Strengthening Public Sector Human Resource Management Capacities in Africa


Reflections on Strengthening Capacities for Professionalism in Africa’s Public Sector

Presentation by:
Dr. John-Mary Kauzya (PhD)
Chief of Public Administration Capacity Branch
Division for Public Administration and Development Management
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations Secretariat
New York
www.unpan.org
Reflections on Strengthening Capacities for Professionalism in Africa’s Public Sector (by John-Mary Kauzya (PhD))

Abstract:

This presentation calls for the development of a common understanding of professionalism which could guide the work of the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers’ Network (APS-HRManet) in promoting professionalism in the management of human resources and the delivery of public services by the Public Sector in Africa. The author contributes to this by taking “professionalism in the public service as the ability and practice of performing a function in a systematic manner with commitment, selflessness, and concern for the general interest, adhering to agreed fundamental principles and values, laws, rules and regulations, to provide the best possible efficient, effective and innovative public services to the community all the time”. The presentation takes professionalism in the public service to have the following specific traits: a passion for excellence; competence; a professional awareness; experience in the field; effectiveness; and personal qualities including abilities, knowledge, skills, and attitude. The author argues that even if professionalism may have traits that are universal, different organizations specify its traits differently and that in promoting professionalism there should be caution about fitting traits of professionalism as specified in one organization to fit in another. A major thread running through the presentation is that while the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration seeks to reinforce professionalism in the public service and administration in Africa, it is only a professional public service that can successfully implement the Charter. In this way the presentation brings out a symbiotic relationship between ethics, professionalism and the implementation of the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration. The author then calls upon governments to prioritize the implementation of the charter as a critical means of developing professionalism in the Public Service in Africa. The author brings out the issue of decline in professionalism in the public service in Africa and argues that it leads to decline in the delivery of services. Calling for a study of the phenomenon of how decline in professionalism leads to decline in the delivery of services the author refers to what has been termed as “quiet corruption” and argues that it is a direct consequence of the decline in professionalism in the public service. The main argument here is that a professional public service would not engage in neither grand, nor petty, nor “quiet corruption” and that the efforts that have for long been put on highlighting grand and petty corruption in the public service should have included (or even emphasised) restoring professionalism in the service. This then makes restoring professionalism in the public service in Africa an urgent requirement for improvement of performance and delivery of services. The author makes the point that this is more imperative especially since the delivery of public service has a direct linkage with the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or more specifically for Africa, the development objectives stipulated in the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) or National Development Strategies. And so the paper emphasises that the benefits of enhanced professionalism include not only inculcating positive values, building trust, and enhancing transparency and accountability but, most importantly, contribution to improving service delivery and development in general. The author calls for efforts to develop professionalism in the public service including teaching it in its principles, practices, and conduct. The presentation highlights the various elements that need to be touched on in developing professionalism in the public service as: competence, character, attitude, conduct, excellence. However, emphasis is put on strengthening supportive institutional arrangements including systems, structures, laws, rules and regulations as well as professional infrastructure such as
associations as necessary for professionalism to be developed. The presentation puts a high premium on leadership as critical in supporting the growth of professionalism.

Introduction:

Meeting at the United Nations Headquarters in New York for the MDG Summit, World Leaders reiterated that they are “convinced that the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved, including in the poorest countries, with renewed commitment, effective implementation and intensified collective action by all Member States and other relevant stakeholders at both the domestic and international levels, using national development strategies and appropriate policies and approaches that have proved to be effective, with strengthened institutions at all levels, increased mobilization of resources for development, increased effectiveness of development cooperation and an enhanced global partnership for development”. This presentation is urging African governments to add another condition which is “public servants working with professionalism” to effectively deliver public services. Protecting and advancing the public interest ahead of individual interest; the maintenance of public confidence in the integrity and objectivity of our governance; openness to public inspection; transparency and accountability; and the ceaseless concern to fight against poverty are critical in Africa’s struggle for development. However, they require a highly professional public service, among other things.

