

ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM REFORM PROCESS IN UGANDA: TO WHAT EXTENT DID IT ATTAIN ITS OBJECTIVES

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Abstract

The growing discourse on public administration system reform process is a result of the very inadequacies generated by the process itself. This paper based on literature review delves into the various phases of the public administration system reform process to assess the levels of achievement of intended objectives, the constraints thereof and proposed solutions. Whereas sequential interventions – both legal and administrative – have littered the reform process since NRM government captured power in 1986, the political will to actualize them has remained wanting. This has not been helped by the conceptually transfixed civil service which has continued to see reform after reform elements came into being with minimal effects on their mind sets or attitudes to see them work. Unless government allows institutions to work with autonomy and detach them from individuals; strategize to deliberately psych up the civil service through better remunerations; it is predictable that the multitude of legislation and reform programmes will remain on paper and the blame game shall continue between the political leadership and civil servants.

Key words: Public, administration, systems, reforms

Introduction

Right from the mid 1980s, Uganda has undergone several public administration systems reforms (PASR) as a means of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery. Whether these reforms achieved their intended objectives at their different times of implementation is a matter of conjecture. Scholars have variously analyzed these reforms with sizable controversies over their outcomes (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006; Treisman 2007).

Public administration systems reform which is akin to Public Sector Reform (PSR) is about strengthening the way that the public sector is managed for purposes of providing public services. According to Opio-Lukone (2004), PASR is about re-aligning administrative structures and processes to the new developments of the public sector. At the start of public sector reforms in Uganda in mid 1980s, there was an argument that the public sector was over extended – where it was attempting to do too much with too few resources. It was arguably poorly organized; its decision-making processes were irrational; staff was presumed to be largely mismanaged; accountability systems were weak; public programs were poorly designed and public services generally were poorly delivered. The economic constraints made service delivery expensive because of expanded responsibility with non-expanding budgets thus leading to poor performance of public bureaucracy, with officials becoming officious, unpleasant to the citizen, and corrupt taking its toll. In the 1980s, government acknowledged that there was indeed poor public service delivery and decided to make changes which ushered in the process of PASR.

This paper offers a fascinating insight into the conceptual, historical; and practical perspectives surrounding public administration systems reforms in the public sector in Uganda. In drawing on the expertise and experiences of established scholars, the paper explores the



contexts and achievements of public administration systems reform process. In this paper, I focus on public sector reforms from early 1980s which were aimed at minimizing the costs delivering public services, change the way of implementation of public interventions, promoting the private sector in service delivery and driving the economy forward.

The paper intends to contribute to the public administration systems reforms discussion that is currently ongoing in Uganda reflecting on the gains and failures thereof. The gains registered should form the basis for building on further reforms while the demerits of the reforms should act as a lesson for future designers of reforms. This paper will further contribute towards the body of existing literature on public administration systems reforms in developing countries. The broad historical, contextual and conceptual review of the reform process will guide future analytical debates which should help focus discussion and strategies.

Methodology

This is a literature review grounded article which according to Amin, (2004), is a credible approach to scientific research that uses secondary data. In this article, major public administration system reform process are highlighted to illustrate the extent to which the intended objectives were achieved, the constraints encountered and proposed solutions.

Conceptual foundation of PASR

The public sector reform process in Uganda is informed by the dominant paradigm of new public management (NPM). At this juncture, it is important to first define the concept of NPM which according to Hood (1991) denotes broadly the government policies, since the 1980s, that aimed to modernise and render more efficient the public sector. The basic hypothesis holds that market oriented management of the public sector will lead to greater cost-efficiency for governments, without having negative side-effects on other objectives and considerations. Accordingly, NPM is composed of 7 doctrines which include:

1. Hands-on professional management in the public sector where managers are allowed to manage, so that there is clear accountability (since 'accountability requires clear assignment of responsibility for action').
2. Emphasis on explicit standards and measures of performance where goals have to be defined and performance targets set. It is on this basis that performance is assessed (such as the results-oriented management and out based budgeting in Uganda).
3. Stressing the importance of output controls by focusing on results rather than throughput systems.
4. Disaggregation of units in the public sector by breaking up large entities into corporate agencies to gain efficiency and advantages of franchise arrangements. In Uganda, this manifested as creation of agencies like Uganda National Road Authority, Uganda Revenue Authority; National Planning Authority among others.
5. Greater competition in the public sector through contracts and public tendering. In Uganda, a number of services have been contracted out including road construction, maintenance and repair; market management; cleaning services, provision of security services among others.
6. Stress on private sector styles of management practice by applying private sector management tools to the public sector.



7. NPM stresses greater discipline and parsimony in resource use (Hood, 1991, cited by Hughes, 1998, pp. 61–62). Some of the significant reforms during this period include the reduction of civil servants by up to 10%, whereby by the mid-1990s sub-Saharan Africa had the lowest ratio of civil servants to population of any group in the world (Ayee, 2008).

