Reforming Human Resource Development in Tanzania – Issues, Challenges and Lessons

By

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Abstract

The paper explores the human Resource Development function under the Public Sector Reform Program in Tanzania. It is observed that the human resource development function is one of the important subjects of attention in the Public Sector Reform Program and this encompasses the development of the capacity to accept, adopt and implement specific elements of the program. It also involves efforts to enhance and develop requisite abilities and aptitudes in terms of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours. In addition, it has entailed the enhancement of individual abilities of staff as well as introduction and improvement of systems and process. The paper demonstrates the synergy between the different human resource tools as tools and processes. It also shows how Competency Frameworks as practical tools to guide HR development have been given a pivotal position in order to provide a mechanism through which other HR development processes can be appropriately implemented. Furthermore, it is argued that the best way to develop staff in the Public Service is to adopt career sensitive system for HR development supported by a merit based recruitment and supporting planning for succession. Nonetheless, the importance of on-job training is underscored and attention is drawn to the need to give it the recognition it rightly deserves.
Human Resource Development: Theoretical Meaning versus Practical Reality

The word Human Resource is now a common term and a better alternative to the word manpower. Manpower is a word with sexist connotation not acceptable in the contemporary gender sensitive world. It also places human beings in the same class as other means of production for example labour as one of the inputs in production while we know human beings are complex and are the only thinking resource. The words power and resource also have different meanings and manpower can be at certain times and for convenience be equated to People’s Power and militancy.

The word Development is an encompassing word and reflects some dynamism: movement from a particular state of affairs to a desired different higher state of affairs. Since development in Human Resource Management is taken to comprise increases in present level of skills, knowledge and abilities including the concept of continuous learning/education, training as a concept and a term has tended to be subsumed under the word development.

However, in actual practice, activities considered as training are more amenable to measurement in financial terms and time, which are the other important organisational resources, than those closely identifiable to the term development as utilised in Human Resource Management. For example, two weeks short-term, off the job training as an activity can be easily reflected in a department’s MTEF (Medium Term Expenditure Framework), but it is difficult to

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1 For similar observations see also Mckenna, E. and Beech, N. (1995); Armstrong, M. (1992: 152-161).
show planned organisational experience as a training activity in an organisational plan and with a determined cost structure (where an officer is made to acquire within his organisation different experiences on different functional areas or jobs as preparation for future higher level position). Therefore, activities with definite beginnings and ends, whose direct costs are known are reflected in organisational plans and budgeted for. In practice, the term training is often used to describe such activities which range from programs for the acquisition of basic skills to management development programs.

This observation can be verified by examining Training Plans from different government ministries and departments. What is typically reflected in the training plans are only short-term, off the job courses for skills, knowledge, and attitude and behaviour improvement. Long-term training courses for mostly career advancement reasons are also commonly reflected. On the job training rarely features as absence of direct cost implications or the ability to measure the associated costs accounts for the absence often of on the job training in organisational planning.

The Public sector reform program and HRD

First, a reform program connotes planned change, change goals, and initiated change processes. Change to occur might require a change catalyst but implementation has to depend upon those who are part of the system and processes to be improved. It is logical that success in any change effort is a consequent of a certain facilitated degree of readiness to embrace change and ability to manage and adapt to changes in business processes. Implementing change regardless how novel and beneficial the desired outcomes are requires some preparations on the part of staff concerned, especially staff of middle and higher leadership and managerial levels. The objective is two fold: to inculcate the necessary attitude to acceptance of the onset of a change process and creating or developing the required skills and knowledge for implementing the
planned change processes. The change package cannot be necessarily complete and often during implementation innovations and adaptations have to occur. These important emergent issues fall on the shoulders of those who are part of the systems and processes to be changed and not the change catalyst\textsuperscript{2}.

Therefore, the following measures in respect of training and development are part of the Public Sector Reform Program\textsuperscript{3}:

**Leadership Management and Staff Development Component**

It is possible to comprehend what was on the minds of those formulating the reform program: interventions planned are to be supportive of each other synergistically. In respect of weaknesses observed and as part of the necessary initial preparatory efforts, management and leadership skills enhancement programs were planned. The Component has been implementing these programs through yearly developed action plans. To improve processes and relevant systems some HR tools have been introduced and are mainstreamed in the Public Service.