The capacity building workshop we are holding in Addis in March 2011 has direct linkage to the provision of the constitution of the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers’ Network (APS-HRMnet) which, among its objectives, tasks the network to: Promote excellence, integrity and professional standards in the practice of human resource management in the public sector in Africa and support continental and regional efforts in Africa to implement harmonized public service commitments such as the Charter for Public Service in Africa. “The Charter has been revised in both its content and title since it is now referred to as the “African Charter on the Values and principles of Public Service and Administration”. It should be easy to understand the work of supporting efforts to implement the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration, promoting professionalism. However, owing to the ambiguity of the terms “professional” and “professionalism” it is not as straightforward to understand what is involved in promoting professionalism. I remember when a working Group on Professionalizing Human Resource Management in the Public Service in Africa was discussing the issue during the Round Table Conference of the Africa Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) in Mbabane, Swaziland, in 2008, there was heated debate focused on a single sided understanding of “professionalizing” to refer to creating a professional body with stringent criteria for admission of Members. It took a lot of discussion to make participants see a different understanding of “professionalizing”, based on inculcating a sense of professionalism, knowledge, skills, expertise, creating pride in one’s work and particular care for one’s service and clients. It is important therefore that we develop a common

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1 See the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers’ Constitution
understanding that will guide the work of the APS-HRMnet in promoting professionalism in the management of human resources in the Public Sector in Africa. This presentation is aimed at contributing to the discussion that will help to develop such a common understanding.

**A working understanding of “professionalism”**

There is a huge difference between being an expert, being qualified and being professional. Professionalism goes beyond having extraordinary mastery over knowledge and skills of a subject matter. It has to do with character, attitude, striving for excellence, competency\(^2\), and behavior as well as ethics. Working in a specific profession (medicine, engineering, law, teaching, accountancy, public service, etc) does not really make one a professional. There are many well qualified experts in fields such as these but who are disdained as professionals, their high positions, knowledge, skills and high pay notwithstanding. This presentation takes professionalism in the public service as the ability and practice of performing a function in a systematic manner with commitment, selflessness, and concern for the general interest, adhering to agreed fundamental principles and values, laws, rules and regulations, to provide the best possible efficient, effective and innovative public services to the community all the time.

The following are what we believe will distinguish a professional in any field.

**The Decagon of paradigm of Professionalism**

- Striving for Quality & excellence, not once, not twice but all the time and in all circumstances
- Sustained Maximization of knowledge and sharing it, which implies a constant search for more knowledge and a propensity to always propagate the knowledge through communication among things. A professional therefore has an instinct to teach and to learn new things: “The *sine qua non* of professionalism is specialized knowledge, and not just any sort of specialized knowledge. It is an accumulated and ordered knowledge, built up over time by the experience, analysis, and insight of predecessors in the field. It is knowledge that penetrates to the root of the matter and gives its possessor an understanding not only of *how* things are, but *why* they are that way. It is also hard-won knowledge that requires time and effort to possess, knowledge that many people cannot achieve”\(^3\)
- Persistent innovativeness which implies questioning existing ways of doing things, existing knowledge about things and a readiness not only to accept new ways and new knowledge but also to propagate them.
- Constant improvement in performance: A professional rarely gets satisfied with theirs work. Professionals always believe that even when they are doing well, there is a better way and they search for it.

\(^2\) Reed the GOALS Institute: Professionalism is for Everyone: Five Keys to Being a True Professional, 11th Printing 2011 (Scottsdale, AZ USA).

\(^3\) Robert G Kennedy, PhD: Why Military Officers Must Have Training in Ethics: (Department of Management University of St Thomas, USA, January 2000) read from [http://isme.tamu.edu/JSCOPE00/Kennedy00.html](http://isme.tamu.edu/JSCOPE00/Kennedy00.html)
• Seeking responsibility: Professionals believe that without responsibility to do things their knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for better performance will lay to waste. They therefore always seek for responsibility
• Learning from losses/ failures: Professionals do not waste time grudging over failure and/or losses. They use failure/losses as opportunities for learning and improvements
• Valuing communication and clients: Professionals always emit a glow of professionalism. It is like when you meet a professional, it shows. And this is through the way they communicate, the way they treat people/clients, the way they present themselves.
• Concern for Positive personal image and attitude
• Respect for ethics, laws, rules and regulations: Where would professionalism be without respect for order? Chaos has no place in professionalism. The first sign of a professional is orderliness, ethical behavior, respect for rules and regulations. Even when they strive for change in knowledge, skills, techniques, etc, professionals do it in an orderly way.
• Respect for diversity: Professionals normally know that they are not the only ones on the block. There are other professionals who may hold opinions that are different from theirs. They know that their profession thrives in a world of diversity. And therefore they do not indulge in trivial and parochial limitations in outlook.
• Humble confidence: the most impressive quality in professionalism is 'humble confidence.' Humble confidence shines as knowledge, humility, skilled verbal and written communication, friendliness and appreciation. It is the gamut of everything there is to make a professional but dressed in a gown of humbleness and opposed to arrogance!

