving this was is to 'increase management capability by reinvigorating public administration' (OECD, 2005). Unlike earlier reforms, emphasis in the NPM approach does not focus on reducing the role of public sector agencies, but on reorganising and restructuring it through processes of decentralised management (Elcock and Minogue, 2001).

Rationale for Public Management Reform

Public sector reform is a political activity which is in no way different from other kinds of political activity and its making and implementation may target either public resource allocation or public sector resource redistribution (Lane, 2000).

According to Lane (Ibid), "[t]he demand for public sector reform could stem from a variety of considerations about the public interest, and the supply of public sector reforms could result from a search for more efficiency in public resource allocation or more justice in income redistribution. Equally, various groups may demand or supply public sector reforms for the sake of their own interests. One may expect opportunistic behaviour in the politics of public sector reform".

Three main objectives underline public management reforms: efficiency, equality and savings (Lane, 2000). Efficiency tends to be the major objective when reforming the allocative and regulatory branches of government while equality is the goal when changing the redistributive system of government. Generally however, PSR could be undertaken for two main reasons: firstly, to introduce institutional reform in the various branches of government with the purpose of reducing or increasing the size or resources of various public programmes; and secondly, to implement cut-backs in management which, if successful, may lead to savings.

Of the twin ultimate objectives of the public sector – efficiency in the allocation of socio-economic resources and their equitable distribution across various segments of society – the former has been much more visible than the latter as the major rationale of public sector reforms (Musgrave, 1959, cited by Jan-Erik Lane, 2000)[2].

[2]The World Development Report 2006 discusses this extensively, and has been the focus of recent work by Ravi Kanbur, a former Ghana country rep of the World Bank.

Review of Reform Experiences in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia

To date, international experiences in administrative reform have focused largely on three broad areas.

The first focuses on the redefinition of the role of the state with a view to ensuring that it only performs functions that should be at the level of the state leaving the other functions to sub-national governments, the private sector and voluntary sector. The main issues here are the need for the state to provide an environment that is conducive to private sector development, decentralization of functions and resources to sub-national governments; and privatization, commercialization or liquidation of non-functioning, unnecessary public enterprises.

The second involves the adoption of efficiency measures aimed at enhancing public management performance. The measures include improvement of financial and personnel management systems with an emphasis on increased autonomy for managers (with corresponding responsibility), pay reform (linked to performance) and continued skill development and upgrading.

The third feature is an emphasis on measures aimed at enforcing the accountability of public officials to the wider citizenry through increased transparency and citizen participation in policy making and implementation.

African countries have, over the past three decades undertaken reforms within the framework of the three broad areas identified above. It is important to note that most countries did not approach their reforms by focusing on the above areas sequentially, with evidence of considerable overlap in some countries. In other words some countries will have pronounced element of the first and/or second principles while moving into the third wave in their reform programmes. However, it is still useful to analyze the reform efforts of the countries using the categorization or classification.

First Wave: Structural-oriented Public Service Reforms

The impetus for this first wave of public service reform in Africa were embedded mainly in the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) sponsored by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These public sector reforms sought to make government lean and affordable through cost reduction and containment measures, rationalizing the state machinery, divesting non-core operations, retrenching redundant public sector workers, removing ghost workers from the payroll, freezing employment and adopting measures to control the wage bill and other personnel-based expenditures.

The results of these efforts in the five countries under study were varied and mixed. Ghana for example, was a pioneer in embarking on World Bank and IMF sponsored structural reforms in the 1980s and 1990s. Driven by the economic malaise of the 1970s and early 1980s, the quasi-military Rawlings-led PNDC government launched an Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) in 1983, followed by a structural adjustment programme (SAP) from 1986 to 1991 with support from the IMF and World Bank (Aryeetey and McKay, 2007:147). As the SAPs, the number of central government employees was reduced from 301,000 in 1986 to 260,000 in 1990. Also, by 1990, the government's wage bill had been reduced to 4.5 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Olowu, 2002). The other four countries embarked on similar reforms in the 1990s.

In Uganda, there was a drastic downsizing of government's payroll reduced by more than half, from roughly 320,000 to 147,000. The number of government ministries was reduced from 39 in 1993 to 17 1995. Tanzania, which was about two years behind Uganda in launching serious structural reforms, also reduced its workforce by about 30 percent between 1992 and 1997 from roughly 355,000 to approximately 270,000 (Olowu, 2002). Furthermore, in both countries, as a measure to control the wage bill, there were successful efforts to monetise in-kind pay benefits and consolidate these and non-salary allowances in a transparent gross salary structure. The objective to lower the wage bill however was not realized because the reduction in staff numbers was more than offset by real rises in the pay levels in the previous decade.

