Enhancing Professionalization of Human Resource Management in the Public Service in Africa

**Human Resource Management:**

*A Neglected Element in African Public Service Reforms*

Prof. Gelase Mutahaba  
Department of Political Science and Public Administration  
University of Dar es Salaam  
P.O. Box 35042  
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: A NEGLECTED ELEMENT IN AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE REFORMS

1 Introduction

The objective of this paper is to provide an overview of the underlying causes behind the poor condition of the human resource management function in African public services. That understanding is necessary to be able to place in a proper perspective the diagnosis of the problems currently afflicting the performance of the function within African public services, as well as suggesting appropriate prescriptions, a task which many of the other presenters are supposed to address.

At the 30th AAPAM Roundtable Conference in October, 2008, which was held in Accra, Ghana the author of this paper opined that the realization of a democratic and developmental state by African countries, which was the subject of that roundtable, would significantly depend on the capacity and capability of African countries’ public service systems. That capacity and capability would be required to organize elections, provide sound technical advice on measures needed to stimulate growth, and at the same time address inequality and reduce poverty, attract foreign investment while avoiding over-dependency. That public service will also have to maintain national sovereignty as well as maintaining fiscal stability without overlooking issues of stimulating employment. At a mundane level, it is the same public service that ensures that law and order on the street is maintained, children are taught in school, land ownership certificates are issued, roads and water supply systems are constructed and maintained, and wrong doers are punished. It is also the public service that mobilizes resources from the
public (taxes) required to finance all the above mentioned functions in a modern state.

The author also noted that some commentators had suggested that many African countries public service systems do not yet have the capacity to efficiently and effectively handle even the mundane functions mentioned above, let alone the more complex functions of supervising elections in countries torn by ethnic conflict and preparing economic packages to stimulate recovery in the current global crisis, despite considerable efforts to reform the public service systems.

While we are uncomfortable with generalizations on the poor state of African public services because there are variations in performance among countries and some countries have had their up and downs in this regard, we agree with the broad tenor of the observation concerning the low capacity and capability of African countries’ public services despite considerable investment in strengthening them over a period of close to five decades.

We are contending that the low fortunes of African efforts in reforming public services are significantly linked to the failure by African countries to recognize that public service reform is, to a great extent, reform of “how people” are managed in the public service. We are suggesting that over the five decades since most African countries attained independence and started taking measures to reform their public services, they failed to give adequate and appropriate attention to human resource management issues, in addition to whatever other problems they may have encountered. That neglect has had disastrous consequences on the results of the various reform interventions.

The paper, therefore, is a longitudinal assessment of the extent to which African countries’ efforts to reform public services over five decades have given attention
to human resources management issues. As part of the review, we address various phases/episodes of public service reform over the five decades, paying particular attention to explaining differentials in success attained among countries, and between periods.

The paper is divided into six sections besides the introduction and conclusion, in section one and six respectively. In section two we review the characteristics of the colonial public administration systems, paying particular attention to the HRM issues and how this impinged on the capacity, capability and effectiveness of the public administration systems that emerged as African countries attained independence. Section three is devoted to assessing the measures (reforms) taken by Governments of the early independence period to develop the capacity and capability of the public administration to respond to the challenges of independence and the place that was given to HRM.

Section four covers the period between the early 1980 and mid 1990s, when African public administration, like other jurisdictions worldwide, faced a major crisis. In the section we identify the characteristics of the crisis, its causes and measures taken to contain/redress it and its impact on HR. In section five the paper addresses how African public service systems are being affected by globalization in its various facets, and in turn how they are coping, paying particular attention to the “New Public Management” reform Agenda. We conclude by charting out a way forward- the Imperatives of Putting People Issues First in public service reform.
2. Historical Legacies

There is debate concerning the root causes of African countries current administrative malaise. On the one hand some analysts suggest that African countries value systems and socio-cultural mileus, which emphasis empathy and well nitted support kinships, militate against the institutionalization of Marx Weber’ principles of bureaucracy. Therefore, one hundred years of effort to graft western derived public administration models on Africa has been a fruitless exercise. (Onyemelukwe 1975, Hyden 1983). On the other hand others dismiss such lines of argument by asserting that colonialism has dented and in some cases completely destroyed the underlying foundations of African value systems, especially in so far as they relate to systems of governance. Therefore, if the introduced Marx Weber-based administrative systems are not working the explanation may lie elsewhere, including their having been introduced in a half-hearted manner (Mutahaba; 1989).