Professionalism among public officials

It would be difficult to set a priori the specific standard of professionalism expected from all public officials. Already, the definitions of the concept found in the literature remain very general. Moreover, updating professional behavior depends on the situation and the context. That is why I will simply answer a question by borrowing this image from Alain Chanlat: Almost everywhere, evaluation criteria are vague, lending themselves with difficulty to practical application and measurement. They are so unclear that even the outlines of the concept of professionalism are lost. However, if professionalism refers to the ongoing search for excellence in performance and quality of work in all its dimensions, respect for the client, a love for the product, a concern for detail, a taste for beauty, moral concerns, mutual assistance, updating of knowledge and skills, attention paid to tools and especially, the full development of the human being, then I propose that professional behavior of African civil servants should be evaluated based on the model which identifies six main dimensions which characterize professionalism:
• A passion for excellence;
• Competence;
• A professional awareness (sense of public service in terms of rendering service to the public);

• Experience in the field;
• Effectiveness (individual performance);
• Personal qualities (inherent abilities, acquired skills).

In addition, this model has the advantage of describing what makes up each of the dimensions of professionalism, in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Let us comment on each of these:

• **A passion for excellence:** There is an aspect of professionalism which cannot be enforced through rules or even developed through training or other forms of skills or knowledge building. It is inherent in an individual public servant. Some people naturally search for the achieving the best. This passion once it exists can be tapped and supported so that it its glow does not flicker or die due to external circumstances. It is the job of managers in the public service especially the human resource managers to identify such passion for excellence and encourage it to benefit excellent delivery of public service and uplift the image of the public service.

• **Competence:** Competence does not hide behind any word or abstract terms. We see a competent person not through knowing what they can do but through what they have done or what they are doing. Competence is not just the possession of skills and knowledge but the application of the skills and knowledge in real work place to accomplish specific tasks and achieve specific objectives. Many public servants claim to have competence for the jobs they do. They support this with the training they have undertaken, the diplomas, certificates and degrees they have obtained and the number of years they have spent in the service. But these simply don’t add up to competence. A person is competent not just because of what they can do but because of how they apply that ability in the workplace. As part of professionalism competence is action and achievement oriented. It is not a claim to ability to achieve. It is action and achievement. Competent public service does not claim its competence. A competent public servant does not claim to be competent. It is visible and obvious to every one who gets in contact with the public service or with individual public servants. The reality check for the public service in Africa is how to ensure that the public service environment provides the requisite support and stimulation for those who are competent to deploy their competence to uplift the performance of the public service and enhance the delivery of public services.

• **A professional awareness:** To serve the public is not just being aware that one has a job they have to do and earn their salary. It is more importantly awareness that there is a public out there who have to be served and whose well being and livelihood, sometimes even survival depends on the performance of public servants. This awareness of the criticality of serving the public coupled with the commitment to actually doing it is probably the single most important aspect of professionalism in the public servants. We see it among medical workers working on hungry stomachs to provide health and medical services to the public under difficult conditions. We see it among police officers trying to keep law and order even where their own life is in danger. We see it in bus drivers going out to provide transport services even in situations where other people think it is dangerous to get out due to insecurity. We see it in school teachers who continue operating schools in zones of insecurity where they would be expected to abandon the schools.
The practical issue here is to what extent is this level of professional awareness is recognized and promoted to grow in the public service.