In Kenya and Zambia the pace of implementing structural public service/sector reform programmes (PSRPs) has been comparatively slow and less far-reaching. In Kenya, the retrenchment of public servants through a voluntary early retirement scheme, between 1994 and 1996, were reversed through the hiring of teachers during the same period. Fresh efforts were taken from 1999, as part of the revamped public sector reform programme involving adopting targets of retrenching 42,329 employees (about 10 percent of the total public service payroll) and restriction of the wage bill to an affordable level.

In Zambia, the downsizing of the public service only started in earnest in 1997. From then until the beginning of 2000, the total number in government employment fell from 139,000 to 102,000. Therefore, in Kenya and Zambia, macroeconomic and fiscal adjustment driven reform measures remain high on the agenda of the public service reform programmes, despite the fact that SAP driven reform initiatives were formerly launched in the early 1990s.
As part of the structural adjustment reform programmes, the government of Kenya established the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) in the early 1990s. This measure improved domestic revenue (tax) collection to unprecedented levels. Subsequent reductions were a result of deliberate policies to reduce taxation and slowdown economic growth.

On impact of the measures of public service delivery, generally the structural, PSRPs have had little positive direct impact (Olowu, 2002). On the contrary, they have in most instances severely constrained both capacity of the state to perform and affected service delivery adversely. Staff reduction and employment freeze have created a shortage of skilled professionals and technicians throughout the services, and of the frontline workers needed to sustain, improve access to quality public services in such key areas as education, health, and agriculture extension. Even the reduction of such semi-skilled support staff such as drivers, which happened under Kenya's voluntary early retirement scheme, significantly constrained performance of public service managers.

Another example of a structural public service reform programme measure that negatively impacted on service delivery is cost sharing. In Kenya, for example, prior to commencing the cost sharing policy, gross enrolment in primary schools was about 100 percent. Following an aggressive albeit covert, policy of cost sharing, through introduction of fees and other levies, enrolment had dropped to about 70 percent by the end of 1990s[3].

It is also noteworthy that in the five countries many of the gains of structural public service reform programmes measures have been reversed. This is particularly so in the pioneer success cases of Ghana and Uganda. In Ghana, a wage hike in 1992 cancelled out the previous gain on controlling the wage bill which, as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), nearly doubled from 4.5 percent in 1990 to 8 per cent in 1994. Furthermore, by 1996, the size of the public service has risen to 330,000, about a quarter above the level achieved in the late 1980s. In Uganda, public service numbers have also been on the rise since 1998. There are currently about 197,000 and are set to increase significantly above that in the medium term. Also, the measures, to improve transparency of the compensation package were reversed by the reintroduction of non-salary allowances. Even latecomers such as Kenya show the difficulty in sustaining structural public service reform programme interventions.

As earlier indicated the results of downsizing were quickly reversed through recruitment of teachers and rehiring of some of those wrongfully retrenched such as drivers.

In 2001, the programme was stopped altogether. Nonetheless, structural reforms have had some limited enclave successes in improving service delivery in a few instances. Examples of these include the establishment of autonomous revenue authorities in all the countries in the early 1990s.

The results of restructuring and downsizing were accompanied by enhanced private sector participation, especially; the restructuring of the Works ministry has improved road services in Zambia. Also, in the second half of the 1990s too, Zambia had experienced tremendous improvements in the quality of roads following the restructuring of the Ministry of Works and Supply and putting in place of the enabling policy and legal framework under the public service reform programme. The restructuring resulted in the active participation of the private sector in road construction, rehabilitation and maintenance works, which previous were directly undertaken by councils and roads department under the Ministry of Works and Supply. The government's sole and core responsibility now is to set and enforce standards for road use and maintenance, and to provide policy, legal and regulatory framework to ensure the provision of quality roads.

As a result, the condition of roads in terms of road surface and drain has improved from 20 percent in 1995 to 42 percent in the year 2001. The improved road conditions have facilitated trade and commerce within and among provinces and districts. It has also led to a reduction in vehicle maintenance costs for transporters and other motorists (Mataka, 2002).

[3]For detailed discussion on this issue in the Ghanaian context, see for example, the Ghana Human Development Report, 2007

On the whole, however, it is clear that the reforms under the Structural Adjustment Programme have failed to have any meaningful positive impact on the effective delivery of basic services. Two main factors seem to explain this.