While this debate is important, for purposes of this paper, we will defer discussions on it and address the characteristics of Africa’s governance before colonialism. The literature is clear that Africa had well articulated and thriving governance systems that were very well developed, with many of them having hallmarks of Marx Weber’s attributes of a rational bureaucracy, (Henry Barlow 1984). Africa had empires and kingdoms like the Ghana Empire, the Songhai Empire, the powerful Fulani Emirates of Northern Nigeria, the strong kingdoms of Buganda, Bunyoro, Rwanda, and Bukoba; the democratically controlled Elders Councils in most of present day Tanzania and systems of administration based on Age sets.

The scramble for Africa by the colonialists and related parceling of countries into colonies indiscriminately cut across all these varying systems of administration and proceeded to rule and administer Africa in ways that were not only different
from indigenous systems, but were on the basis of whether the colonizing power was British, French, German or Portuguese. Some of the colonizing powers made some use of indigenous systems of administration, while others destroyed them or ignored them. For example the British colonial system of “indirect rule” was used by Lord Lugard in Northern Nigeria and Uganda in respect of the inter-lucustrine Kingdoms of Buganda, Bunyoro, Ankole and Toro. In Uganda, the Kiganda administrative system was imposed on the rest of Buganda and Baganda chiefs were used by the British colonial government to enforce the system. Where indirect rule was practiced, the ethnic groups on which it was applied had their native systems strengthened and entrenched giving rise to feelings of superiority and to demands for federal constitutions.

Irrespective of whether direct or indirect rule was used to administer the territories, to a great extent colonialism supplanted or suppressed the various traditional administrative organizations, and replaced them with administrative set-ups styled after the system in the mother country. Even then, invariably the emerging administrative infrastructure in most colonies was limited in scope, function and size, concerning itself mainly with pacifying the natives for purposes of facilitating exploitation of natural resources. Variations in terms of complexity of the administrative infrastructure in a given country depended on the requirements for pacifying the natives, on the one hand, and the structure and complexity of the economy and level of investment, on the other hand.

The goals of the colonial system naturally dictated the governance arrangement that were put in place. Given that the goals were to maintain “law and order” and collect taxes, the public administration system was highly legalistic emphasized processes, procedures and precedence. Rules and regulations were the main instruments for eliciting compliance and discipline. The organization was highly hierarchical, inhibiting lower level participation in decision making.
It was also highly suppressive and did not respond to public demands. These attributes contributed immensely to the evolution of an administrative culture that was conservative, unresponsive and antidevelopment in orientation. However, in so far as the interests of the colonial state remained limited to the goals mentioned earlier, on the surface the administrative systems seemed to operate effectively.

The evolving public administration culture manifested itself more significantly in three important aspects: management styles, management of financial resources, and management of information. The systems for managing personnel /human resources, which is our main interest in this paper were built on rigid rules with over revelation of personnel practices and policies; classification of personnel was usually in terms of duties rather than tasks, and people were paid for what they were rather than what they did. Furthermore, the systems were characterized by vague job descriptions, and performance appraisal systems that valued compliance more than productivity.

With regard to professional competence, colonial policy deliberately excluded natives from being appointed to professional positions, these were reserved for colonial officers or like in the case of Kenya and Tanganyika, Asians could be appointed to junior level professional positions. For that reason little, if any, investment was put in tertiary education and training for the natives either in- country or by providing scholarships for training abroad.

Thus, at independence all African public services suffered from a paucity of indigenous public service personnel, a lack of other administrative resources, weak administrative infrastructure, and potentially explosive relations between bureaucrats and politicians. (Mutahaba 1989). The paucity of indigenous public service personnel is indicated by the following data. When Tanganyika became
independent the country had a total of 68 nationals with University degrees, and it did not have a University. This was also the case in Zambia and Malawi. Similarly, education facilities at lower levels were equally under developed. Using Tanganyika again as an example, the country had only 10 secondary schools with a total student population numbering 2400 as it became independent. Thus, the pool of secondary school graduates from which to recruit even junior and middle public officers was very limited.

Given the foregoing, it is not surprising that the capacity and capability of the public services in terms of size of the service in relation to tasks at hand; competence levels, and level of administrative penetration was very low.