**Capacity enhancement initiatives**

The different elements of capacity enhancement programs serve these main objectives: creation of the capacity to accept change, to continue working in the midst of change processes set in motion, to manage and implement change, and the creation of the capacity and dynamism to be change catalysts or drivers of change, adaptations and innovations. The skills and capacity enhancement programs has over the years been covering several key areas:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{2}The following works are also helpful in understanding change and its management: Bacil, D.C and Cook, C.W. (1974); Hussey, D.E (1995);
  \item \textsuperscript{3} The Public Sector Reform Program launched in June 2000 is a re-definition rather than only the continuity to the Civil Service Reform Program of 1991 to 1999.
  \item To read more about the reform programs, see Bana and Ngware (2006: 1999-224) and URT (2003) Revised Medium Strategy, Action Plan and Budget 2003/04-2005/06
\end{itemize}
The organisation of higher level leadership retreat/forums: These events are to allow organised meetings between leaders of the country both political and administrative outside normal political organisations as the parliamentary meetings. The benefits from these forums sometimes organised for specific reasons or following dramatic events, for example change of governments, are many. One benefit of paramount importance is the re-articulation of the country’s visions and practical paths to achieving planned national intentions or national policy objectives and in an environment where status and responsibility differences between political elected leaders and top civil servants are less expressive.

Study tours for senior officials on leadership and management development: The purpose of this activity is to expose key leaders to best management practices as implemented in other countries as well as to give them the opportunity to evaluate themselves and the system they are in charge of against other standards to which they get exposed.

Other training and development initiatives organised to impart necessary skills and to inculcate right attitudes and behaviours include: Leadership development programme, leadership excellence: leadership and ethics, modern management skills and practices, Results Oriented Management, good governance, anti-corruption and ethics, policy development and analysis, managing public service reforms, customer service training, etc. Various Commonwealth organised programs in leadership and management, which are often partly funded, are also facilitated.

Improved and/or new systems and processes

On the whole, the reform program entails introduction of new and improved systems and processes covering almost every aspect of an organisational life. However, under this component the improved
systems to be introduced and their implementation to be mainstreamed within all ministries, independent government departments, and executive agencies are generally referred to as tools and include: competency frameworks, training needs assessments and the development of training plans, human resource planning, succession planning, and the creation of assessment centres.

Training and development through other Public Sector Reform Program Components

The other Public Sector Reform Program Components all have training and development as part of their packages of improvements of systems and processes they are undertaking. Awareness and sensitization programs are significant elements in the implementation of the different initiatives as well as preparatory path-cleaning exercises to limit resistance to change and to create requisite skills, knowledge and ownership. Therefore, for example, in the introduction of the Open Performance Review and Appraisal System (OPRAS) coordinated by the Restructuring Component, ministries and other governmental departments in which the new system is to be introduced undergo training on OPRAS and then actual implementation follows which is as well facilitated, monitored and evaluated – this is similar to the approach employed in introducing strategic planning in Government. The Integrity and Diversity Component to meet objectives set employ several strategies; but other than the creation of both legal and policy frameworks to guide ethical behaviour, most interventions are for awareness creation and sensitization on the relevance of appropriate behaviour. This may take the form of public awareness campaigns using the media to planned training programs combining leadership skills and ethical conduct promotion as the subject matters for the training interventions (The Leadership Excellence Program jointly run by the Tanzania Public Service College (TPSC) and the Tanzania Global Development Learning Centre (TGDLC) is an innovative example). Some components, for example, the Records Component
have identified gaps in professional training for the record management profession and have in collaboration with TPSC and the School of Library, Archives, and Documentation Studies developed Certificate and Diploma Courses in Records Management and Archives. The Information Management Systems Component is greatly responsible for the level of increased computer literacy in the public service; it supports availability of computers and training in computer use to facilitate better management of employment records in different government departments.