First, the programmes' strategies and interventions generally had little or no direct link to improvements in services.
Second, some of the interventions, such as the freeze in recruitment directly undermined capacity building for service delivery.

Lessons Learnt from Implementation of the SAP-Led PSRP in the Five African Countries

Various lessons were learnt from the SAP led PSRP in the five countries
These include:

- The cost containment or cost reduction measures, in themselves, could not lead to sustainable reduction of public expenditure;
- They were having a negative impact on the level and quality of public services by undercutting organisational capacity;
- For a number of reasons including the fact that they were perceived to be externally driven and owned, there was no commitment to them by those involved and little or no public support for them. This highlights the crucial role of the national (or at least government) ownership in shaping prospects for effective policy implementation – an issue which was to form a major principle of the poverty reduction strategy papers that replaced the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s and 1990s.
- As a result, except for those responsible for managing the macro-economic situation, public service executives would seize every opportunity to block or reverse implementation.
- However, the reforms themselves generated opportunities and pressure to take measures to improve service delivery, which provided the launching pad for the next wave of public service reform programme.

Second Wave: Capacity Building for Improved Service Delivery

The foregoing lessons made the countries to realize that weak capacity was the root problems in poor delivery of services.
The next focus of their PSRPs, therefore, shifted from cost reduction and cost-containment to capacity building. This conceptual frame apparently derived from the perceived success in improving and expanding public service delivery in developing countries in the decade after independence through capacity building interventions.

The key interventions in this regard included:

- Enhancing staff skills: this aspect of the reform perpetuated past practices but there was a heightened sense of the need to give more emphasis to on-the-job and short-term training and to manage technical assistance. The systems targeted for improvement included those for human resources, financial and information management; and, also improvement in structures extended in some countries to encompass structural reforms such as governance-oriented decentralization.
- Restoring incentives, both positive and negative, as with a combination of improvements in public sector

wages and the application of sanctions for non-compliance with newly adopted codes of ethical conduct;

Thus, most of the donor-funded public sector reform (PSR) projects in the countries launched in mid-1990s were mainly about capacity building in a more broadly defined sense. The World Bank, for example, provided technical assistance credits to Ghana (1995), Kenya (1994), Tanzania (1999) and Uganda (1995). UNDP was another multilateral agency that actively supported capacity-building based PRPs in all the countries in the later half of the 1990s. The bilateral donors supporting public service reform programme projects were largely involved in capacity-building interventions. United Kingdom's DFID (then ODA), for example, focused much of its support on systems development, especially in financial and human resources management, so that it had such projects in all the countries under study here, with the notable exception of Zambia. Similarly, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) focused its support on development of financial management systems. It had such projects in Kenya and Tanzania. Generally, however, the capacity building-oriented initiatives did not have much visible impact on service delivery. In addition, the capacity building measures were in many instances piecemeal and fragmented. One significant shortcoming was the conspicuous absence of effective and sustainable capacity building.

Even in those countries where major downsizing of public service had taken place, there was limited progress in pay reform. The resources released from retrenchment were not enough to appreciably lift the low salaries of public servants. Consequently, morale and discipline in the public service remained low, and various unethical forms of conduct such as bribery and corruption remained rife and in some cases rising. In the circumstances, service delivery continued to deteriorate in most countries throughout the 1990s. It was the recognition of this deterioration which necessitated the reform initiatives to redesign of the next set of public service reform programmes (PSRPs). This wave of reforms were not at all about sacrifices and pains inflicted by such measures as retrenchments, employment freeze and other cost containment measures. Rather the reforms were broader with emphasis on improving service quality.

The initiative focuses on all service areas concentrated in key domains of public concern. The key outputs and outcomes relate to timeliness and quality of service/customer care and responsiveness to the public. In order to ensure ownership, it is based on leadership and implementation by the ministries themselves. It uses simple business process re-engineering supported with local technical assistance.

The early results are promising with a clear indication that time has been drastically reduced, for example, in Tanzania in regard to the time it takes to process passports, acquire work permits and licenses in several areas. Land titles are even processed much faster (10 days instead of 270). There is also marked improvement in the administration of small loans to women and students (University of Tanzania Consultancy Bureau, 2001).

