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
Introduction

- Main argument: “Public servants working with professionalism” are required for effective, efficient, responsive and equitable delivery of public services.
- Workshop linked to the constitution of APS-HRMnet 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.
- A working understanding of “professionalism”
- The paradigm of Professionalism
- Professionalism among public officials
- Specific Traits of professionalism may vary from Organization to Organization
- Symbiotic Relationship between Ethics, Professionalism and the Implementation of the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration
- Where did professionalism go wrong?
- “Quiet Corruption” and Decline in Service Delivery
- Developing Professionalism in the Public Service
- Elements that need to be touched on in developing professionalism in the Public services
- Benefits of professionalism in the Public Service
- Recommendations:
Working understanding of Professionalism

- 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 Paradigm of professionalism

- Striving for Quality & excellence,
- Sustained Maximization of knowledge and sharing it,
- Persistent innovativeness.
- Constant improvement in performance:
- Seeking responsibility:
- Learning from losses/ failures:
- Valuing communication and clients:
- Concern for Positive personal image and attitude
- Respect for ethics, laws, rules and regulations:
- Respect for diversity:
- Humble confidence:
Professionalism among public officials

Professionalism is 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. Professional behavior of African civil servants should be evaluated based on 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).
Specific Traits of professionalism may vary from Organization to Organization

- Different organizations specify its traits differently
- Caution about fitting traits of professionalism as specified in one organization to fit in another
- 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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>External</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal and external views of professionalism</td>
<td>Knowledge, Skills, Attitude, Awareness, Values</td>
<td>Behavior, Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDIVIDUAL PUBLIC SERVANT</strong></td>
<td>Organizational culture, Internalized beliefs, Norms, Internalized values</td>
<td>Institutions, Systems, Structures, Laws, rules, regulations, Policies, Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE PUBLIC SERVICE AS A COLLECTIVE ENTITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Symbiotic Relationship between Ethics, Professionalism and the Implementation of the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration

- 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.
Thoughts on how to develop professionalism in the public service in Africa

First: Where did professionalism go wrong?

- Lapse in HR Practices: Selection, recruitment, induction, Training, Motivation, Discipline, etc
- Decline in Professionalism: Conduct, Ethics, respect for laws, rules, regulations, competence & love pursuit of excellence, self image of public service
- Slippage in Public Service leadership and Control
- Decline in the delivery of services
- Deviation from good Public governance and administration
“Quiet Corruption” and Decline in Service Delivery

- Big and petty corruption detrimental to the delivery of services, image, and trust of government and public sector in general.
- The view of the author 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 petty or grand corruption.
- Read *Africa Development Indicators 2010*, (the World Bank) on “quiet corruption”: “the failure of public servants to deliver goods or services paid for by governments”.
- “various types of malpractice of frontline providers (teachers, doctors, inspectors, and other government representatives) that do not involve monetary exchange.
Developing Professionalism in the Public Service

- Character
- Competence
- Laws, rules
- Institutions
- Attitude
- Conduct
- Excellence
- Structures
- Systems

Leadership

Professionalism connected to Character, Competence, Laws, rules, Institutions, Attitude, Conduct, Excellence, Structures, and Systems.
Developing professionalism continued

- Developing service and development oriented leadership:

- Training and an on-going commitment to learning and improving skills:

- Motivation and Incentives:

- Professionalization infrastructure:

- Commission or a Taskforce or a Committee to spearhead the development of Professionalism in the Public Service.

- Leaders at all levels in the Public Sector must become effective role models by adhering to the highest levels of professionalism.