PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM IN UGANDA (1989-2002): A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

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Being a manuscript presented to AAPAM for publication

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Abstract

The current drive to improve management in governments through public service reform programmes to increase efficiency, effectiveness, and the delivery of quality service to the public (i.e., customers) is common to many developing countries including Uganda. The purpose of this paper is not to evaluate the success or failure of the Public Service reform processes as such but rather to assess the major challenges to this type of exercises using Uganda's case. The paper will address the extent to which the reform programme in Uganda has achieved its objectives so far. The paper will argue that the Uganda Government reformed the Public Service at a most difficult time when its political and socio-economic infrastructure to support its revitalization had totally collapsed. Under these grave circumstances, it is extremely difficult for the Government of Uganda to fully achieve the objectives of the reform programme that it is now implementing.

Introduction

This paper analyses the nature of the Public Service reform programme instituted by the Government of Uganda (GoU) from 1989 to 2002, a period that covers the initiation, diagnosis, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the reform. This entrepreneurial-like reform, driven by the neo-liberalism of the new public management (NPM) or new managerialism principles, aims at improving efficiency and effectiveness in the performance of the Public Service.

The Public Service reform was conceptualised as soon as the National Resistance Movement (NRM) captured state power on January 25th 1986. The NRM's argument for this reform was to improve on its performance and to deliver the promises of the protracted people's revolution. Also, the reform was intended, in an accountable and transparent way, to enhance the performance of the Public Service to achieve good governance and optimum resource utilisation that was in scarcity due to the misrule of the past regimes.

According to Rhodes (1997), the NPM concept has two meanings: one, is the concept of new managerialism and, two, is the concept of new liberal-institutional economics. Managerialism, which was the dominant strand in Britain in 1988, refers to the introduction of private sector entrepreneurial management principles to the public sector. Rhodes (1997) stresses that managerialism means: hands-on professional management, explicit standards and measures of performance; managing by results; value for money management practices; and more recently, closeness to the customer as a focus for service delivery.

The new institutional economics, on the other hand, refers to the introduction of incentive structures such as competition, participatory management, and customer care into the public service provision. It stresses: desegregating bureaucracies; greater competition through contracting-out; and quasi-markets. Market competition is exemplified by introducing competitive provision of services like contracting-out projects, and non-core activities and programmes to local and international contractors. These services were hitherto being provided by direct labour of public employees in a monopolistic way that was inefficient, uneconomical with no meaningful impact on the citizens' welfare, and devoid of consumer choice.

This paper, which focuses on four of the ten principles espoused by Osborne and Gaebler (1992), and that agrees with Rhodes' (1997) managerialism and new institutional economics, cuts across most Public Service reforms in Uganda. These four include: 1) Promotion of competition in service provision; 2) Measurement of performance based on outputs/outcomes; 3) Redefinition of internal/external clients as customers; and 4) Decentralisation of authority to enhance participatory management.

As a result of the Economic Recovery Programs initiated in 1987, which entailed reforms characterised by the restructuring of the Public Service including Ministries, Police, Judiciary, Prisons, Teaching, Health, and Military-based Commissions, there has been acclaims by the Government and donor agencies about the success story of administrative reforms in Uganda. Thus, Uganda has been used as an example of a success story of institutional and economic reforms in Sub-Saharan Africa, apart from South Africa that is considered to be at a higher level of public sector management (Apter and Rosberg, 1994).

It is, however, worth noting that despite the so-called successful reforms, Uganda remains one of the poorest countries in the world with a high debt folio, low standard of living, inefficient service delivery, poor regional distribution of services, very high levels of corruption, and underdeveloped industrial and agricultural base. This malaise is coupled with an environment that does not attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) on sustainable basis (World Bank 1991). The country's national budget to date depends 52% on donor support, an extremely high percentage which shows lack of sustainable planning and socio-economic development.

Theoretically, the NPM is situated within neo-liberalism advocated by Osborne and Gaebler (1992) where market-led competition with regulated delivery of services is regarded as a panacea for development. Although globalisation is a reality even in public administration, the challenge is to make it beneficial to developing countries like Uganda by making competition in the delivery of public services more economic, efficient, effective, value for money oriented, and transparent and accountable to the people. Because the resources that are spent on public sector reforms are enormous, they need to be critically evaluated as a sign of emphasising optimum resource use through accountable and transparent mechanisms that may fuel the needed development. The Public Service is viewed as the institutional, structural, managerial and environmentally influenced mechanism through which the state or governments, by virtue of public trust, administer and deliver services to the citizens.

The focus of the paper is that given the importance of the public sector and the attendant managerial reforms, there is critical cause to understand the intervening processes and their outcomes to sustain the development process. However, despite the continued implementation of the reform, the paper argues that there is lack of a clear understanding of whether the principles of NPM are relevant to improved performance of public service delivery in Uganda. The fears of reform being captured by the elite to sustain their interests at the expense of the public who have put trust in public institutions needs to be well explained in the proper perspective of public sector reforms. The institutional, financial and structural capabilities for reforms also need to be addressed.

The Influence of Liberal Economic Theory on Public and Private Management

According to Owen (1998), the liberal theories on the role of government emphasises what governments should do and not do to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery. The Keynesian economic theories were popular in the post-war and post-colonial eras, where the welfare of citizens was regarded as a politically sensitive issue that could not be handled by weak, undercapitalised and foreign dominated private sector especially in developing countries. Governments took it upon themselves to use instruments such as subsidy, provision of goods and services, production operations and regulations to pursue allocative, distributive and stabilisation policies.