- **Experience in the field**: Knowledge and skills can only be actualized when they are put to work in the field to be translated into experiential achievement. Experience in the field is not just the number of years one spends working. It is what one is exposed to in terms of hands on and achievement. Many public servants claim experience in terms of number of years and the variety of organizations or agencies in the service they have worked in. However this cannot be the only determinant of experience in the field as an aspect of professionalism. It depends what one does during the years and in the variety of organizations and agencies. Some public servants are shifted from organization to organization, from job to job not because of their successes but because of their meager performance. In this case their experience cannot add up to professionalism. To the contrary it points to the lack of it. The message for human resource managers on this issue is that moving public servants from job to job should not be a matter of trial and error but based on matching job related competences and individual public servants’ portfolios to improve performance.

- **Effectiveness (individual performance)**: As an aspect of professionalism, achievement is a relentless pursuit of achieving objectives, accomplishing tasks, meeting deadlines, sometimes irrespective of hindrances especially in terms of inadequate resources and obstructions. It involves improvisations where resources and instruments are found wanting. It involves running faster when it is realized that the allocated time will not be enough. It involves avoiding giving excuses for non performance. In fact sometimes individual performance as an aspect of professionalism may be seen in trying, in not giving up more than in achievement.

- **Personal qualities (inherent abilities, acquired skills)**: Finally we should not forget that a professional is a person. And people are not made up of just acquired knowledge and skills. They have inherent attitudes and abilities that they can deploy to enhance performance. There are people who simply cannot steal. There are people who get extremely agitated by the possibility of being late to work or missing a day of work. There are people who get extremely disappointed when they do not manage to provide the service they are supposed to provide. There are people who cannot stand poor quality work. There are people who have a natural tendency to learn and invent new things and new ways of doing things. In other words, there are people who are inherently predisposed to professionalism. If this is true, then the task of human resource managers in the public service is to identify such people, select them, recruit them, develop them deploy them and motivate them correctly to tap their inherent professionalism to the betterment of the Public Service.

**Specific Traits of professionalism may vary from Organization to Organization**

Professionalism sounds like a universal value. And it has aspects such as those outlined above which are universal. However, research shows that different organizations specify its
traits differently. Therefore in promoting professionalism there should be caution about fitting traits of professionalism as specified in one organization to fit in another. For example; the United Nations in its competence for professionalism indicates that an official who behaves with professionalism: Shows pride in work and achievements, Demonstrates professional competence and masterly of subject matter, Conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and achieving results, Is motivated by professional rather than personal concerns, Shows persistence when faced with difficult problems or challenges, and Remains calm in stressful situations. The National Science Teachers’ Association (USA) in promoting professionalism among science teachers emphasizes the following principles: Promoting the Growth of All Students, Taking Personal Responsibility for Professional Growth, Being Leaders in the Profession, Upholding Personal and Professional Ethics, and Support for Professional Teachers of Science. The Maryland Judicial Taskforce on professionalism in the Judiciary identified the following traits of Professionalism in the Judiciary: compliance with the Rules of Professional Conduct, civility, courtesy, and respect for colleagues, trust among colleagues, competence as attorneys, dignity, punctuality, and concern for client welfare, candor with the court, honesty, integrity, and fairness with both court and counsel. What is clear though is that professionalism has two sides to it: the individual side concerning the public servants each of them being an individual and the organization side which is the public service as a collective entity. From each of these there is an internal side that cannot be easily visible and an external side with things that can be done to exhibit professionalism. From the individual public servants externally professionalism can be seen in their behavior and practices. But internally they have must have the professional knowledge, skills, attitude, awareness, and values. Normally if these are professionally correct they will be reflected in their behavior and practice.

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5 see Principles of Professionalism for Science Educators (http://www.nsta.org/about/positions/professionalism.aspx) Adopted by the NSTA Board of Directors, June 2007; Re-adopted, November 2010)
Symbiotic Relationship between Ethics, Professionalism and the Implementation of the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration

The African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration includes in Professionalism as article 9 in chapter 3 on Rules of conduct binding public service employees. The Charter outlines three things in respect to professionalism; namely:

- Public service employees shall carry out their assignments and duties with professionalism and diligence.
- Public service employees are required to be civic-minded and courteous when dealing with users.
- Public service employees must behave responsibly and respectfully towards their superiors, colleagues and associates.

In Article 10 the Charter links professionalism to ethics and rules of conduct specifying that:

- Public service employees shall display integrity, full and total adherence to ethical rules and values.
- Public service employees shall not solicit, accept, demand or receive, directly or indirectly, any payment, gift or other advantage, in return for performing their obligations.
- Public service employees shall not use their posts, functions or responsibilities for political or partisan purposes. They shall in all circumstances be impartial and loyal in performing their duties.