The low numbers of indigenous personnel occupying senior public service positions meant that senior levels of the public services were staffed by colonial/expatriate officers raising issues of whether the senior public service could be trusted. The enormity of this problem is indicated by the following data. In Nigeria, at independence in 1960, only 15 percent of established super scale posts were held by Nigerians, 0.7 per cent by other West Africans, and 83 per cent by Europeans. In Zambia, the composition of the upper civil service in 1964, when she became independent, was as follows:

Table 1: Composition of Zambian Upper Public Service by Race, 1964

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division grade</th>
<th>European</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>1,256</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>2,692</td>
<td>1,882</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,948</td>
<td>1,021</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5,883</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Mutahaba, 1989 (page 150).
In Swaziland, established posts stood at 3,062 at the time of independence and of these about 500 were senior civil service positions. Of the latter, Europeans accounted for more than 90 per cent, with Swazis accounting for the remaining 10 per cent. Furthermore many of the countries could not address the numbers problem by training potential public service personnel because of the absence of tertiary training facilities. Tanzania, Zambia, Swaziland and, Malawi, to mention a few, did not have a university of their own. They had to rely on universities in neighbouring countries. Only Nigeria, of all the countries in English-speaking Africa, had an institute for training senior administrators.

The weakness of the service were moreover accentuated by shortcomings in the rules, regulations and procedures, all of which had been established for managing a public service with different objectives – a colonial service. While it would take some time to change the inherited rules and regulations for managing the human resource function, for the indigenous personnel who had to operate under them the rules and procedures were considered to be illegitimate which tended to undermine their efficacy. This was true for example of rules for hiring, firing and disciplining public service employees which might not have been strong enough to withstand pressures coming from the social and cultural milieu.

3. Responding to the Challenges of Independence
The attainment of independence had ushered in great expectations on the part of the citizens of the new independent states. Independence called into question the appropriateness of the entire machinery of government, which had been designed by the departing colonialists. There was an emotional attachment to the need for changing the colonial machinery even if only for its own sake. Also, the objectives, and consequently the functions, of government were to change considerably with the attainment of independence,
Thus government activities increased in number, scope, and size and the order of importance attached to the various activities also changed. The function that was completely new was the maintenance of sovereignty, this function having been exercised by the colonizing country. The furtherance of socioeconomic development, though previously part of the functions of the colonial government, was until then accorded low priority. It was now to be a major function of the newly independent governments, and the requisite machinery for this activity had to be devised. Another issue that till then had not come up was the maintenance of national integrity. During the colonial period, the different ethnic groups comprising the territory were not committed to the colonial territorial unit for their linkage to it was a matter of administrative convenience. Independence transformed the situation: all ethnic groups falling within the boundaries of the newly independent state were claimed by it as its citizens, and they were expected to feel a commitment to it as their country—a commitment transcending the one they held for their tribe. Machinery for carrying out this new activity had to be developed.

These new and expanded functions would tax any administrative system, let alone one that had been developed for purposes of shouldering less diversified and simpler functions. Meeting all of them at once, in most uncertain circumstances and with no past experience as a guide, the newly independent states could only grope their way through, reacting to events rather than controlling them according to an overall master plan.

While it is true to say that there were variations with regard to the various countries' experiences with reforms in the early independence period, these can nonetheless be grouped into several discernible patterns (Mutahaba, 1989). On the one hand, the countries can be grouped according to their propensity toward
reform; while on the other, they can be grouped on the basis of the types of reforms they adopted.

With regard to the former, four patterns can be identified. At one extreme are a few countries that showed little or no propensity toward reform. Such countries made no pretense at administrative reform at all, either because the inherited colonial administrative machinery were deemed adequate for the tasks thrust upon them, or because, like the departing colonial masters, they did not see the need for much change. A second group improvised reforms when the occasion warranted, adopting an approach that was pragmatic, relying on hunches and improvisation. Examples under this group include Malawi, and very often Kenya is often cited. A third group includes those countries that consciously planned reforms and established formal machinery for the initiation and evaluation of reforms. Such countries established commissions of inquiry or ministries of administrative reform or invited outside consultants to review overall administrative conditions. Examples of such countries include Tanzania, Zambia, the Sudan, Ghana, Nigeria, and at times Kenya. At the other extreme is the fourth pattern, consisting of countries that showed the greatest propensity toward reform. Many of these countries established completely new institutions and machineries of government mainly because the previous bureaucratic apparatus simply collapsed. Cases in point are Mozambique, Angola, Ethiopia in 1974, and Guinea. It is not in any way being suggested that these four patterns are tight compartments; they represent fluid positions on a continuum, and a country's reform efforts can indeed be grouped under more than one pattern.