However, the global trend is that provision of goods and services can be privatised, while governance cannot. What governments should do is a fundamental question that has dominated political philosophy for decades and is being enriched by the economic theories on government's role in modern globalized societies. The role of governments can be visualised on the continuum of the far right, with other things being constant that favour absolute minimum government involvement in the economy; and the far left that favour total government involvement in the economy. The former prefer that the individuals should be left to make their own economic decisions, while the latter prefer that only collective action and ownership or intervention by the state can solve problems and inequalities thought to be inherent in capitalism. Viewed from the Marxist theoretical perspective, the state eventually withers away thus bringing the continuum to full circle.

There is apparent consensus that the role of government should be limited to providing economic infrastructure, provision of various collective goods and services, resolution and adjustment of group conflicts, maintenance of competition, protection of natural resources and accessibility to resources with stabilisation of the economy. The concern here include the types of goods and services the government should complement the private sector, the asset base that should be under government and the number of the workforce that should be employed by the government.

While attempting to answer these concerns, there is need for relevant considerations in the process of attempting to infuse the principles of private sector management to what has hitherto been a public sector management 'empire' dominated by neo-bureaucratic principles. Owen (1998) further observes that the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and reforms spearheaded by donors in developing countries are indicative of the need to reform public sector administration and management. The packages and conditionalities imposed upon developing countries should be remedied over time in order to sustain reforms within a consistent and relevant policy framework.

The Role of the State and the Public Service in Africa

The state in Africa has roots in the dual role of the colonial state that protected the interests of the African people and the powerful world economy monopolised by colonialists. The post-colonial state could not shade off easily its colonially-oriented philosophical foundation. Consequently, the post-colonial elite found themselves operating under the limited interests and resources of the state, thus turning themselves into another "neocolonial bureaucracy" with the only difference that they were local politicians and bureaucrats thriving at the expense of their own people (Wunsch and Olowu, 1990).

For many years, the mercantilist school of thought was a benevolent entity without which the prospects of directing people-oriented advocacy for the state development management was at stake. The state was propelled as a champion of development in antithesis of the distorted performance of markets that were largely unregulated. The inadequacies of the over-centralised state equally led to the promotion of markets by neo-liberal scholars and practitioners who pointed out its predatory nature and projected it as more of an obstacle to development as it benefited a few elite at the expense of the poor majority. Also, the state was justified to intervene in the economies of developing countries for economic reasons, but more so for political and social pressures such as to control resources, benefit the masses and the need to remedy market inefficiencies due to poor infrastructure, communication gaps, and lack of entrepreneurship and capital.

The inadequacies and incompetencies of public officials in managing the Public Service and the existing distortions such as corruption, inefficient monopolies, inflation, low capitalisation and lack of empowerment of workers did not augur well within the narrow nationalisation policies. Africa, and Uganda in particular, did not escape these contradictory roles of the market and the state; hence, the economic and political distortions that have affected all other spheres of life especially the majority rural and urban poor who subsist below the poverty line. The state's peculiar role to rationally allocate public resources with optimum efficiency and effectiveness based on demand was later challenged by advocates of free market economy and private sector-led development (Owen, 1998).

Thus, the trend in the 1970s tended to be skeptical of the role of the centralised state as being central to developmental change. Instead, it was viewed as promoting collective energies within society with more emphasis on decentralisation and participatory management with varying degrees of success and failure. This is why Champy (1995) believes that the only way to sustain effective and efficient delivery of services is the full promise of re-engineering management as the main force behind institutional success. The trend of re-engineering operational processes and organisational structures produces results, but more so if reinforced by changing management work. This includes the way we think about work, organisation, inspiration, deployment, facilitation, measurement and reward for value adding work. In addition, there is need to emphasize managerial accountability and transparency that focuses on self-managers, processes and people oriented managers, expert managers and senior managers who participate in formulating and implementing government policies.

Furthermore, there is a general thinking among scholars and practitioners in management and administration that the old principles of management need to be overhauled as human work is distancing itself from machine-like operational environment to close interactive organisational networking at the global, macro and micro levels of the economy and the need for knowledge-based management (Drucker, 1992; Champy, 1995). Contrary to the centralist management style that tends to be non-responsive and wasteful, there is a worldwide trend towards the introduction of NPM in several public institutions. The aim of new managerial style is to make public institutions more efficient and responsive to the demands of the customers and therefore more transparent and accountable to realise value for money. The key elements of NPM are hands-on professional management, explicit standards and measures of performance, a shift towards greater competition in the public sector, greater parsimony in resource use and, perhaps most significantly, the development of the internal markets with emphasis on customer care and performance management (Carter, 2000).

Thus, the poor performance of public institutions in Uganda necessitated the implementation of reform programmes to improve their management, operations and structural performance. In Uganda, the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) were first muted in 1981 and when the economy was growing by about 2.6 percent, the growth did not take root because of political conflicts that resulted in the take-over of political power by the present (NR)Movement Government. The Government gradually appreciated the potential virtues of economic stabilisation for development. The principle aims of the 1987 SAPs components of rehabilitating the economy, promotion of growth, stabilisation of the economy, reduction of inflation and minimisation of the balance of payments crisis, became the main focus of economic policy in Uganda. The relevant public institutions therefore had to be re-invented to conform to the policy objectives to address the national concerns of development and also the donor conditions for further financial support. The questions as to whether the reforms have delivered the intended objectives and the factors responsible for such achievement are still largely unanswered. It is this gap that the next section devotes itself.

History of the Public Service In Uganda

The Public Service, being the operational arm of the Government, is charged with the task of analysing and making decisions, administering public policy, influencing all development efforts, and regulating the balance between state power and state capacity to achieve socio-economic development.