PSRP and systems and processes for HRD

The tools for HR development, mentioned earlier, are interdependent as one might be an input to some other tool and the output of another tool. For example, competency frameworks support and complement Training Needs Assessments; and from TNAs, training plans are to be developed; Competency frameworks are also helpful in deciding the type of people to be recruited - recruitment represents one of what is referred to as the trinity of aspects in Human Resource Planning, i.e. staff acquisition: other aspects of the trinity are utilisation and retention. How people are recruited and the type of people recruited determines whether staff capability present can be developed and be appropriate in the future for higher positions in the hierarchy, i.e. to facilitate succession planning. Assessment centres can serve two purposes: as development centres the emphasis being identification of skill gaps, therefore aiding TNAs and deciding on actions to take to remedy the discrepancy between desired capabilities and actual abilities. Assessment centres can also be used to supplement selection processes of key personnel through interviews so that the limitations of normal interviews are mitigated.
HR Development Tools and Movement from a Generalist to a Specialist

When we speak about succession planning we are thinking of the capacity of lower level staff to succeed into higher level positions when they become vacant. In most cases, higher level personnel are supposed to be generalist, i.e. able to have 'Helicopter View' of issues. They must have the capacity to provide oversight over the activities of a number of different specialists⁴.

The technical HR competencies shown on the table below are what the different specialists must acquire and utilise but to different degrees depending on individual specialisations. To a HR generalist, the case for mastering at an acceptable level and for effective performance all the technical HR competencies cannot be over justified and is essential.

We are often employed as specialists and through working experiences coupled by management development programs/career development programs we get prepared to be generalists. Therefore, the capability to develop and to acquire relevant different skills over the long term by new recruits will determine whether the organisation is planning for succession needs in the future or not. In the HR case, any of the specialists might at one time in the future have the capability to become generalists.

Getting future generalists in different fields entails proper management of the entry of different professionals within the organisation. That is when the concept and practice of meritocracy becomes important. We have from a pool of applicants to select the best available candidate, this is done through competitive selection processes and might include a combination of interviews, psychometric tests and simulated actual work experiences. The

⁴In depth analysis of personnel-flow in organisations and the development of specialists and general managers for senior posts, see Mc Beath , G. (1992).
successful candidate has then to be supported to develop; work experience has to be augmented by exposure over the long-term to 'Business Management Competencies' and 'Professional competencies', for example, in order to support the availability of potential HR generalists within the organisation\(^5\).

**Human Resource Managers Competency Framework**

Meritocracy is a new concept in employment management in the Public Service – it was The Public Service Regulations of 2003 made under section 34(1) of The Public Service Act No. 8 of 2002 which gave official blessing to the introduction of this new practice. It might be to some degree appropriate to argue that at present those with the right capabilities and attributes, including age, to facilitate succession might be few than would have been the case when employment is through a more transparent and competitive system\(^6\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Management Competencies</th>
<th>Technical HR Competencies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Process Reengineering</td>
<td>Appeals, Grievances, and Litigation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change management</td>
<td>Attendance and Leave</td>
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<td>Contract Management</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost-Benefit Analysis</td>
<td>Career Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customer Relations</td>
<td>Compensation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Management</td>
<td>Discipline and Adverse Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Employee Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation</td>
<td>Equal Employment Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Awareness</td>
<td>Human Resource Management Fundamentals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Needs Assessments</td>
<td>Instructional Systems Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcome Measures and evaluation</td>
<td>Instructional Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>Job Analysis</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\(^5\) More in-depth explanations and analyses on Competency Based HRM can be found in Sharmon, G. (2004)

\(^6\) In some specific specialisations or disciplines the available personnel are limited in numbers and therefore, competitive recruitment processes cannot be implemented to bear the desired results. Although there are no exclusion clauses in the regulation for medical personnel and teachers, but realities has forced the government to discriminate in favour of these disciplines and to allow their entry into service without undergoing competitive selection processes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Human Resource Management Practices</th>
<th>Labour Management Relations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Planning</td>
<td>Organisational Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Competencies</td>
<td>Organisation and Position Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching and Mentoring</td>
<td>Pay Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Performance Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Management</td>
<td>Personnel Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making</td>
<td>Personnel Systems Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Position Classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation</td>
<td>Reduction -in -Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Relations</td>
<td>Rewards and Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
<td>Staffing and Recruiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td>Succession Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
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Source: Sourced from a Pamphlet for GOWM (Government Office for the West Midlands - UK) of 2005 by J. Findlay

The labour market in the country today is different from decades ago where you had to do with what you only had. To be fair to the citizenry at present is to give equal opportunities to those often many with the right qualifications and aptitudes for the specific vacant posts. In the future this practice will create a pool of right type of staff to facilitate succession within the public service, i.e. a larger number of people who could move from being specialists to generalists and whom have also to compete with each other for future positions.