Ferlie et al (1996) describe 'New Public Management in Action' as involving the introduction into public services of the 'three Ms': Markets, managers and measurement. This definition is in agreement with Hood (1991) doctrines of hands-on professional management; performance measurement; and adoption of private sector modes of operations. However, some modern authors define NPM as a combination of splitting large bureaucracies into smaller, more fragmented ones, competition between different public agencies, and between public agencies and private firms and incentivization on more economic lines (Dunleavy 2006). This entrepreneurial-like reform, driven by the neo-liberalism of the new public management or new managerialism principles, aims at improving efficiency and effectiveness in the performance of the Public Service. Defined in this way, NPM has been a significant driver in public management policy around the world, from the early 1980s to at least the early 2000s. A 2003 Organization for economic Co-operation and Development paper described the characteristics of the new public management as decentralization, management by objectives, contracting out, and competition within government and consumer orientation.

According to Rhodes (1997), the NPM concept has two meanings: one is the concept of new managerialism and, two, is the concept of new liberal-institutional economics. Managerialism, which was the dominant strand in Britain in 1988, refers to the introduction of private sector entrepreneurial management principles to the public sector. Rhodes (1997) stresses that managerialism means: hands-on professional management, explicit standards and measures of performance; managing by results; value for money management practices; and more recently, closeness to the customer as a focus for service delivery.

From the above definitions, NPM, compared to other public management theories, is oriented towards outcomes and efficiency, through better management of public budget. It is considered to be achieved by applying competition, as it is known in the private sector, to organizations in the public sector, emphasizing economic and leadership principles. Accordingly, new public management addresses beneficiaries of public services much like customers, and conversely citizens as shareholders.

The historical and contextual perspective of PASR in Uganda

Uganda was until recently widely acclaimed as an African success on account of achievements in macroeconomic reforms, poverty reduction and political stability, following years of civil war, economic decline and worsening poverty. Progress on these fronts was accompanied by a succession of PASR reforms, ranging from an ambitious programme of civil service restructuring, the creation of a series of semi-autonomous public agencies, reforms in public expenditure management, decentralisation, innovations in service delivery, and legal and institutional measures to combat corruption (Robinson, 2006). These reforms were within the wider context of New Public Management which was sweeping across the globe during the 20th century, in both developed and under developed countries. They were spearheaded by the Ministry of Public Service but implemented across the entire Public Service.



When the National Resistance Movement took over State power on January 25th 1986, it inherited a country traumatized by civil war and state terror with a largely dysfunctional public service with systemic pathologies. These manifested within the government bureaucracy fiscal turmoil, with uncertain spending patterns and large debt burdens; there was limited revenue to cover debt repayments or to fund needed public sector engagements; corruption which all conspired to create major hindrances in service delivery. This founded the approach to radical initiatives which were implemented in the late 1980s and early 1990s as part of the structural adjustment programme. The NRM's foundation for the reform process was arguably to improve on government performance and to deliver the promises of the protracted people's liberation struggle through its ten-point reform programme. These reforms placed emphasis on cutting costs through downsizing and rationalizing the bureaucracy. This was accompanied by the monetisation of benefits and improving the incentives through pay reforms, along with measures to improve the efficiency of the civil service through functional reviews and ministerial mergers. The emphasis later shifted to enhancing performance through results-oriented management with consolidation of pay and pension reforms (Robinson, 2006). Also, the reform was intended to enhance the performance of the Public Service to achieve good governance in an accountable and transparent way; that was in scarcity due to the misrule of the past regimes.

In May 1987, the Government launched the Rehabilitation and Development Plan, 1987/88 – 1990/91, with comprehensive proposals to build an independent, integrated and self-sustaining national economy. In the process of developing this Plan, it became apparent that the Government's ability to implement it was seriously inadequate because the Public Service, the operational wing of the executive arm of Government, had also been a victim of Uganda's previous traumatic experiences. The general observation was that the Public Service, which had previously been hailed as one of the best in Africa South of the Sahara, had become bloated or over-expanded without justification, run down in terms of training, tools and equipment, poorly remunerated employees, inefficient, unproductive, unresponsive to national needs and utterly demoralised and characterized by pretence to work through 'moonlighting' and 'sunlighting' (Olum 2003). It was against this background that Government adopted the economic recovery package which sought to liberalize and stabilize the economy in 1987 followed by the Public Service Review and Reorganisation Commission (PSRRC) in 1989 to examine and make appropriate recommendations on a number of key areas. Altogether, the PSRRC made 255 recommendations on how to revamp the Service, confirming the long held impression that the Public Service was in such a bad state that it needed a complete overhaul and reorientation. The recommendations were accepted with some amendments by Government and formed the basis of the Public Service Reform Programme (PSRP). In this direction, as noted by Nkata (2010), government identified the following major components for implementation the administrative reforms:

1. The process and machinery for management of the Reform
2. The need for enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector
3. The need for managing information and control systems
4. Developing human resources capacity of the public sector
5. Time management and organisational discipline
6. Promoting good governance and private sector development.