In this way the Charter implies that professionalism and ethics are so linked that it is not conceivable to have one without the other. But one important thing the charter implies is that while the charter seeks to reinforce professionalism in the public service and administration in Africa, it is only a professional public service that can successfully implement the Charter. For one to understand how professionalism in the public service has become a central issue to public administration and public service in Africa one needs to read the whole Charter. Taken in its comprehensive meaning as discussed in the opening sections of this paper, professionalism in the public service is the central theme running through the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration. The question at this point becomes how to develop and sustain professionalism in the public service in Africa.

Where did professionalism go wrong?

- Slippage in HR Practices: Selection, recruitment, induction, Training, Motivation, Discipline, etc
- Deviation from good Public governance and administration
- Decline in the delivery of services
- Decline in Professionalism: Conduct, Ethics, respect for laws, rules, regulations, competence & love pursuit of excellence, self image of public service
- Lapse in HR Practices: Selection, recruitment, induction, Training, Motivation, Discipline, etc
If decline in professionalism leads to decline in the delivery of services, we may want to study this phenomenon beyond the corruption against which every one is crying about in the Public Service in Africa. This brings us to discuss the challenges related to overcoming “silent corruption”.

“Quiet Corruption” and Decline in Service Delivery

There has been for long a general view that the delivery of public services in many African countries has largely declined due to big corruption in the public sector which has siphoned away funds and other resources that would go to the provision of essential public services. Indeed big and petty corruption is very detrimental to the delivery of services and eroded the image and trust of government and public sector in general. However, the view of the author on this issue has been and still is that in daily practice of the public service, there are public servants whose behavior, though not termed as corruption, is as detrimental, if not more detrimental to the delivery of services than grand corruption. In its flagship report entitled *Africa Development Indicators 2010*, the World Bank raised the issue of “quiet corruption” defining it as the failure of public servants to deliver goods or services paid for by governments adding that quiet corruption is pervasive and widespread across Africa and adversely affects Africa’s development. The report points out “various types of malpractice of frontline providers (teachers, doctors, inspectors, and other government representatives) that do not involve monetary exchange. These behaviours include both potentially observable deviations, such as absenteeism, but also hard-to-observe deviations from expected conduct, such as a lower level of effort than expected or the deliberate bending of rules for personal advantage. For example, recent findings indicate that primary school teachers in a number of African countries are not in school 15 to 25 percent of the time (absenteeism), but, in addition, a considerable fraction of those in school are not found teaching (low effort). Frontline provider deviations from expected behaviour that meet these requirements broaden the scope of corruption”. The phenomenon has been for long known by those close to the public service in most African countries. So, what is surprising is not that the World Bank raised the issue in March 2010 but why having been dealing with public sector performance in Africa for a long time, why now and not before? The view of this paper is that the highest manifestation of decline in professionalism in the public service is the raise of what is termed.

Quiet corruption has direct and indirect consequences. The World Bank report elaborates “both the direct consequences, such as the limitation of the productivity potential of households, firms, and farms, and the indirect consequences, such as distrust of public institutions and the notion that frontline provider malpractice is inevitable and omnipresent. As an example of direct consequences, we might think how poor service delivery caused by absenteeism or low effort on the job might hamper a child’s development, with potential permanent effects on adult educational attainment, cognitive skills, and underlying health”. The point needs no belabouring. A professional public service would not engage in neither grand, nor petty, nor quiet corruption. The efforts that have for long been put on highlighting corruption in the public service should have included (or even emphasised) restoring professionalism in the service. In many respects in African public services, restoring professionalism is an urgent requirement for improvement of performance and delivery of services. It is more imperative especially since the delivery of public service such as education, health, agricultural extension, etc have a direct

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6 Read How quiet corruption is hindering Africa’s development
linkage with the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or more specifically for Africa, the development objectives stipulated in the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) or National Development Strategies. We do not need to mince words on this issue. Africa’s development requires professionalism in its public service.