The performance of the Public Service in Uganda has its roots in the colonial era that began effectively in 1900. This was an era where the public servants were foreigners to Africa. Serving as representatives of the colonial countries, they were used to consolidate the colonial rule. The high echelons of the Public Service were monopolised by colonial agents who served interests that were mostly opposed to the interests of the 'natives'. The post-colonial Public Service that was supposed to serve the citizenry inherited the culture of serving narrow interests that were retained by the new Public Service elite as a basis for their survival.

The strong wave for post-colonial governments to have centralised states to fund institutions responsible for the delivery of public services exacerbated the contradictions of the capacity of government to do business at the expense of the private sector, the latter being dominated by foreigners. The economic crisis of 1973 fuelled by the global oil crisis, low agricultural prices, increased debt burdens and decreased service delivery in terms of quality and quantity, led to further questioning of the capacity of the Public Service institutions to deliver goods and services to the public in a cost effective manner (World Bank 1991).

Worst of all, the gains that the Public Service in Uganda had enjoyed from 1962-1971 were further eroded when dictator Idi Amin Dada took over state power in a *coup de tat* that toppled Apollo Milton Obote on 25th January 1971. This collapse of the public administration machinery was quickly followed by economic decay, civil strife, and political instability.

Among the problems in the Public Service as diagnosed around the 1987 when the NRM came to power, were difficulties in the delivery of social services to the citizens, inefficient functions of Central Government, over-centralised Public Service and generally compromised service delivery by corrupt management of the ministries and public enterprises. Further, the Public Service was bloated or over-expanded without justification, run down in terms of training, tools and equipment, poorly remunerated employees, and characterised by pretence to work through 'moonlighting' and 'sunlighting'. The reform interventions were also envisaged to automatically correct the existing distortions and poor performance. In sum, when the NRM came to power, it found the Public Service that had in the 1960s been hailed as the most efficient and effective in Africa south of the Sahara to be inefficient and demoralised (Ministry of Public Service, Civil Service Reform, 1994).

Thus, the NRM government promised a fundamental change in the management of public affairs through the Ten-Point Programme (this programme has since been changed to fifteen) that, among other things, aimed at building and consolidating democracy, building an independent and integrated economy while fighting corruption at all levels of society. Hence, the Civil Service Reform Programme (CSRP) initiated in 1988 and operationalised in 1989 with the setting up of the Public Service Review and Reorganisation Commission (PSRRC) under the CSRP, heralded one of the fundamental changes in handling public affairs and policy formulation in the country. The desire for reform has been carried out with four distinctive macro-and-micro level initiatives, which are as follows: a) Constitutional reform was designed to democratise the national political system (Constituent Assembly was elected in March, 1994); b) Decentralisation was designed to increase the powers of democratic participation of local authorities and their empowerment for self-determination (Decentralisation Statute, 1999); c) Liberalisation and privatisation was designed to reduce state control over the economy within the macro economic stabilisation, adjustment framework and market-led competition (PERDS Statute, 1993); and d) the CSRP which aimed at redefining the role of government, rationalise and streamline Government structures, eliminate redundant staff, restructure management systems and incentive structures for improved performance in public service delivery.

As much as the Public Service Reform started in 1989 in earnest, it was re-launched in 1997 to bring it in line with the provisions of article 175 of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda. The enormous number of 255 recommendations for reforms which were adopted after a diagnostic review in 1989 indicated the gravity of the problems the GoU was faced with to reform and turn around the performance of the Public Service. Between 1992 to 1997, the GoU streamlined and reduce the government ministries from thirty-eight (38) to twenty-two (22). However, this was still seen as being high and containing a number of duplications. The staff numbers were reduced from 320,000 on the payroll to nearly half. The functions of the centre were to some extent devolved through the Decentralisation Statute No. 15 of 1995, the Local Governments Act, 1997, and the 1995 Constitution. Payroll and establishment controls were put in place, most benefits were monetized and take-home-pay was modestly increased. The effects of these reforms based on the principles of new managerialism, are yet to be fully understood and appreciated in relation to the performance of the Public Service.

Nevertheless, the need for the reform of the Public Service (1997-2002) is indicative of the identification of the short falls of the earlier reforms. The main tenets of the programme were to develop the Public Service that delivers timely, high quality and appropriate services aimed at the development and facilitation of growth of a wealth creating private sector. To operationalise this mission, the components of the reform programme were as follows: Enhanced management of the Reform; Enhancing efficiency and effectiveness; Management information and control systems; Developing human resources; Time management; Organisational discipline; and Good governance.

The Strategic Report of the Ministry of Public Service (2000) alluded to these reforms and concluded that "the profile of the Public Service has changed for the better, but what remains is to keep the momentum of the reforms…" Despite this ululation, there is need to analyse this reform process by situating it within the economic, social, political and administrative environments that influence the way the government machinery works.

The New Managerialism and Public Service Reform in Uganda

The NPM and entrepreneurial government share a concern with competitive markets, customers, and outcomes. This transformation of the public sector involves "less government" or ("less rowing") but "more governance" (or more steering) (for these phrases, see Osborne and Gaebler 1992: 34). Whether the objectives of the new managerial reform in Uganda are being successfully implemented or not is the central concern of this paper.

It ought to be mentioned that Government is a system that is used to making legally binding decisions and, to some extent, implement them collectively in the public interest. It is further observed that civilised societies cannot function effectively without effective government; an effective government determines the levels of development of any society in an organised way. Hence, governmental systems can be improved upon to tap the useful potentials of public servants who are hitherto entrapped in a mesh of patronised bureaucracies. However, it may not be justified to exonerate some public servants from being blamed for systems in which they participate in institutionalising and sustaining their narrow interests that are opposed to the general public interest.