Third Wave: Focus on Service Delivery Improvement

The next form of public sector reforms

programmes was the focus on service delivery improvement by the five countries. Here, the focus of the countries' PSRPs originated from factors such as:

- The need to demonstrate early results from reform,
- Public demands for transparency and accountability,
- The shift to market economies and private sector-led economic growth, Influence of 'new public management'.

The Desire to Demonstrate Early Results

The first stage of reform (structural reforms) can impose severe social and political pains especially on the downsizing and retrenchment of employees.

Consequently, the majority of the public and most political leaders do not support those reform programmes, and can even be quite hostile to them. In their circumstances, both the political and administrative leaders of the PSRP perceive the need to demonstrate early progress in service delivery improvements in order to achieve and/or sustain crucial public support and political commitment for the overall public sector reform programme (PSRP).

In other words, there was an imperative and urgency to respond to the shortcomings of past PSRPs. This is precisely what happened in Tanzania, which responded with the launch of 'quick wins' service delivery improvement programme which is comparatively technically simple, fast and low-cost to implement; its potential impact can be very high, demonstrating that tangible results can be achieved rapidly.

In the case of Tanzania, the impact at the immigration department (where work permits for expatriate personnel are processed) and at the Ministry of Trade and Industry (where investment certificates are issued) is very noticeable in terms of facilitating foreign investment inflows. At the time, this scheme has a relatively narrow focus.

Public Demand for Transparency, Integrity and Accountability

The global surge of political liberalization, pluralism and enhanced democratic environments in the 1990s has since triggered a demand for good governance. The voices for transparency, integrity and accountability have demanded from the public service not just improved service delivery, but also demonstrable value-for-money in public expenditures, corruption free service delivery, the observance of meritocratic principles in human resources management and greater participation from civil society. It is such pressure that hastened the introduction of the Result-Oriented Management (ROM) component in the Uganda PSRP in 1997. By then, Uganda had already downsized its public service substantially. ROM was geared towards transforming the culture of the new small public service to ensure it delivered services for which it was accountable.

The initial phase of ROM entailed the identification of performance indicators and targets, and annual plans by every public service organization including local government (district) councils. These targets provided the basis for issuing performance contracts to public service managers, who could then effectively be held accountable. Furthermore, against these targets, the organizations and their staff will in the future be allocated resources and be assessed annually.

So far, however, progress in the implementation of ROM has been slower than initially envisaged. There is low implementation capacity, which is underpinned by lack of incentives, including poor pay. Therefore, there is not yet any discernible impact on service delivery.

Nevertheless, the ROM initiative in Uganda represents a unique and pioneering response to the quest for PSRP impact on service delivery by enhancing transparency and accountability of public service organizations and their managers (Olowu, 2002).

The Shift to Market Economies and Private Sector-led Economic Growth

In the five countries, as elsewhere in much of the developing world, the collapse of socialist and communist economies in the early 1990s heralded a shift to market economies (capitalism) and private sector led economic growth strategies. This paradigm shift in the role of the state was well captured and indeed exploited in the definition of the new vision and mission of the second state of public sector reforms programmes which focus on capacity building for improved service. Generally this trend brought about serious attempts by public sector reform programmes in the countries to impact the role of the state in promoting private sector development and even foreign investment.

Influence of 'New Public Management'

The so-called 'New Public Management' (NPM) has been adopted by the countries under discussion here in various ways. Notably, institutional pluralism in the delivery of public services has been embraced in the context of redefining the role of the state. It is in this context that all the countries under discussion here have embarked on decentralization reforms and the corporatization of public service delivery through establishment of executive agencies. These reform programmes have devolution incorporated into them in Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda, and therefore may be expected to have more extensive and profound impact on service delivery in the medium-to-long term. Even in countries with limited decentralization measures such as Kenya, the potential impact on service delivery is discernible.

Even though Kenya's decentralization policy at the time was yet to be fully implemented, the PSRP has a component of local government reform that reflects the recognition and imperative for institutional pluralism in service delivery. In this context, the Kenyan government has introduced Local Authority Transfer Fund, to which it disburses five percent of all its revenues to the local government councils. However, the release of fund is tied to the submission of service delivery improvement plans, and a plan to achieve a medium-term. This simple fiscal decentralization measure appears to be effective. Accountability by the councils has vastly improved, with 100 percent return of proposals and accounts. There is also ample anecdotal evidence of significant improvements in service delivery in many local government councils (Olowu, 2002).