**Developing Professionalism in the Public Service**

It has been for long assumed that once one is an “expert” in one’s field of study, one becomes a professional. Consequently professionalism has not been taught. I believe that professionalism needs to be taught in its principles, practices, and conduct. However, since “teaching” is not the same thing as “developing” even if the two are linked, the challenge we have on our hands is how to develop professionalism if we understand it in its broad terms. If professionalism is an amalgam of character, attitude, conduct, excellence, and competence, the question is: of these what can be developed and how. What needs to be done and how in order to develop professionalism in the public service? This is a critical question for Ministries responsible for public service, human resource managers in the public service, and management development institutions by whatever name called and indeed all stakeholders and key actors involved in developing the capacity of the public service in Africa. The various elements that need to be touched on in developing professionalism in the public service are presented in the diagram below. They are: competence, character, attitude, conduct, excellence. However, this paper asserts that supportive institutional arrangements including systems, structures, laws, rules and regulations as well as professional infrastructure such as associations are necessary for professionalism to be developed. Above all leadership is critical in supporting the growth of professionalism.

**Elements that need to be touched on in developing professionalism in the Public services**
Therefore, the task of developing professionalism in the public service in Africa will entail:

- Assessment of the type of leadership that is spearheading the public service in Africa and how it can be developed to ensure that it favours and champions the growth and development of professionalism in the public service;
- Analysis and assessment of the institutional set up in the public service including organization structures, systems, laws, rules, and regulations as well as professional bodies and associations to see to what extent these provide incentives for and support the development of professionalism. In this case institutional development becomes part of developing professionalism.
- Ensuring that the training infrastructure with various training institutions right from kindergarten inculcate professionalism. There is need to realize that the development of appropriate professional values, attitudes and behaviors is a continuum that starts when a student joins a specific training institution and as such professionals in any field need to be exposed to the essence of professionalism. There is work for human resource managers in the public service to advocate for the inclusion of professionalism in all training in the country to produce a population that is pre-disposed to provide public services professionally.
- Analysis and assessment of competence of the public servants vis-à-vis the tasks they have to perform to effectively and efficiently serve the public and ensuring that the necessary competences are developed through training and other staff development activities;
- Emphasis on pursuit of excellence in every field of the public service ensuring that excellence is determined not only by the public servant but also by the users of the services provided. In addition there has to be a strong emphasis on sustained research and creation of continuous learning to achieve and sustain excellence
- Ensuring that the recruitment processes avail to the public service staff who have character and attitude that is pre-disposed to serving the public.

**Developing service and development oriented leadership:** Developing professionalism in the public service in Africa requires public sector leaders capable creativity to play the role of leading the crusade for shaping the future of public services that ensure ensures not only development and achievement of MDGs, international development objectives and national development strategies but also and probably most important to ensure that the vulnerable communities are not left out of the development process. The development of such a leadership is a challenge but it must be addressed because it is part of the key to developing professionalism in the public service on the continent.

**Training and an on-going commitment to learning and improving skills:** Continuous learning through continuing education and other self development activities will contribute to the development of knowledge and skills that are part and parcel of the competences of professionalism. Therefore governments need to put a high premium on training public servants. However, we need to bear in mind that professionalism does not come from just schooling and certification. Professionalism is not so much of what is acquired externally through education. It is also about what is evoked from deep within their conscience. Therefore efforts of developing professionalism must include approaches of training and education that touch the ignition of an
individual’s motivation. Such approaches include mentoring, experiential learning staff exchanges and study visits etc.

Motivation and Incentives: Motivation is a humane value, an inward drive to serve. Incentives on the other hand can be regarded as rewards that an individual values so much that he/she will work hard in response to them. It is now a well known fact in many African countries that incentives such as pay are very poor. It is not useful to pretend that professionalism exists outside the influence of pay. Therefore, the strategies for developing professionalism in the public service must include progressive improvements in the remuneration of public servants to ensure that they do not get the temptation to behave unprofessionally under the pressure of unmet critical needs such as food, housing, education and health for themselves and their dependants. Most public servants who have the propensity for professionalism do not aspire to be rich. They aspire and are happy to serve. However, it is understood that to serve to the best of their abilities they need to be alive. And being alive is not just a matter of biology! Being alive is a social and economic phenomenon as well!