**Meritocracy against Game-keeping and Poaching**

Both game-keeping and poaching are staffing strategies which when one is practiced should not completely hinder the use of the other (not mutually exclusive). By game-keeping we mean limiting access to higher level positions to own staff through internal movements; it also entails preparations to make the movements possible, i.e. developing the capability to move. Poaching meaning getting the right type of employees with the right attributes from the market - ready made. There are several pros and cons in respect of both strategies but it is advised that the use of only a particular strategy is what is
not healthy. Both strategies should be employed but in a pre-determined manner. It is known that game-keeping is good for continuity and poaching is good for getting new blood, different attitudes, behaviour, etc. and thus possibilities for some positive changes.

There are clauses within The Public Service Regulations of 2003 which also provide for movements without competitive procedures. These are appropriately restrictive requiring higher level approval. Nonetheless, it is argued that 20% of new staff could be less disruptive and might provide avenues of bringing in required changes. The importance of competitive entry at early entry points, i.e. for recent graduates of particular age cohort, can not be overemphasised. However, changes at managerial level through meritocracy have to be contained to an acceptable level, i.e. of 20% in normal circumstances. How is this to be done?

To allow for internal movements, the clauses which provide for it should be used. However, these provisions cannot maintain a policy of tacit or implicit game-keeping since justification may not be easy every time. The main challenge is to create a pool of suitable candidates who can successfully compete for middle and senior level posts when they become vacant. Allowing entry into the organisation to those who can be supported to develop career-wise and providing the right opportunities to staff is therefore significant7.

Supporting Career Development of Staff

There are different types of employees: for lower level staff, training and other capacity building initiatives are for increasing ability to perform specific tasks. A small number will progress into

7 In the same perspective, the relationship between organisational planning, desired competencies, performance appraisal, training and development, and succession planning as sequenced interdependent activities is underscored by Jorm, et al (1996).
supervisory positions, and a few may show the potential to progress career-wise. To professionals and managerial staff, career paths are relevant. Career paths are designed to encourage systematic development of similar individuals to ensure that each has the opportunity to participate in the full range of training and to gain experience in a planned range of relevant activities, and then to progress logically along the most suitable career development route. Most staff will end up concentrating on a specialised activity, though organisations will like to have a core of high ability personnel to gain multifunctional experiences as the foundation to general management or to top higher level posts. Broad experiences from management development programs including working on diverse assignments are preparations to senior level positions for future generalists.

**Does the current practice within the Public Service measure up to the above requirements necessary to developing our people?**

The answer is yes and no. The answer is the affirmative in the sense that even without any systematic processes, any organisation is likely to attract the three different type of employees: those who will be lower level staff performing some specific tasks within a functionary unit; those who will be highly competent specialists in performing specific functionary activities, i.e. a procurement expert, a labour relations officer, etc; those who will be generalists, regardless how good they really are, to be at senior organisational levels.

Nonetheless, without planning of some kind the destiny of our staff and ultimately of the organisation, its survival and performance, is left to chance. As it is for human beings to productively exploit their natural environment they have to have some control over it, as organisational members for our own development to be desirable and beneficial to us and to our organisations then we need to make some preparations and deliberately to develop a guiding system. This is a challenge to both HR practitioners and professional associations. Some of these preparations are now there; meritocracy as the guide to employment will bring to the organisation those who can both
develop into competent specialists and others into generalists to manage responsibilities at senior positions. It will as well catalyse potential generalists to exploit better available opportunities to develop themselves and gain the appropriate experiences so that they can successfully be candidates for senior positions.