It is further observed that neither traditional liberalism nor traditional conservatism has much relevance to the problems that governments face today. The problem of relevance may lie in juxtaposing the real priorities of what governments can do (i.e., steer) against what the private sector can do (i.e., to row). This can only be feasible when governments are re-invented for effective and efficient service delivery to exist at affordable costs that are incentives to development. The entrepreneur in government should link resources in new ways to maximise productivity and effectiveness, thus radically reshaping their managerial values, functions, processes and outcomes in an accountable and transparent way. The new ways should minimise threats and seek new opportunities by exploiting them. Thus, Government institutions should be innovative, flexible and responsible organisations.

Drucker (1993) observes that to build entrepreneurial management in the Public Service institutions may be the foremost political task of this generation. There is dire need for social innovation in public institutions. Although there may be ends that governments can achieve, they cannot be achieved because government lacks the means or more so the knowledge of how to do it. This poses a challenge on how governments can become more public friendly and how challenges and solutions for sustainable development can be met.

The nature of the existing centralised bureaucracies is the reason behind the preference for institutions that are lean, decentralised and innovative. Indeed, there is a genuine need for flexible, and adaptable bureaucracies that can learn new ways to face challenges brought about by changed conditions. The need for competition, making of informed choices, customer care performance, medium measurement and other non-bureaucratic mechanisms to get things done effectively and as creatively as possible, became issues of public policy advocacy and scholarly debate.

These public policy concerns were done to review the kind of governments that developed during the industrial era, with their sluggish centralised bureaucracies, their preoccupation with rules and procedures/regulations and their hierarchical chain of command that no longer works well in the modern world. Although these traditional institutions achieved a lot of great things during their time, somewhere along the way they became blocked, wasteful and ineffective. This was to the extent that when the world changed, the bureaucracies failed to change with it.

Specifically, the hierarchical and centralised bureaucracies designed in the 1930s or 1940s simply do not function well in the rapidly changing, information rich, knowledge-based, technological society and the global economy of the 1990s. Because the organisations of the 1990s are big, cumbersome, expensive and extremely difficult to turn around, they need to be reformed. Gradually, new public institutions, including private ones and non-governmental organisations (third sectors), are coming into the limelight with better organisational methodologies, objectives and outcome evaluation. The reforms in government now focus on: decentralising authority; flattening hierarchies; focusing on quality; and being close to their customers – all in an effort to remain competitive in the new global market place.

There are also voluntary not-for-profit organisations that are alive with new initiatives such as new partnerships that blossom overnight between business and education, between for-profits and not-for-profit organizations and between public and private sectors. Virtually all institutions are struggling at once to adapt to some massive sea of change thus striving to become more flexible, more innovative, more entrepreneurial, more competitive and more customer or client oriented.

It is argued that the ultimate consumer should be able to make informed choice between alternative service providers and therefore be used as the instrument of market-testing power. There is a fundamental problem with the Public Service where choices of citizens are by nature limited, although this can be linked to providing a clients' charter to communicate and maximally standardise the citizen's expectations from particular institutions. The means of redress or sanctions for non-delivery of services should be addressed through regulatory provisions and conducting customer surveys to have their input in decision-making and also in evaluating performance expectations or pre-set standards. The Public Service needs to be motivated to be more responsive to the needs of the citizens.

The fundamental issue of applying commercial pressures to Public Services should not cause the providers to concentrate on the easy cases which are cheap to handle without costs to the citizens' priority needs. It is observed that Governments are not meant to be business-like. However, under political pressure, dramatic changes are occurring in the management and administration of public services. These are forces for the good, if they are properly managed. The Public Service should be able to progressively improve the quality of their service delivery to the benefit of all if they are well sustained and planned. Because the public's confidence in government is low, government's new philosophy of entrepreneurial government, where an entrepreneur (in public or public sector) uses resources in new ways to maximise productivity and effectiveness, has to be enhanced to improve performance.

Jordan (1992) observes that there is need for better government and not more or less. In addition, he notes that there is no need to get rid of the public sector because it can be transformed into a better institutional culture. This makes the case for not running the government as a business. Indeed, the apparent ignorance or failure of the public servants to effectively run the Public Service machinery should not be construed as the failure of the traditional administrative system; the failures could be as a result of other endogenous factors that need to be addressed in their own context. Hence, even competition among individuals or organisations for effective performance has its own problems that need to be clearly understood. Therefore, in order to understand reform we must understand the institutions that we are seeking to change (Rhodes 1997).

To achieve efficiency in the Public Services, the World Bank (2000) seeks to encourage competition and markets; private public enterprises, reform of the Civil Service by reducing on staffing, introducing budgetary discipline, decentralising administrative structure and encouraging greater use of NGOs. These reforms equate good governance in public administration and management to liberal democracy. Irrespective of the short-falls in reform, Rhodes (1997), observes that many commentators accept that new managerialism and agencification has had significant impact on the Public Service culture, although the tendency to exaggerate the degree of changes that work along similar lines of private business remains possible, if not inevitable. This calls for the need to distinguish carefully between the intentions, the network and the reality of administrative reforms.

However, the re-invention of government should be seen as an evolutionary and not a one-time paradigm shift that may turn out to be catastrophic. The relationships between mainstream Civil Service and agencies may become fatal over time. There is need to adjust to new methods of service delivery with the attendant institutional and regulatory support to the new approaches. Although markets are here to stay, customer focused quality should not ignore transaction costs that have to be avoided as part of the reform objective.