For the countries that showed some propensity toward reform, the choice of reforms adopted could be divided into two broad approaches.
The first category placed emphasis on undertaking major internal organizational changes and using modern management tools and techniques to improve performance. Under this approach administration tends to be defined narrowly: it is deemed to have its own internal logic, malperformance should be corrected internally. Broad societal reform was not only considered irrelevant to administrative reform but there was also a bias in favor of maintaining the status quo in that regard.

Many African countries adopted this approach as an official doctrine both on their own initiative as well through coercion or persuasion by donor agencies such as the United Nations and USAID. Public administration principles and practices were imported many times wholesale from the developed world. Programs of technical assistance in development administration multiplied. U.S. government project funding in this field, for example, totaled $85 million between 1963 and 1970. With regard to addressing HRM issues much of the focus was on setting up local training institutions in public administration, with staff, training philosophies, methodologies, and teaching material being imported and having little semblance with the tasks and responsibilities of the public services in question.

It also included training top-level practitioners and their potential successors at western based institutions. Liberally distributed scholarships attracted a whole generation of students from African countries for education in universities and specialized management institutions in America, followed by attachments in private and public organizations. In terms of outputs many countries were able to train large numbers of professionals and by the mid 1970s dependency on colonial/expatriate personnel had declined significantly. The substance of most of the training reflected a public administration discipline based essentially on
the "principles" enunciated by Woodrow Wilson, Luther Gulick, and Frederick Taylor. This point was articulated most succinctly by Milton Esman:

“It consisted of a set of politically neutral techniques that could produce economy, efficiency and effectiveness in implementing policies and programmes sanctioned by responsible political leadership. It was not addressed to the controversial substance of policy, to politics, but to the most efficient process for carrying them out. As codified in the PODSCORB framework, American public administration was a technocratic science (1) universally applicable to all cultures, and (2) committed to rationalizing structures and procedures within the bureaucratic institution of the state”. (Milton, 1969)

In general, there was an optimism concerning the practical contribution of this approach to administrative improvement in the new states. This general optimism is underscored further by a document released by the United Nations in the early sixties:

“In order to accelerate the pace of development a concerted advance on all fronts, i.e., governmental organization and procedures, personnel management and training, budgeting and financial controls, fiscal policy and administration, etc., is more fruitful than a piecemeal approach on individual sections”.

The second approach toward reform was adopted by those countries that placed emphasis on the need for broad societal development as opposed to the development of the administrative system. To this group, the administrative system is only a part of a wider system consisting of many interdependent subsystems. Each subsystem performs functions that affect and are, in turn, affected by the other subsystems.

The advocates of this approach believe that in the underdeveloped countries the administrative bureaucratic system is already overdeveloped in relation to the other subsystems and that it possesses a disproportionate share of skills and modern technology, which make it overshadow other social sectors. It is further
argued that whereas in developed polities the increase in bureaucratic strength, which results from administrative improvements, is counterbalanced by strong extra-bureaucratic subsystems, the absence or weakness of such subsystems in new states makes administrative improvements reinforce the imbalance. In the absence of these balancing mechanisms, bureaucracies in these societies tend to behave unpredictably, and generally "irrationally," irrespective of whether they have been reformed or not.

Under these circumstances, stress should therefore be placed on the development of extra bureaucratic institutions, such as a strong political system, organized interest groups, a healthy economic system, as prerequisites for the emergence of an effective administration. The first few years of independence saw some African countries take efforts to develop and institutionalize these sets of institutions. Most effort went into the development of the party system or, indeed, to be exact, the single party system (Mutahaba 1989). Thus from Guinea, Ivory Coast, Ghana, and Sierra Leone on the west coast, to Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya, and the Sudan on the east coast, the ruling party became the sole political party; and administrative bureaucratic institutions were subordinated to it. The countries where this was attempted with the most vigor, however, are those that attained independence following long periods of revolutionary activity and had during the struggle relied foremost on social mobilization and the development of institutions for that purpose. The most typical examples were Mozambique; Angola; and, to some extent, Guinea, during the period of Sekou Toure.