Among the countries, Ghana appears to have pioneered the recourse to the agency model in the search for alternative options for improved public service delivery of services. Thus, for example, Ghana transformed its Rural Water and Sanitation Department to an agency in 1994. Today, this agency is considered to be a model for comparatively effective delivery of rural water and sanitation service in Africa (Koranteng and Amoakoh, 2002).

More recently, all the other countries have embarked on programmes to establish executive agencies. Among the latter countries, Tanzania has at present the more systemic, comprehensive and active programme that is judged to have significantly affected service delivery.

At another level, NPM has introduced in the focus countries such concepts and practices of 'managerialism' as client-orientation and management accountability. In Ghana and Tanzania, 'clients service charters' have been established to commit public organizations and staff to provide better services and ensure that the public can hold MDAs accountable. Service delivery surveys (SDSs), public perception surveys and expenditure tracking studies are other new tools for monitoring and evaluating public service performance, as well as reinforcing accountability in the public service that are widespread across the focus of these countries. In Uganda, public service managers have been moved out of permanent and pensionable, secured tenure to limited (three year) performance contracts.

Further, in Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia, open and more participatory staff appraisal schemes have been introduced. However, the impact of all these on service delivery has not yet been assessed, and it is probably too early to do so.

Policy Implementation Lessons

There is consensus that PSR is more crucial to developing countries than for developed countries for at least three reasons:

First, most developing countries have the problem of heavy public debts, severe resource constraints which impact negatively on both capacity and performance of the public service.

In this context, PSRP is crucial not just in directly improving service delivery but also in prioritizing the roles, functions and programmes and strategic management of the limited available resources.

Second, globalization and information technology revolutions are seen to pose unique challenges to developing states. Public sector reform should identity how the state can facilitate its citizens to withstand the negative consequences of globalization, such as severe competition in international trade, and take advantage of the opportunities arising from globalization and information technologies.

Thirdly, public sector reform in developing countries needs to put in place sustainable strategies which will prevent the loss of the critically skilled manpower such as scientists, science teachers, doctors, nurses, engineers, technicians, accountants and managers among others to developed countries.

Significant Public Service Reform Gains but Limited Impact

Public service reform has contributed to significant gains in all the countries discussed. For example, the structural reforms had made important contributions to streamlining government structures, functions and staff to more affordable and efficient levels. There had also been improved capacity, mainly in terms of skills and systems. However, in each of the countries, the impact of the reforms has so far been limited, especially with regard to improving service delivery.

Problems Hindering Implementation of NPM Reforms

The major problems and constraints to public sector reform identified include: Support for the reform programmes remains narrow and difficult to sustain at all levels, (i.e. those of political leaders, the public at large, and the bureaucrats) for two reasons. First reform programmes such as structural reforms are still stigmatized by conditionalities such as retrenchment, employment freeze and cost-sharing among others. Second, to the extent that the reforms entail change, there are large constituencies who perceive threat and resist change.

Most capacity and resources constraints often hinder implementation of plans and programmes for improvement and expansion of services. Furthermore, in a vicious circle, poor budgeting and financial management practices exacerbate the problems of capacity and resource constraints, and vice versa. There are no effective incentives for performance. Generally, pay remains low for public servants in the countries.

Potential Dangers of Reversals and Inertia

There is evidence that some past gains in public service reform programme implementation have been reversed. This is especially the case with cost-containment measures, as happened with retrenchment in Ghana and in Kenya; pays reform in Uganda; and decentralization of health services in Zambia. Also, inertia or excuses for not sustaining implementation are quite common, as exemplified by pay reform in Tanzania. Therefore, the leaders and managers of PSRPs must remain vigilant to these dangers.

Suggested Policy Responses

New impetus to focus on service delivery improvement

There is new impetus to focus public service reform programmes on improvement in service delivery. This impetus arises from the following:

- the need to demonstrate early results;
- public demands for transparency and accountability;
- the shift to market economies and private sector-led economic growth; influence of 'new public management';
- the need for public service reform programmes to support sector-wide approaches; and
- pursuit of integrated systems approach.

Institutional Pluralism is Imperative for Sustainable Delivery Improvements

The capacities of the public services in the focus and other developing countries will remain relatively low well beyond the foreseeable future. This fact is underscored by two particulars.

Firstly, the public revenue bases in these countries remain narrow and unstable. Secondly, public revenues remain comparatively low, at about 15 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for these countries except Kenya which has about 27 percent. The statistics of revenue mobilization are low compared to those of developed (OECD) countries, where they range about 40-60 percent of GDP.