For the purposes of this paper, the following interventions that are central to the managerial reforms in the Public Service in Uganda will be addressed: promotion of competition in the provision of services, measurement of performance based on outputs/outcomes, redefinition of internal/external clients as customers, and decentralization of authority to enhance participatory management. Each of these interventions will be treated in turn.

Promotion of competition in service provision

Osborne and Gaebler (1992) observe that competition in the public sector versus monopoly is the real issue other than merely private versus public. On the advantages of competition, they found out that without competition only about 50% of useful time is optimally exploited. Competition responds to the needs of customers that maximizes time use, reduces costs and increases public scrutiny of the quality of services offered. Competition unleashes improvement where monopolies were clogged through bureaucracy. It is further observed that competition rewards innovation, while monopoly stifles it. The morale of public employees and their pride is enhanced by competition as better working attitudes and methods are resultantly more satisfying, let alone the threats to job security due to the turmoil of change especially for non-performers.

The varieties of competition include: contracting-out, load shedding, procurement, contracting without recreating private monopolies, internal competition, improved accountability systems like procedures, and avoidance of inequitable outcomes. These issues bring out a lot of management outcomes that involve promoting the good side of competition, while taking its weaknesses with regard to handling public welfare issues in a just and politically sensitive manner that safeguards the constitutional rights of the citizens. However, Jordan (1992) argues that private business is not always more efficient than government. He asserts that the importance in distinction is not public versus private but monopoly versus competition with the former being derided as waste and duplication, a point that reminds us of the conflicting demands we have in organisations. It is admitted that competition can bring out bad as well as the good in management. More fundamentally, competition should not succeed at the expense of the workers and public welfare because of the profit motive *per se*. Otherwise, government will be questioned for its value and ultimate reporting to the public.

Hence, the notion that government should not always attempt to deliver using old style bureaucracy is correct but should be qualified. The trouble about the real world is that it involves trade-offs among desirable goals, for example, we want services that are cheap to deliver but with high standards; we want organisations that learn but are reliable; we want them flexible but predictable; we want low salaries, but well motivated staff. These views are inevitably contradictory in practice, principle and theory.

Further, markets are normally judged by their efficiency in producing and distributing goods and services. There is great need to have a broader assessment of markets and the lessons learnt from them. In addition, the mere defence of the market in purely efficiency terms is inadequate. Although markets are excellent devises for the efficient production of goods and services, they lack the special consideration mechanism for human development; although they can contribute to where governments fail, the markets provide the context, extent and methods of competition. Competition is efficient or fails depending on the success of markets and regulatory environment.

In sum, for whatever the problems of introducing competition in government it is there to stay in a fast moving market place as fewer and fewer people go to the public institutions for service delivery. If the public institutions are to survive then either they compete or die as more better quality alternatives will leave out those who cannot afford the alternatives.

Under the Movement regime, the GoU is making serious attempts at introducing competition in the way public goods and services are being delivered. The commonest method now in use is through contracting-out of services such as roads, street parking and garbage or waste management. Although contracting-out has produced some positive effect on the way these services are delivered to the consumers, especially regarding efficiency, and effectiveness, a lot still remains to be done in terms of their quality and quantity. It can be noted that there is still 'air' supply of goods and services, systemic corruption whereby tenders are awarded either to firms that are not in existence (briefcase firms) or do substandard work. Worst of all, fiscal and bureaucratic accountabilities are flouted with impunity without any heads rolling. Thus, efficiency and effectiveness in the way services are supplied is quite questionable in the Ugandan case.

Measurement of Performance based on Outputs/Outcomes

The rationale for measuring performance is varied and includes the principle of accountable public institutions to ensure that money has been spent as agreed and in accordance with procedures, and efficient use of resources. To operationalise accountability, there is need to establish how money was spent, comparing costs to ensure efficiency and relating effectiveness to intended objectives and outputs, and provision of equitable services is also a measure of accountability (Norman 1997).

The power of performance measurement is expressed in the slogan which states that "what is measured gets done as measuring makes people responsive to change in their values in the work place. It clarifies goals that make organisations accountable to the public about their service expectations". Another important aspect of performance measurement in the public sector is that if results are not measured, it is difficult to tell success from failure. In fact, it is dangerous for the Public Service to keep on spending the hard earned public expenditure budgets without an idea, especially by the executives who are the major decision-makers, about how success or failure in the achievement of the expenditure objectives entails for the institution.

Once the performance measurement methods are in place, the information may be used in three ways. First, institutions are able to link pay to performance orientation. Second, is the use of information as a management tool to continually improve their results. Third, and most importantly, tying spending to results and outcomes instead of inputs and reduced costs *per se*.

There is also the issue of what is being managed which brings in the three "Es", namely; Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness. Norman (1997) refers to economy as the cost of the inputs used economically. He refers to effectiveness as producing results, while efficiency is concerned with the cost of producing results. Equity has also to be considered as it imputes the quality of results in the whole scheme of performance measurement. All round measurement may be impossible if it is not focused. Nevertheless, reporting of measurement efficiency is an essential part of public accountability. It is also important to recognize that managers operate in a political, social, and economic environment that should not be ignored.

Good performing organizations should be characterised by the following indicators in terms of effectiveness and efficiency: timely service delivery, for example, through prompt response to correspondence; completion of assignments in time; having desired outputs with minimum cost; minimal or no complaint from the client or public; putting in place conducive working environment; putting in place optimal organisational structures, and staffing norms; and keeping the service well informed of any new developments in the service.