Irrespective of the reform approach adopted, after two decades of reform most African public administration systems could be described as weak in terms of capacity and capability in relation to the tasks at hand, and some were in crisis. It is our view that, in as much as the continued weakness of the administrative systems could be ascribed to many factors including underlying
external environmental pressures which made the post independence reform effort inadequate, a major factor was that the management of the human resource function was not given the attention it deserved in the reform agenda and the people issue continued to be neglected. We address this point in the next sub-section.

The foregoing review addressing approaches to public service reforms during the first two decades of independence in Africa suggest that irrespective of the approach to reform adopted, in many countries the measures did not adequately HRM related issues. Given the inadequacies in HR management systems as countries attained independence one would have expected interventions related to improving HRM to be prominent in the public service reforms. Unfortunately few countries even developed a personnel policy statement outlining how the HR resource would be obtained, harnessed and deployed for purposes of accelerating development. One had therefore to distill government position/policy on public personnel issues from circulars on various subjects of the HR function.

Another important issue related to Governments not paying attention to constituting appropriate organizational mechanisms through which the functions of managing HR would be carried out. The organizational mechanisms that were inherited at independence- the Establishment Secretariats and the Civil Service Commissions remained un-reformed tending to be staffed by people who are not HR professionals and many times the jurisdictions between the Commissions and Establishment Secretariats with regard to recruitment, discipline, promotion as well as between these central agencies and the line organizations are often not clearly outlined. The failure by Government to deal with the issue has affected the management of HR adversely.

Another HR function that remained untouched during the post independence reform period was employee appraisal. Invariably supervisors generally often making opinionated judgements on the employee, without the employee get feedback as to how he had been reported on, which made the assessment irrelevant to the whole question of improving the performance of the individual staff.
One HR issue that was given some attention during the early post independence public service reforms was skills development. Partly because the absence of skilled personnel was so stark and leaders of the newly independent countries could not deliver on the promises made during the independence struggle without skilled people the first decade saw many countries make great strides in this area. Thus while in 1961 English speaking Africa had less than six universities and many of them were concentrating on the liberal arts, law and social sciences by the mid seventies countries such as Nigeria had more than six universities and they were concentrating on a whole range of disciplines from computer science to hydrology.

While those efforts went to some extent to increase the number of indigenous skilled personnel and made it possible to reduce dependence on colonial personnel, their impact on the capacity and capability of the public services was limited. This was partly due to the fact that skill development was addressed as an isolated issue rather than as part of an integrated HR reform package. Training can only have an impact on an organizations performance if it is linked to improvements in recruitment practices, HR planning, employee appraisal as well as pay and reward systems. Unfortunately those elements were not given the necessary attention.

The neglect of the pay and rewards function within African services was unfortunate and among all the HR issues, it has had disastrous consequences on the health of African public services. During the first decade of independence (and even into the second) public service pay levels were relatively good and there was no doubt that the pay structures in place then were sufficient to recruit, retain and motivate the best brains in the country for public service. For example graduates entering the public service did not only receive good pay, they were assured of a car loan and access to government pool housing at a low and fixed proportion of salary. Most of these officers felt they had taken the first step up a ladder of promotion to status, authority and an assured standard of living. Salaries broadly held up until

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the oil price shocks of the early to mid-1970s, and somewhat longer in a country like Zambia which enjoyed an offsetting but temporary mineral boom.

The problem of low pay only came to the fore from the late seventies and early eighties as economies slowed, revenues faltered, and staffing numbers continued to rise, driven by expanding social services and a paradigm of development that envisaged government playing the dominant role in many sectors. The erosion of pay was to intensify in most countries to the extent that by the mid eighties officers retiring from public service were contemplating how they could cope with a pension far less in purchasing power than anticipated at entry. At the lower end of the pay spectrum, daily paid unskilled workers earned slightly better than a subsistence wage.
This collapse of pay destroyed the employment contract between government and its public service employees. Although the public service outwardly maintained many of its formal routines, informality mushroomed, and performance plummeted. Ordinary civil servants in almost all African countries adjusted for the collapse of the formal reward structure by a series of survival strategies. These ranged from taking second jobs, within and outside office hours, manipulation of travel allowances and *per diems*, extracting private fees for public services, commissions on office procurement contracts, to outright theft of public assets. Professionals with scarce skills left to work in the private sector or even overseas. Donors seeking to maintain operational effectiveness of their projects, paid supplements, often large ones. These had the effect of drawing skilled staff out of departmental structures into project units, further undermining core administrative capacity. Aid dependence increased and the management of aid programs moved in the hands of donor agencies. Training budgets evaporated, training institutions atrophied and trainers lost skills and relevance. Systemic corruption became ingrained. The formal rules became in many public services a shell in which huge informality was practiced. Public interest and the merit principle were relegated to second place.

