Introduction

Since independence more than three decades ago, administrative reforms in Swaziland, as indeed in many other countries in Such-Saharan Africa, were implemented in terms of several phases. The first of these phases was concerned with efforts directed at the localization, training and manpower development of staff of the inherited colonial administrative system. This was understandable, given the poor record of British colonial administration and the rapid expansion of the civil service through the proliferation of ministries and departments as the Swaziland government geared itself for more tasks and responsibilities during the post-independence era. The Udoji Commission Report (1969) on training and localization of the Swaziland civil service is a classical example of these efforts.

Besides training and localization initiatives that were necessitated by the rapid expansion of the civil service, during the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, the improvement of salaries and wages, including terms and conditions of service, was by far the most important single issue of civil service improvement that occupied centre-stage in the priorities of African governments (Adamolekun, 1995: 35). In Swaziland, early administrative reform efforts that focused on the structural re-organization of the civil service, the improvement of salaries, wages and terms and conditions of service for public employees, including the adoption of improved management systems and

Throughout the majority of African countries, the most recent phase of public sector reform, focusing on three key institutions such as civil services, public enterprises and local governments, coincided with the widespread adoption of Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAPS) in such a way that administrative reform has been intimately linked to the need for fiscal stabilization and economic adjustment on the one hand. On the other hand, administrative reform has been linked to increasing concerns about greater efficiency, transparency, accountability, participation and capacity building (Adamolekun, Op.cit, 34).

In this article, we examine the key features of the Public Sector Management Programme (PSMP) in Swaziland, including its goals and objectives. It is argued that because the country has, since independence, adopted an ad hoc approach whereby the implementation of administrative reforms was focused on such pressing issues as localization, training and salary reviews, it neither has the experience, expertise nor capacity to implement an enormous reform programme such as the PSMP.

We conclude the analysis by pointing out that the importance of a competent and committed leadership in driving and sustaining reform efforts need not be over-emphasized. Accordingly therefore, in the absence of a strong political will and commitment on the part of the political and civil service leadership, prospects for the implementation of the PSMP are dim.

**The Public Sector Management Programme: Historical Backgrounds**

During the late 1980's, the Swaziland economy performed relatively well, benefitting from a substantial increase in direct foreign investment as a consequence of sanctions against apartheid
South Africa. The resultant high rate of economic growth led to significant increases in employment and public sector revenues to the extent that the government committed itself to a high expenditure regime in order to meet the demand for goods and services from an ever increasing population whose annual growth rate stands at 3.4 percent. However, during the early 1990s, mainly because of the lifting of sanctions against South Africa, the economy took a turn around such that macro economic performance deteriorated and real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth remained significantly below the level consistent with increasing unemployment. The low rate of growth in the country’s economy in recent years has been characterized by a lack of manufacturing expansion, reflecting a slow growth of inflows of direct foreign investment, particularly from South Africa, (IMF 1997:9).

Deteriorating economic performance saw the government budget running into deficit between 1992/93 and 1994/95 with the rate of expenditure far exceeding the rate at which revenue was collected. In addition, with member states calling for re-negotiations of the Agreement, there was considerable uncertainty with regard to the future of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) which accounts for approximately 50% of total revenue. Moreover, government had committed itself to significant infrastructural development projects, improvements in the salaries, wages and terms and conditions of service for civil servants and a large restructuring programme for the parastatal sector. Evidence of the fact that rapid public sector expansion and periodic salary and wage reviews were not entrenched in economic realities was that, among the expenditure items, personnel costs took the largest share of total expenditure and absorbed more than 40 percent of revenue.

It is against a backdrop of these and other economic realities that the government was forced to critically re-examine the manner in which it conducted public affairs. Consequently, from the mid
1990s, a number of reform initiatives were established such as the Internal Structural Adjustment Programme (ISAP) whose focus is on revenue diversification and expenditure control, the PSMP whose overall goal is to contribute towards enhancing the institutional capacity of the public service, and recently, the Economic and Social Reform Agenda (ESRA), the objective of which is to instil discipline within the civil service and promote the principles of affordability, efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery and in meeting targets (Swaziland Government, 1999:3).

Before these economic and administrative reforms, the government had taken positive steps towards strengthening the development planning system by establishing the National Development Strategy (NDS), which outlines the vision for the development of the country over two and a half decades and is based on the aspirations of the majority of stakeholders and key players in the economy. Forming part of the national development strategy, the focus of these reforms, including the PSMP, is to internalize prudent fiscal management by ensuring that improvements in revenue collection and expenditure are in conformity with conditions of economic performance. Unlike their predecessors, a distinguishing feature of the current reform efforts is that they are closely linked to fiscal stabilization and economic adjustment.