The most common performance enhancement strategy has been some merit or bonus system for high performing individual and/or groups. The traditional approach was Management By Objectives (MBO) based on importance of financial incentives to improve performance in productivity - i.e., performing more with less. Quality management emphasises empowerment of the employees to use data to pinpoint problems, gives tools to isolate them and their root causes, develops solutions, and evaluates them for implementation.

It has to be noted that measuring effectiveness is difficult, but this can be reinforced by performance management systems which have clear objectives, targets and outputs whose variables are shown on a continuum of either improvement or not, and to deduce even the narrower concept of efficiency. Also, managers have to balance the contradictory perceptions of different stakeholders about the type of services and how they should be achieved.

From a participatory management perspective, another rational for performance measurement is to take into account stakeholder expectations. Public managers are sometimes living in contradictory environment where the satisfaction of one stakeholder may annoy another. Hence, the more powerful stakeholders may benefit as they have greater influence at the expense of the less powerful. The need to manage for results brings in the question of value for money as a guiding principle for people to comply with standards, targets and pro-active actions that speed up service delivery.

The measurement of performance is based on organizational and individual performance, with the assumption that the targets by which individuals are assessed must aggregate into the performance outputs of the institution as a whole. The problem arises with decentralized management where individual managers are free to decide their own priorities that may deviate from the organization's objectives and intended outcomes.

One other typical performance measurement is economy through ensuring savings in budget allocation. However, this may not give a fair picture of the actual use of resources that benefit the relevant stakeholders. A more sophisticated way of how money is well spent is to ask how much was produced in exchange for what is spent. It is important to note that reductions in budgets may not necessarily mean increased productivity or cost reduction as other interventions may have distorted the performance value and thereby measurement.

Allocative efficiency is also measured in a more subjective way as optimum benefits are neither scientifically determined nor by political expediency. The measure of effectiveness is equally difficult as desired results are fluid and keep on changing. The changes in state and behaviour are better targets for measuring effectiveness using the before and after effects. This assumes that there is agreement on the outcomes which is sometimes pragmatically difficult to gain consensus on. There is a problematic lack of tracking of results in government that leads to unnecessary red tape. The objectives of minimal costs *per se* can increase costs as red-tape and lack of performance measurement in reverse lead to further burdens to government. The focus on inputs other than outputs is a dangerous management focus as it does not create systems to monitor and evaluate value for money programmes.

Pollit, Birchall and Putman (1998), observe that benchmarking in the Public Service is not clear as it exists in quasi-market or purely monopoly situations. However, benchmarking enhances commitment to improving standards and developing new technologies, quality of information provided to the public and to set performance standards for subordinate bodies as guidelines for accountability and transparency. Benchmarking may be characterised by various categories such as minimal, average and maximum standards in order to evaluate their outcomes realistically and create room for further improvement. Disparities in organisational capacities, differentiated clientele expectations and deciding on why and what characteristics are important may make benchmarking in public services difficult. In the Public Service, benchmarking is said to be useful when process management and policy and strategy development are actively used. Benchmarking is as a result of pressure to improve performance and it involves identifying best performers and comparing objectives, boundaries of processes and critical success factors.

According to Armstrong (2000), it is said that 'if you can't measure it, you can't manage it' and 'what gets measured gets done'. Certainly, performance cannot be improved upon until one knows what the present performance is in order to anticipate the future. The process of managing performance begins by defining expectations in terms of targets, standards and capability requirements. But this can only be achieved if there are agreed upon and reliable performance measures.

Measurement is an important concept in performance management. It is the basis for providing and generating feedback, it identifies where things are going well to provide the foundation for building further success, and it indicates where things are not going so well, so that corrective action can be taken. In general, measurement provides the basis for answering two fundamental questions: 'Is what is being done worth doing? 'Has it been done well, Or if not well, why so?'

Indeed, the greater the emphasis on measurement and quantification, the more likely the subtle, non-measurable elements of the task will be sacrificed. Quality of performance frequently, therefore, loses out to quantification. Hence, the criteria for performance measures should: Be related to the strategic goals and measures that are organisationally significant and drive business performance; Be relevant to the objectives and accountabilities of the teams and individuals concerned – i.e., they are only effective if they are derived from statements of accountabilities and/or are based on well researched capability frameworks; Focus on measurable outputs, accomplishments and behaviours that can be clearly defined and for which evidence can be made available; Indicate the data or evidence that will be available as the basis for measurement; Be verifiable – i.e., provide information that will confirm the extent to which expectations have been met; Be as precise as possible in accordance with the purpose of the measurement and the availability of data; Provide a sound basis for feedback and action; and, be comprehensive, covering all the key aspects of performance, so that a family of measures is available, bearing in mind that 'effective performance is measured not merely by the delivery of results (however outstanding) in one area, but by delivering satisfactory performance across all the measures'.

In response to the concerns about public service measurement values, Kaplan and Norton (1992), clarify that in the past performance measurements in private companies had focused on indicators of operational performance in form of qualitative financial measurements that were appropriate to them. These indicators indicated little about analysis and seemed to be the norm, while destroying the future value and need for sustainability. The authors argue that there is a widespread urge to use a wide range of qualitative and quantitative measures to improve the manager's ability to assess the success of a strategy and identify necessary performance trade-offs. The authors recommend indicators that provide managers with a feedback for financial, innovation, learning and customer perspectives. This calls for a balanced set of indicators that does not negate performance improvements in one area at the expense of performance in other areas. Short-term improvement may degrade long-term objectives and values. A holistic strategy needs to be communicated to all levels in an institution. It involves key factors being integrated in the evaluation process of public services thus enhancing logically consistent monitoring and evaluation based on financial, internal business, innovations, learning and customer perspectives.