The foregoing section has demonstrated how the neglect of HR by African Governments as they designed and implemented the first set of public service reforms (1960-70) came to have a negative impact on public service productivity and performance, thereby contributing to the crisis in public administration which African countries experienced during the early eighties. In the next section we devote attention to the African countries’ initial response to the public administration crisis, under what is called Structural Adjustment Program reforms, paying particular attention to the effect of those reforms on the people factor.
4. First Wave PSR Reforms: Cost Containment and Stabilization

We suggested in the foregoing section that the neglect of HR issues had seriously affected the health of the public administration systems and in some cases reversed the gains made as a result of the post independence public service reforms. Because of the strains on the economies most countries took the view that the crisis was caused by an expansion in the size and cost of government as opposed to the fact that Governments had weakened and were now in crisis. The response was to adopt Structural Adjustment Programs that focused on cost containment and shrinking the scope and size of the public sector. The SAP reforms sent the HR function in the public service reeling and made it the executioner of the public service, as it was in charge of the retrenchments and indiscriminate reduction of staff without taking into account need. That was the time when issues of HR planning, training and development, recruitment as well as staff welfare were put in the deep freezer and the status of HR managers in public service organizations reached its lowest ebb.

Fortunately this phase did not last long, although by the time countries abandoned the interventions a lot of damage had already been done to the fabric of African public services. Many African countries, as well the donor community came to realize that the structural adjustment related reforms were not sufficient to bring about a reversal in the decline of the public service. The measures did not only have disappointing results in terms of intended objectives, they had adverse and in some cases disastrous impact on the health and capacity of the public service. By starving public agencies (particularly, those responsible for health, education, water and sanitation, employment generation, law enforcement and justice administration) of personnel and financial resources it became difficult to maintain tolerable standards in the delivery of the services. Also, besides destroying the incentives and motivation structure, the cost-cutting aspects of SAP measures aggravated the ethics and accountability crisis confronting the African public services. It was at the height of SAP reforms that the services witnessed increasing cases of moonlighting, inflation of
contract prices, bribery and corruption (Balogun, 1989). SAP has also been accused of dismantling public service institutions without leaving behind any viable alternatives (Adedeji, 1992a).

5. Second Wave Reforms: Service Delivery Improvement
The disappointing outcomes led to the development of what have been termed second wave Public Service Reform Programmes (PSRPs) (Mutahaba and Kiragu, 2005). These broadened the reform agenda and began to explicitly address some of the causes of poor public service performance. Many of them explicitly adopted concepts of New Public Management (NPM), drawn from the experience of OECD countries with a similar administrative tradition. Implicitly, the designers of these programs appeared to believe a traditional public service could no longer be the goal and that there was a need to re-think the model.

First, the reforms placed an emphasis on improving delivery of public services. This entailed a focus on performance. At the level of individual employees this meant the overhaul of human resources management practices to emphasise assessing performance based on results and rewarding personnel based on those results. At institutional level performance would be measured based on the extent to which an institution has achieved agreed targets in the strategic and annual plans. In several countries special incentives, such as performance improvement funds, were established to encourage public institutions to re-engineer existing processes to make them faster and more efficient (so called “quick wins” programs). Emphasis is placed on making public institutions more transparent by requiring them to publish annual reports describing how budget resources have been used, and the results obtained from them.

Second, the reforms continued the focus on rationalization of the role of the state and its functions which had been started during the SAP era reforms. However the redefinition of roles was to be based on objective conditions in the country,
including the capacities of the various players in development, including the state, rather than being on a doctrinaire basis. Increasingly governments would come to focus on classic public goods functions such as law and order, development and maintenance of infrastructure, regulation of the private sector, macro-economic management as well as the provision of social services in areas where there are large “externalities” such as primary education and health care.