In the circumstances, public services in developing countries needs to: firstly, keep to critical minimum the range, quantity and quality of services it will commit to provide freely to the public. Secondly, it should mobilize for a widely inclusive and participatory delivery of the essential services. These should be achieved through:

- Decentralization of services to states, regional and local governments, and communities.
- Facilitating and promoting participation of the private sector and other non-governmental agencies in the delivery of such essential social services as education and health.

Strategies should be comprehensive and integrated

Piecemeal and fragmented PSR projects have shown to be rarely effective and their outcomes are generally not sustained. Examples of this include:

- downsizing without capacity building.
- capacity building without pay reform.
- capacity building without service delivery focus.

Accordingly, the countries are all striving either to design or implement comprehensive and integrated PSRPs. Some, like Kenya where the programme extends to cover privatisation and public enterprises, legal sector reform education sector reform among others, may however, have overstretched the comprehensiveness, and made integration even more complex and challenging.

There is consensus on the need to move on fairly broad front, and to integrate various public sector reform, with a focus on improving service delivery. The performance improvement model in Tanzania is an attempt at achieving such integration within conventional public service processes.

Donor assistance should be channelled more effectively

It is smack of a tautology to state that donor assistance remains crucial to the PSRPs in the focus countries. Donor funds have been the predominant source of financing for every facet PSRP in all the countries.

A suggestion that the comparatively low contribution of domestic revenues to PSRP may reflect weak government commitment to the reform programme is not supported by any evidence. PSRPs like other reforms and development programmes in the countries are funded under the development-cum-investment budget (vote), which in all these countries has a majority of donor funding. Therefore, PSRPs are not significantly discriminated against in the allocation of domestic revenues in the governments' budgets.

However, donor assistance could be channelled more effectively. Some of the drawbacks in donor assistance include the following:

- the push for excessive reliance on technical assistance from developed countries and especially their nationals in the case of tied aid. This was in many instances at the expense of ignoring better qualified, more experienced and cheaper local and regional expertise.
- some donors: reliance on enclave Project Implementation Units (PIUs) which they equip and staff at much higher standards then the rest of the public service. While the rationale for this option is familiar, it is observed that PIUs seriously undermined capacity-building and morale across

the public service.

In the context of the above, African countries may want to urge their development partners to:

- Progressively move from project-oriented to a sector-wide approach (SWAPs) in supporting PSRPs. As a first step, donors could move to a 'basket funding' mechanism which is in extensive use in various SWPs in recipient countries. For example the Performance Improvement Fund (PIF) in Tanzania and Zambia represents advanced forms of 'basket funding', part of the government budget.
- Increasingly support enhanced utilization of local and regional consultants and other experts as technical assistance for the PSRPs in SSA countries. Therefore, as much as considered effective, donors' assistance to PSRPs should not be tied to procurement of technical assistance or other services or goods from the donor countries.
- Facilitate improved sustained sharing of experience and knowledge between the designers and implementers of PSRPs. The participation of senior policy advisers, civil servants and civil society actors in these workshops across international borders in Rwanda as a resource person is just one example of facilitating knowledge sharing.

Conclusions and Policy Lessons

The lesson learned from the paper is that, a significant amount of effort has been undertaken since the mid 1980s to promote reform in the institutional architecture of the public sector in the five countries. The forgoing chronicle of PSRPs in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, shows that service delivery improvement has only been a major focus of PSRPs in recent years. Ghana had a Civil Service Performance Improvement programme (CSPIP) since the early 1990s but a recent evaluation of the programme shows that it was largely unsuccessful in terms of improving service delivery. Such attention to service delivery improvements are just starting in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

Furthermore, it is difficult to design, complex to implement and even more difficult to sustain a PSRP that guarantees the right outcomes and impact on service delivery in the long run. Such a programme is necessarily comprehensive and integrated with other public sector reforms and SWPs. Unfortunately, both capacity and experience in these are awfully lacking in the public services of the developing case study countries.

Moreover, while strong, broad-based and sustained support, especially by both political and technocratic leaders are critical to the successful design and implementation of NPM reforms, they are not easy to come by. The legacy of the pains of the SAP-driven structural PSR (i.e. retrenchment, employment freeze, wages freeze, cost-sharing, etc) still makes the general public and political leaders weary of reforms. Also, there are strong vested interests against most changes inherent in the implementation of the reforms. In addition, weak or no incentives undermine ownership and commitment to reform by public servants. Nevertheless, there are promising results both in the design, implementation and impacts of the reforms in the five countries.

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