Performance assessment under Results-Oriented-Management (ROM) should suggest best practices and should target key outputs characterised by high-level objectives, outputs and performance indicators. These characteristics should relate to their contribution to the quality of the final product and building commitment to perform effectively.

Five categories of performance criteria are being applied in Uganda. First, is the measurement of high-level objectives. This measurement involves the extent to which objectives are outcome-oriented, specific, measurable, focussed on manageable number of outputs, clarity of actions and explicit linkage to outputs. Second, is clarity of outputs. The outputs need to be clear, time bound, prioritised at the highest level, monitorable and comprehensively tied with the mission and within the control of the implementer. Third, is the relevance of Performance Indicators (PIs). The PIs should be valid for each output, balanced by taking into various dimensions, sufficient to be meaningful, bear targets that are realistic and not arbitrary. The procedures for performance monitoring such as reporting, review and data capabilities should be clearly specified. Fourth, whether the plan preparation process is satisfactory. High-level involvement in the planning process, involvement of stakeholders (implementers), reflection of plan in the ministry's policy statement and timely submissions are also evaluated. The plan should factor in balanced set of measures such as combining quantity, quality, client satisfaction, milestone and process time measures where applicable. Key areas for improvement should be taken to account after best guesses. Fifth, is the collection of information and/or data. Information should be collected from daily operations of the organisation, from financial systems, computerised management information systems, regular external reports, customer satisfaction surveys (not quarterly); and sample or one-off surveys (Uganda Bureau of Statistics).

Steps in data collection include listing all performance indicators in Annual Performance Plan (APP), identifying data type, identifying sources of data, checking whether the data/information available, how often it is collected and how easy it is to collect the data, determining who in the Department will be responsible for data collection, tabulating and analysing the information, deciding how often the data needs to be collected, and discussing the data collection plan with other Departments that are data sources to solicit their co-operation.

The purpose of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is experience-focused learning for improved service delivery, planning and allocating resources optimally. It clarifies, and strengthens awareness and interest in developing communities by focusing on results. The various methods, tools and approaches are clarified from the point of view of purpose, use, advantages, costs, skills, time required and key references.

According to the World Bank (2002), performance indicators are measures of inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes and impacts for development projects, programmes, or strategies. The indicators enable managers to track progress, demonstrable results and take corrective action to improve service delivery and management decision-making by key stakeholders. Performance indicators assist to set up key targets and assessing progress, identification of problems for corrective action and indicating levels of reviews of performance. On the positive side, performance indicators are an effective means to pursue progress towards objectives and also facilitation of benchmarking comparisons between different areas and activities, something that has been hitherto difficult in the public sector. On the other hand, poorly clarified or even too many performance indicators without accessible data, may not be practical and therefore time consuming. The relevant data collection and data analysis skills are therefore necessary in the conceptualisation and use of performance indicators.

The problem of what to measure in order to constitute the criteria that is agreeable in the Public Service delivery remains a complex problem. It appears that every profession, including politicians, view the delivery of public services from different perspectives and generally from their historical and contemporary backgrounds. However, to scientifically evaluate the performance of public services, there is a dire need to identify key performance areas from a holistic point of view. Indeed, the performance evaluation of the Public Service undergoing reform should primarily be based on managerial competencies – an area glaringly deficient in Uganda today. This involves identifying the major managerial competencies that have shaped or misaligned Public Service performance.

In Uganda, the performance standards are being set out in various public institutions using the results oriented and quality management principles. The time, quantity, quality, customer satisfaction, response rates, stakeholder participation, outcomes, outputs and other methods of assessment of performance are being popularised. However, in Uganda, many government officers resent the idea of performance measurement because they have not learnt it properly or lack commitment and training. This resentment leads to the adoption of crude performance benchmarks that remain on paper, as they end up not being implemented.

In Uganda, the Output Based Budgeting (OBB) is also now an important tool in performance management of scarce public resources. This tool is based on results and total quality management as effective tools in forcing organizations to act on the performance information that is available to them. It is a mission-driven budget with clearly delineated outputs and outcomes for early tracking of a transparent and accountable way of value for money programmes and projects.

Finally, in Uganda, performance measurement is being emphasized through quality controls as well as the implementation of ROM through monthly, quarterly, and annual reports to various key monitoring, and supervision institutions of the Government. This is also supported by OBB based on a sector-wide evaluation approach.

Redefinition of Internal/External Clients as Customers

Osborne and Gaebler (1992) observe that the driving force behind Government performance should be meeting the needs of the customer and not of the bureaucracy. The customer is identified as the only one who determines quality on the assumption that he or she is informed about the correct choices, has the purchasing power, and the alternatives are on a timely basis available for decision-making. The satisfaction one derives from being attended to can be enormous.

Customer-driven management is said to reduce on bureaucratic arrogance (common in Uganda) that leads some people to ignore government services for better alternatives that value their needs and responds accordingly. This is why some customers tend to vote with their feet if services are not of the quality and quantity they demand. Therefore, funding has to be based on performance related allocations but not on automatic allocations on vote (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992).

The concept of getting closer to the customer implies the importance of valuing the customer as a source of good planning and improved performance in the delivery of public services. According to Drucker (1993), even NGOs that have practiced customer-oriented management have grown in strength and size, by keeping abreast with whatever their clients expect from them.