However, adopting a career sensitive training and development system will support the meritocracy employment objectives. It is important that opportunities for personal development are provided fairly in an organised manner. For every level of management, a series of pre-determined training and development programs have to be implemented and efforts are to be made to ensure that all employees at a particular level undergo similar experiences. For example, For HR specialists to be competent in their jobs and competent enough to facilitate their movement upward, the 'Technical and Professional Competencies', as shown in the table above, must be all, but in differing degrees, be part of the package of skills, knowledge and abilities possessed. The HR specialists as potential candidates to be generalists, in a planned system and over a period of time have to be exposed to 'Business Management Competencies'. It is without doubt that those competencies shown in the table are relevant to generalists from all specialisations but in differing degrees. Competent generalists must have been exposed to the different competencies and efforts should be undertaken to strengthen generalists’ capabilities to manage their increased responsibilities (before reaching the 'level of incompetence')\(^8\).

**Aligning Training and Development to Career Development Needs**

It is good sense, therefore, to develop career sensitive training and development programs and to make it compulsory to employers to

\(^8\) It has been argued that employees may develop within organisations to being specialists and then to competent generalists and ultimately at a certain point in time performance might be reversed and incompetence might be observed.
support the planned programs for different levels and type of employees and to ensure equal access to them by all employees.

**Figure 1**

![Career-sensitive training for public servants (Borrowed from the Public Service Training Policy being developed)](image)

There is also a challenge to those institutions in the country providing professional training in HR. Three-year post secondary school undergraduate HR professional qualification provided has to constitute most of all or related 'HR Technical Competencies' as shown in the table. Post-graduate studies must have the 'Business Management Competencies' and the 'Professional Competencies' taught. This mode of training of HR personnel will be creating both HR specialists and generalists. It might also make it easier for employers to facilitate employees' desires to move upward through the hierarchy.

Training service providers have to closely link up with their clients and develop service packages which correspond closely with clients' needs. Here is an example of what training providers can offer to...
the Public Service so that acquisition of some essential skills and knowledge can be achieved.

### Table 2: Proposed Leadership Development Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives of the five days program</th>
<th>Topics to be covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of the role and responsibilities of leadership</td>
<td>Understanding Leadership concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of your preferred behaviour and an appreciation of your impact on others</td>
<td>Creating the conditions for success in teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional intelligence and flexibility in using appropriate leadership styles</td>
<td>Strategic planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching and conflict resolution techniques</td>
<td>Coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear thinking and an effective approach to problem solving, planning and briefing</td>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of teams and team-work and the role of leadership in team development.</td>
<td>Assertive communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing what is on offer relative to the HR Competency Framework, some of the essential knowledge and skill types of the “Business Management” and ‘Professional Competencies’ are available in the above program. It is often difficult to package all important competencies in one single 5 to 10 days short-term training programs; even to cover a few of them quite adequately could be difficult. A series of programs scheduled appropriately might lead to tangible desirable outcomes.

**How do we capture on the job training in our organisational plans?**

There are several challenges ahead. The first one is to either adapt present training interventions so that they continue to be useful in
the proposed approach to systematic HR development, i.e. career sensitive Training and Development, or to develop new packages suitable at every level. This has to be preceded by clear definitions of what each level entails and the requirements of particular skills, knowledge, etc. relevant at each level. The second one is to create an enforceable system for implementation that will systematise adequately and uniformly Human Resource Development function in the public Service. The Third and of its own significance is sensitization on the importance of on-job experiences to employee development, and capturing on-job experiences in the proposed scheme of career-sensitive training and the development of organisational training plans.

Conclusion

Although terms to describe efforts to enhance or develop requisite abilities and aptitudes in terms of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours might change from time to time, it is argued that training might be the more familiar word to practitioners. It has been observed that the Human Resource Development function is one of the important subjects of attention to the Public Sector Reform Program and it encompasses the development of the capacity to accept, adopt and implement specific elements of the Reform Program. Individual abilities of staff are enhanced and systems and process are improved or introduced. Synergy between different initiatives has been observed both between the different HR tools as tools and the processes they are to improve. Competency Frameworks as practical tools to guide HR development is given a pivotal position and is said to provide a framework through which other HR development processes can be appropriately implemented. It is argued that the best way to develop staff in the Public Service is to adopt career sensitive system for HR development supported by merit based recruitment and thereby supporting planning for succession. Nonetheless, the importance of on-job training is
underscored and a challenge as to how to give it the recognition it deserves is put forward.

References


President’s Office Public Service Management (22nd March, 2006) Final Revised Draft of *A Training and Development Policy for the Public Service of Tanzania*.