**The PSMP: Key Features**

While the NDS is an instrument for achieving grass-roots and broad-based participation in the development process and specifically to address such socio-economic problems as unemployment, rapid increases in population growth, crime, unstable labour relations and the gradual erosion of the social fabric of Swazi society, through the PSMP, the government made a public policy decision to embark on internally-induced self-restructuring administrative and managerial reforms as opposed to an International Monetary Fund (IMF) - imposed economic structural adjustment programme
(Dlamini, et al, 1999:62). The original focus of the PSMP were such areas of reform as policy formulation, implementation and legislative administration, human resource management, financial management and the government machinery. However, consequent upon the launch of the NDS and the ESRA, the PSMP focus shifted to administrative reform with emphasis on improving civil service efficiency and effectiveness, including the legislative framework within which policy-making and implementation occur.

The NDS acknowledges the fact that in modern society, the major functions of government can be classified into several categories, such as the creation of an enabling environment for socio-economic and human development; the exercise of sound macro-economic management and the provision of basic socio-economic services in areas where private sector participation is either inappropriate or unsatisfactory. However, in order to satisfactorily carry out these and other functions requires an efficient and effective civil service, hence the overall objective of the PSMP is to enhance the capacity of civil service to perform at high levels, thus meeting the expectations of government and the people with regard to economic growth, social development and good governance. Much more specifically, the PSMP aims at raising the standard of performance and increase deficiency and cost effectiveness in service delivery by the civil service (Swaziland Government, Op. cit, 2).

The PSMP has five main objectives, each of which is intended to produce several outputs whose overall impact will be to raise standards of performance and achieve greater efficiency and cost effectiveness. The first PSMP objective is to develop clear and appropriate ministerial missions, objectives, strategies, structures and staffing levels. Among the expected outputs are clear ministerial mission statements, objectives and strategies as well as required structures and operating
systems and procedures and the development of ministerial strategic and action plans.

The second objective is to identify areas wherein government participation needs to be reduced or is deemed inappropriate and to increase the involvement of the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals in the provision of services. Outputs that are expected from this objective include the development of a comprehensive list of areas of government operations in each ministry with potential for commercialization, privatization or implementation by NGOs, including the formulation of appropriate policies for the implementation of commercialization and/or privatization programmes.

The third PSMP objective is to improve both the performance and productivity of civil service to facilitate the effective and efficient delivery of services through new or revised operating, technical and management systems and new or revised human resource management approaches. Some of the outputs that are expected from this objective are the formulation of new or revised human resource management systems and new or revised operating, technical and management systems and procedures. To this end, it is hoped that revised Civil Service Board (CSB) functions and regulations and revised General Orders (GO’s) will be put in place.

Given the significance of training as a vital tool in enabling employees in an organization to acquire the specific knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for the efficient performance of their jobs, the fourth objective of the PSMP is to build the capacity of operating staff, middle level and senior civil service managers, through training. Other than arming operational level staff with the requisite technical skills, one of the expected outputs of this objective is the production of middle and supervisory level as well as senior civil service managers with appropriate technical and human
resources management skills for effective leadership and strategic management of a constantly changing public sector.

Lessons of experience with regard to the successful implementation of administrative reform have emphasized the need for an introduction of a public relations strategy to keep the civil service, the international donor community and the public periodically informed on progress and development in the reform programme and its impact on service delivery to the public. In order to satisfy this prerequisite, the fifth an final objective of the PSMP is to create awareness and disseminate information to civil servants and the public at large about the goals, objectives and activities of the programme in order to encourage its support and ownership.

Since the acquisition of skills is critical to the success of the programme, the PSMP recognizes the need to match the pace of reform with the required training in order to strategically manage the restructured civil service. To this end, the Swaziland Institute of Management and Public Administration (SIMPA) has been called upon to play a pivotal role in delivering the training. Accordingly, in order to meet the challenges placed upon it by such an enormous programme as the PSMP, the capacity of SIMPA will be enhanced by an on-going institutional strengthening project, funded jointly by the European Union and the Swaziland Government (Swaziland Government, Op cit, 7).