This is why organizations should constantly ask their customers what they want and thereafter shape the entire quality service and operational processes to produce it, thereby overturning the hierarchical organisational chart upside down emphasizing that managers exist only to serve, first and foremost, the customers. Customer surveys become very important to monitor what could be called the customers' fluctuating temperatures to cause relevant intervening circumstances through justified feedback on a continuous basis. The different ways to listen to the customer include; surveys, customer follow-up, community surveys, customer contact, customer reports, customer councils, focus groups, interviews, electronic mail and customer service training. Other methods include test marketing, quality guarantees, inspections, ombudsmen, tracking complaints, suggestion boxes and forms. All these may not be applicable in the public sector uniformly, but evaluation of what produces optimal results that are manageable within the institutions may be exploited to sustain customer focus.

Henceforth, the customer should be put in the driver's seat. This positioning of the customer is seen as the best way of the customers controlling optimum use of resources they choose from. It is assumed that most customers know what they want because of the following advantages: service providers being made accountable to their customers, depoliticising the power to make decisions, stimulating more innovation, giving people choices between different kinds of services, committing less waste because supply is matched with demand, empowering customers to make choices and to be more committed, and creating greater opportunities for equity.

In Uganda, the concept of customer care is being operationalised through client charters, public relations, setting of benchmarks, and monitoring of attitudes about customer satisfaction through desks and district officials. Further, in Uganda, some government officials behave in a customer blind manner, as they do not get their revenues from the targeted customers, but from the pool of public resources. Executive public managers tend to please the politicians and the legislature from which they get resources, while politicians are driven by their constraints and other supporting policy networks. The private sector, on its part, depends on sales variations.

However, Osborne and Gaebler (1992) observe that putting customers in a powerful position is not enough as it must be reinforced by transforming existent bureaucracies that are bottlenecks to the performance of the Public Service. The philosophy behind customer orientation is user friendliness, transparency and holism in management of public resources. The information and communication revolution has now made customer networking systems more flexible and user friendly thus cementing the role of the customer or clients in service delivery as part of the efforts to survive in the turbulent global economy.

Decentralisation of authority to enhance participatory management

Participatory decentralisation is the administrative decentralisation of authority to manage, by empowering various levels of the Public Service, to strategically plan, monitor, and evaluate programmes and activities at the middle and lower levels in the public institutions. The advocacy for decentralised management or governance has been backed up by the assumption that the workers' experience of the work place cannot be replaced by the expertise of managers. For a very long time, centralised institutions were fashionable when information and communication technologies were primitive and slow and the workforce relatively uneducated. This is contrasted with a situation today where information is virtually limitless and instantaneous and the public employees are well educated. Decisions that take months to be formulated only become effective when the situation has changed. There is need to flatten hierarchies especially in a country such as Uganda to give authority to employees to make accurate and timely decisions that are responsive to the stakeholders (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992).

Decentralised institutions have advantages which include: Being more flexible than centralized institutions; they can respond quickly to changing circumstances and customers' needs; are more effective than centralized institutions; and generate higher morale, more commitment, and greater productivity. The Public Service has been averse to risks and this message was destructive to the extent that it made public servants to remain docile, passive, embittered, and tied to traditional hierarchical organisations without taking control into their own hands. Instead of controlling and reducing waste, it dis-empowers employees to solve work related problems without using their knowledge and experience. To reverse this situation, entrepreneurial leaders use participatory management to decentralize decision-making, encourage teamwork, reduce on bureaucracy, create institutional champions for innovations, invest in their employees and re-skill and morale boost them.

The other important aspect of decentralizing public organizations through participatory management is that it virtually doubles productivity as the levels of commitment are multiplied. This has been proved through research experiments where the ideas of employees at various levels of committees reversed performance to optimum levels as part of the Total Quality Management (TQM) programmes.

For decentralization to be consolidated, participatory management, employee empowerment, and teamwork in the organisation are crucial. There is need to build task-oriented institutions that do whatever it takes to achieve results. Teams are easy to organize for particular challenges, than passing through bureaucratic challenges that require waiting for higher-level decisions all the time as the work and organisation suffer. Team-building increases performance capacity of institutions by enabling cross-departmental linkages, innovations, collaboration, building lasting networks, and holding employees to esteem with ultimate improved organisational performance. Further, there is a challenge to create an institutional champion for bottom-up innovation requiring that the established teams are protected from intimidation by the traditional bureaucrats.

Participatory management that are not based on sound values that are inculcated throughout the organisation run the risk of failing in the face of intense conflict. There is need to invest in empowered employees to sustain their positive participation towards organisational development. Decentralisation is, therefore, an important aspect of any reform programme that is intended to democratise the public sector by way of consultation through public enquiries, equal opportunities, decentralisation of decision-making and co-determination. Such a measure is a major tenet of transparency and accessibility through participatory management.

Pollit, Birchall and Putman (1998), particularly distinguish between centralisation and devolution, and between horizontal and vertical decentralisation. In Uganda today, the links between decentralisation, efficiency, equality and organisational performance are areas yet to be fully attained. However, Uganda's experience clearly shows that greater managerial freedom under decentralisation and other management reforms do not necessarily lead to economy, efficiency, effectiveness and quality as they are not the only criteria by which the adequacy of Public Service institutions may be judged. Issues of public accountability, competence and central control with their positive attributes have significantly been jeopardised with the implementation of decentralisation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has argued that Public Service reform is essential in order to invigorate the process of service provision to the public. In this paper, four key areas of public sector reform has been presented, namely; promotion of competition in service provision, measurement of performance based on outputs/outcomes, redefinition of internal/external clients, and decentralisation of authority to enhance participatory management. The paper has clearly shown that although each of these reforms have been implemented very little has so far been achieved due to the socio-economic and political state in which the country is in today. Issues such as public accountability, competence, and corruption are still high on the agenda. These and issues related to physical infrastructure have equally to be addressed.

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