In public management terms, one dimension of this trend is to reassess the governance framework for particular policy functions. This entails in several countries the creation of autonomous agencies to deliver key programs, in particular subjecting them to a governance framework which gives managers greater freedom from government regulations in return for the achievement of specific performance standards and targets. Alternatively, if agencies already exist (as in Tanzania and Ghana, for example) the aim is to streamline and improve the management and oversight of those remaining in regular public administration institutions. These moves were informed in part by New Public Management reform ideas (Ademalukun, 1999).

This wave of reforms also seeks to reverse the centralization of government which occurred under the centre-led development paradigm, when the mandates of local governments were sharply curtailed, including their virtual abolition in some countries (Olowu, 1998). Guided by the principle of subsidiarity, the thrust is to push service delivery down to the local level, where there is more information and, hopefully, greater scope for community action to hold local government service providers accountable. In regard to power distribution between the central government, local authorities and other actors, appreciable changes have taken place in some countries such as Uganda and Tanzania. Power has continued to be decentralized to local authorities in the context of the Local Government Reform Programmes (LGRPs). The ongoing decentralization
by devolution (D by D) in some countries has seen substantial hiving of responsibilities, resources and decisional power to local authorities.

The reforms have also seen placing of fresh emphasis on the rehabilitation and modernization of office equipment, enhanced use of information technology, and improvements in record management systems across government.

During this wave of public service reforms Governments have paid more attention to HR management issues than had been the case since African countries attained independence. Increasingly the public service reform programs include policy statements on management of HR stating the principles to guide the management of each of the HR functions, including recruitment, training and development, conditions of service, promotion and career development, staff performance review and a host of other issues.

The reforms have also tended to include measures to strengthen and rationalize organizational arrangements for managing the HR function, including decentralizing the administration of HR to line organizations and treatment of the HR functions in an integrated manner. In many countries there is increased focus on reforming pay and compensation out of a realization of its pivotal role in enhancing productivity and performance of the public service.

In Tanzania for example, the Public Service Reform Program, Phase 1 which was launched in 2000 was preceded by the issuance by the Government of a major policy paper called *Public Policy Management and Employment Policy* in 1999 in which it articulated the principles to guide the reforms. The principles recognized that the success of the reforms would hinge on the attention given to managing the people in the public service.
Seven years after, when Government developed and launched PSRP Phase 2 HR issues have been given even greater prominence. Thus out of the six substantive key result areas to be focused on in the reform program three (3) key result areas are on HR issues-i) managing people in the public service, ii) pay and rewards reform and iii) leadership development. It is also worth noting that more than 40% of PSRP Phase 2 funding, over the five year period are to be spent on HR related issues.

Tanzania is not alone in moving in this direction, many other countries are taking similar measures in recontion of the critical role of people in ensuring public service delivery is improving on the continent. In the next section we discuss how to ensure that the momentum is maintained.

6. Conclusion and Next Steps
While the recent reform measures have gone, in some way to move African public service in the direction of a concern for efficiency and effectiveness and quality of service delivery, and giving attention to improved management of the human resource, there are concerns that some of the reform interventions that give autonomy to managers, including decentralizing HRM to the respective institutions could erode the traditional means of ensuring public service accountability through parliament, executive political leadership (ministers) as well as the regulatory institutions, such as Public Service Commissions. This is especially so given that consumers of public services either do not know their rights or they are too weakly organized to defend themselves and local level democracy is still weak. As Africa moves these reforms forward care should be taken to strengthen the counterbalance institutions that give voice to the citizens at the centre and the local level.
With regard to HR there is need to strengthen even further the regulatory institutions (the PSCs) on the one hand, to have them perform their standard setting and regulatory roles efficiently and effectively. This requires giving them more autonomy as well as greater financial and staff resources. On the other hand the central institutions for coordinating the MDA actions in HR management variously called Public Service Management Department, Ministries of Civil Service/Public Service or establishment Secretariats need also to be given greater capability and prominence in the line of ministries, by doing what has been done in some countries placing them under the Office of the President or Prime Minister. This will help in ensuring that the autonomy given to the Institutions in managing the HR function is monitored on a regular basis.

For the above to work smoothly there is a need to have the HR personnel in all countries to operate as professionals and exercise self regulations the way other professionals such as doctors, engineers and accountants for example operate. They will have to set standards, work with training institutions to develop standard curriculums and ensure that entry into the profession is based on merit. That cannot happen when there are no professional associations at national, regional and world levels. This workshop is a beginning of that journey, it is going to be a long and hardous journey but the destination can be reached.
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