In organizational terms, the management of the PSMP and its activities takes place at different levels of the machinery of government, such as Cabinet, the Office of the Head of the Civil Service, line ministries and departments, the Office of the National Director (PSMP) and the Management Services Division (MSD). Some of the primary responsibilities of the National Director (ND) who
reports to the Public Service Reconstruction Committee (PSRC) on a periodic basis, are monitoring of programme implementation and reporting on the management audit and strategic and action planning; cross cutting studies and studies of technical issues. In turn the PSRC reports to the Minister for Public Service and Information who tables quarterly reports to Cabinet.

The foregoing are key characteristics of what the government refers to as a ‘refocused PSMP’ which, it is hoped, will be implemented with greater urgency and a bias for action. According to the authorities, the PSMP has a number of features which separate it from other programmes that came before it. These distinguishing features are that the programme is ‘home-grown and predominantly Swazi-designed and driven, it recognizes the need to build and test continuing political commitment and leadership and .... emphasizes an open process, which is consultative and participatory’ (Swaziland Government, Op cit, 9).

**The PSMP: An Assessment of Civil Service Reform**

Besides undertaking and completing detailed management audit studies in three ministries; initiating these studies in eight other ministries; developing a performance management system and the formulation of a draft PSMP project document, the PSMP has not made remarkable progress in the direction of accomplishing its key mandate and objectives, namely, improving the performance of the civil service, since its establishment in 1995. The PSMP, which was a necessary and well-conceived programme, has been faced with numerous problems and challenges, many of which are administrative or management-oriented in nature, while some of the obstacles can be classified as political in orientation.

When the PSMP was launched during a national workshop in June 1995 that was attended by a large number of senior politicians and civil servants, it is said to have had top level support. The
programme’s high level support was exemplified not only by the ratification of the launch workshop’s recommendations by Cabinet but also by the hosting of a series of ministerial workshops that facilitated the articulation of key managerial issues confronting government in general and the civil service in particular (Parry, 1998: n.p). However, subsequent years that witnessed the appointment of the incumbent Prime Minister and his launch of ESRA in February 1997 saw a steady decline in the fortunes of the PSMP.

During its establishment, architects of ESRA argued that one of its objectives is to give added impetus to the PSMP. Specifically, ESRA was presented as an effective management tool and action-oriented programme designed, inter alia, to focus on priority areas such as the creation of an enabling environment for the growth and development of the private sector and the promotion of direct foreign investment. Paradoxical, however, the Parry Report has argued that ESRA was partly responsible for the problems and weaknesses which had become apparent in the PSMP process. As Parry further argues:

“There was a general view that ESRA had subsumed - some people went so far as to say ‘killed’ - the PSMP and was by far the more important of the two initiatives. There are some important pointers here about the importance of top level, visible and sustained leadership, clarity and a robust approach to performance monitoring in any successful change initiative. ESRA enjoys all those success factors. As things stand at present, PSMP does not”. (Parry, 1998: n.p).

Besides its political woes, particularly early in the period of its existence, the PSMP suffered from what may be referred to as a ‘leadership crisis’. This is in the sense that although there was widespread consensus that the early appointment of a National Director with overall management and administrative responsibility for the PSMP was crucial to its success, it wasn’t until February, 1977 that someone was selected and subsequently appointed. However, his resignation in June 1998 left a leadership vacuum that could not be filled until the appointment of the present incumbent in
1999. These developments meant that the PSMP was without substantive administrative leadership at a crucial period in its history, namely, during the early years of its existence, hence this partly explains why a programme that was regarded as a centrepiece of the public reform agenda took such a long time to get off the ground.

Some of the reasons why the PSMP has not made significant progress in achieving its main objectives of improving the performance of the civil service are organizational in nature. For instance, in a recent Review of the Human Resources Management Function in the Swaziland Civil Service, a number of main issues were identified by key stakeholders as undermining the PSMP. One of these issues centres on the location and reporting relationship of the programme which is such that the PSMP is an integral part of the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Public Service and Information. The rationale behind such a location is that since the overall goal of the PSMP is to develop the capacity and management of the civil service, it was found suitable to locate it in the ministry that has responsibility for public service management (Mataka, 2001:166).