Professionalization infrastructure: Professional bodies bringing public servants together such with their counterparts in the same profession such as lawyers, accountants, human resource managers, public administrators, teachers, health workers, architects, etc, Offering each other civility and respect rather than elitism and disdain constitute an infrastructure through which professionalism can grow and should therefore be promoted as part of the efforts to develop professionalism. Within such an infrastructure “professionals” could have a fiduciary relationship with clients, and an obligation of trust and compassionate concern for the client's welfare that takes priority over other concerns. Moreover deviation from the agreed norms and codes of conduct within each profession could be checked or reprimanded by the professional body. This would minimize the burden of the public service of being the sole controller of public servants. This works out best when one believes that a profession is an organized calling in which men pursue a learned art and are united in the pursuit of it as a public service.

Benefits of professionalism in the Public Service

While the main argument of this presentation is that enhancing professionalism in the public service will contribute greatly to the improvement of performance in terms of the delivery of public services and development in general, there are intermediary benefits which are equally important. They include: inculcating positive values in the public service and aligning them with those of the population, building trust, and enhancing transparency and accountability.

- **Inculcating positive values:** The Professionalization of public services will serve as one of the generators and guardians of positive values in the Public Service. As governments in Africa strive to regain the trust of the citizens, they need to realize that the African context currently is one where the shift of values is an important dimension of changing culture, processes, systems, and relationship between the public service and the public. In the final analysis professionalism has a critical role to play in the development process of the country.

- **Building trust:** A public service that has fully or at least to a large extent has embraced professionalism will project an image of a government that has concern for the citizen, that respects public resources and uses them for the benefit of the general interest, that ethnically
competent to address the socio-politico-economic challenges facing the population, and ensures the well being of everyone. This will generate and build trust on several levels including: trust between the government and the public, trust between the political and the bureaucratic sides of government, and trust among the public servants themselves. Ideally this should create harmonious development or at least minimize conflicts that detract development efforts.

- **Enhancing transparency and accountability**: Professionalism puts a premium on respect for the needs of the clients/customers by whatever names they may be known (patients in hospitals, students in Universities, pupils in schools, parents, consumers, voters, tax payers, users, etc). This encourages openness, collaboration, involvement, and reporting on results. Professionalism promotes self control either through individuals behaving according to the dictates of their profession or professional bodies providing incentives for public servants belonging to them to behave according to their codes. Eventually transparency and accountability get enhanced. It is difficult to conceive professionalism without accountability.

**Recommendations:**

The following recommendations are made on the assumption that African Governments are taking professionalism in the Public Service as a major concern and one of the most critical contributors to the development process on the continent. They are made also on the assumption that Ministers responsible for Public Service, Senior Managers in the Public Service including those responsible for human resources are resolved to promote professionalism in the Public Service.

- Ministries responsible for Public Service, Ministries responsible for Education, Public Service Commissions and other Appointing Authorities, Universities, Management Development Institutes, a Tertiary Institutions, professional bodies, representatives from Private sector and Civil Society Institutions should be brought together into a Commission or a Taskforce or a Committee to spearhead the development of Professionalism in the Public Service. Such a Committee or what ever name it is called will first and foremost propose how to integrate professionalism in education and training curricula and programs, Public Service selection and recruitment processes, and advocacy activities for cultivating demand for professionalism from the population. Proposals from such a committee could strengthen the institutional infrastructures for professionalism.

- The above recommended Committee should conduct research and hearings on Professionalism in the Public Service in the country and use the findings to identify indicators and indices of professionalism in the Public Service and develop standards of professional conduct to guide the practice of professionalism in the public service including periodically monitoring and evaluating it. The standards and indicators should be published to the Public Service and indeed the Public itself. Some countries have codes of conduct, but what we are recommending goes far beyond just codes of conduct.

- Leaders at all levels in the Public Sector must become effective role models by adhering to the highest levels of professionalism in rendering service of what ever nature to the Public and community and by holding all public servants practicing under and with them to high standards of professionalism. The entire governance structure must be engaged in this endeavor.
The Committee on Professionalism should develop professionalism guidelines and sanctions for adoption by the Public Service reflecting the expectation that Public Servants will behave with professionalism in serving the Public.

Bibliography:

1. Africa Union: Draft African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration


7. “How quiet corruption is hindering Africa’s development” in the World Bank’s ‘Africa Development Indicators 2010 March 2010)