However, there is a contrary view which argues that a reform initiative of such magnitude, whose primary objective is to enhance the capacity of the civil service to perform according to expectations, needs to be strategically located in the Office of the Head of the Civil Service in order for the sectoral ministries to realize and appreciate the need and importance of the programme. Moreover, and by definition, the PSMP needs the strong support and leadership of the Head of the Civil Service in order to achieve the desired progress. Finally and as is a common feature of most change initiatives of the magnitude of the PSMP, receptivity to change by civil servants is occasionally negative and questionable. Accordingly therefore, there is need for the power and authority of the Head of the Civil Service to drive and spearhead the change processes in order to ensure the
unflinching support of these changes by most key players in public service management (Ibid).

Another organizational issue that hampers the progress of the PSMP concerns its institutional relationship with the MSD - an existing organ within the civil service whose responsibility centres on developing structures, systems and staffing levels of line ministries and departments. There is a widespread perception - which is correct - that the activities that are undertaken by the MSD are complementary to those being undertaken under the auspices of the PSMP. Moreover, since staff of the MSD already have basic as well as practical skills in management services and consultancy, which are needed to implement some of the activities of the PSMP, it makes organizational sense for the two divisions to forge closer institutional linkages based on co-operation.

The human resources at the disposal of the PSMP are as important as the financial and material. While it is in order for the PSMP to be “home-grown and Swazi-driven”, it must, however, be manned by a team of highly-rated and competent professionals, capable of standing out amongst civil servants in ministries and departments to be recognized as pacesetters in the change processes that are engendered by the programme. (Mataka, Op. cit, 167). This is not the case with the PSMP which is hard-pressed in terms of staffing and, as an integral part of a ministerial bureaucracy, does not enjoy independent control over financial and material resources.

Another challenge facing the PSMP is that since it is not widely publicized and, as a consequence, its not well known among its key stakeholders, such as civil servants and other beneficiaries of public services, there is a widespread view that the programe is synonymous with retrenchment. Although retirement options as an issue of public policy have already been examined by the government, there is no doubt that some of the negative perceptions of the PSMP arise from the fact
that the programme has not been extensively publicized.

Underscoring the need for the PSMP to be comprehensively publicized among both its key stakeholders, namely, civil servants and the community at large, the Mataka Report has rightly observed that:

“The civil service is a large bureaucracy which has been in existence for a long time. The natural tendency therefore is to strive to maintain it status or ‘continue to oil the wheels of bureaucracy’ and to resist change. Sometimes people will resist change not because change is bad, but merely because there is not enough information on the change that is required, the processes that go with that change; and indeed the benefits that will accrue from the change”. (Mataka, Op. cit, 169).

Organizations and people within them, whether these organizations are private or public, operate within the confines posed by a dynamic, turbulent and constantly changing environment. The rate and/or tempo of technological and other changes is increasingly accelerating such that this view can not be disputed. Given the fact that all organizations are vibrating from the forces of change, the management of such change is one of the most formidable challenges facing humankind. In a way, the PSMP is charged with the enormous responsibility of being a change-agent, hence it is essential for those that drive the programme to level the administrative playing field in order for the change process to receive the utmost receptivity. This is because it is true that the sheer speed with which change is rushing towards modern society can be over-whelming unless the latter is prepared for it emotionally, psychologically and intellectually.

**Conclusion**

The socio-economic and political developments of the late 1980s and early 1990s that led to deteriorating economic conditions in Swaziland and gave birth to the PSMP placed in stark reality
the need for adequate public sector administrative capacity, especially within the core civil service. What has emerged from this article is that the PSMP was born out of a realization that the ability of the civil service to carry out the critical functions of government is severely limited. Moreover, architects of the programme were driven by the realization that since the size and cost of the civil service was excessive, there was need not only to contain its size but also improve its performance.

Such concerns as cost containment, the reduction of the wage bill, capacity-building and the promotion of the efficiency of the civil service are some of the distinguishing characteristics that separate the PSMP from earlier administrative reform efforts. Directly or indirectly, the PSMP is anchored on fiscal stabilization and (internal) economic adjustments, hence its significance cannot be over emphasized. However, despite its importance and unlike the Prime Ministerial - inspired ESRA, the PSMP has not been well endowed with strong support and commitment from the political and civil service leadership.

Parry has rightly argued that:

“The PSMP is at the heart of the government of Swaziland’s national development Strategy. If it fails, the other elements of the strategy - ‘a unifying framework for all the national efforts that have been exerted so far in an attempt to improve the lives of (the Swazi) people’ - will be much less effective and will probably fail too. The chances of success seem to ... very slim without donor support and technical assistance, not least in terms of encouraging the Government of Swaziland to establish a better strategic framework for the programme” (Parry, 1998:n.p.)
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