The Commission's report was adopted as a blueprint for reform in 1989, and the launch of a civil service reform programme in the early 1990s. These steps were among the first in what has been a constant and busy process of reform over the past thirty years. They were implemented through a series of phases which the next section will now address.

Nature of public administration systems reforms

The major objective of the reforms from NRM's perspective was to improve on its performance and to deliver the promises of the protracted people's revolution. The reforms can be categorised into distinctive phases clustered as follows: Phase 1: from 1986 to 1993; Phase 2: from 1994 to 1997; Phase 3: from 1998 to 2002; Phase IV: after 2003 as detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Phases of public administration systems reforms in Uganda from 1986 to 2012

Phase	Nature of reforms
Phase 1: 1986 to 1993	
1986 to 87	NRM takes power
	Inspectorate of Government (IGG); Directorate of Ethics and Integrity (DEI)
	Economic Recovery Package (World Bank, IMF and others)
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1988	Public Service Review and Reorganization Commission (PSRRC) created
1989 to 1990	PSRRC report issued as blueprint for SC reform
1990 to 1991	Uganda Revenue Authority established
1991 to 1992	PSRRC report approved by National Resistance Council (NRC) as basis of civil service reform
	Public Finance Management (PFM) reforms introduced where MTEF used to formulate budget; system of cash budgeting adopted
1992 to 1993	Civil Service Reform Secretariat formed
	Civil Service Reform Programme (CSRP) launched (World Bank)
Phase 2: 1994 to 1997	
1994 to 1995	New Constitution
	Pay reforms introduced
	Auditor General created
1995 to 1996	Public Expenditure Reviews (PERs) introduced in different sectors; some included public expenditure tracking studies (PETS)
1996 to 1997	Public Service Reform Programme by the World Bank
	Universal Primary Education program launched; creates need to hire teachers
	Local Government Act
	Results Oriented Management and Staff Performance Appraisal piloted
	Pay reform one of 5 national priority programme areas; Recruitment freeze lifted
	Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP); Poverty Action Fund (PAF) created
	Decentralization
	MTEF used to integrate planning and budgeting; Output oriented budgeting introduced
Phase 3: 1998 to 2002	
1998 to 1999	Commitment Control System
2000	Budget Act
2001 to 2002	Leadership Code Act



Phase	Nature of reforms
	Inspectorate of Government Act (IGA)
	Quarterly Budget Performance Report introduced
Phase 4: 2003 to 2012	
2002 to 2003	Office of Accountant General created
	Public Finance and Accountability Act
	IFMS introduced through pilots
	National Anti-corruption strategy, 2004-2007
2004	Comprehensive local govt. review
	VAT and Income tax Amendment bills
	Public Prosecution and Disposal of Public Assets Act
	Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority (PPDA)
2005 to 2006	Code of Conduct and Ethics
	Financial Management and Accountability Program (FINMAP)
2006	Universal Secondary Education
2007	Local Governments Financial and Accounting Regulations
	Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit (BMAU) created
	Anti-corruption court operational
	Integrated Personnel and Payroll System (IPPS) introduced
2008	Anti-Corruption Act
2009	Whistleblowers Protection Act
	High level performance agreements introduced
2010 to 2011	National Strategy to Fight Corruption and Rebuild Ethics and Integrity in Uganda 2008-2013
2012	Anti-Money Laundering Bill, False Claims Bill
	Public Finance Bill proposed

Phase I: 1986 – 1993

The objective of this phase was to re-organize Government structures through rationalization of Ministries/restructuring of government, decentralization and anticorruption, market liberalization; macroeconomic stabilization; domestic revenue mobilization; and trade policy reforms. The anticorruption reforms started with creation of the Inspectorate of Government (IGG); and Directorate of Ethics and Integrity (DEI) between 1980 and 1987. The objective was to curb rampant corruption which had bedeviled the public service thus hampering effective service delivery (Matt, A., and Bategeka, L. 2013). The economic reforms between 1988 and 1992 were initiated with the objective of enhancing revenue collection and financial management in government. The key milestones reflected as implementation of economic Recovery Package majorly supported by the World Bank through creation of the Uganda Revenue Authority; adoption of the Public Finance Management (PFM) reforms where midterm expenditure framework (MTEF) was used to formulate budget; and a system of cash budgeting was adopted. It should be noted that many of the reforms attempted during this time have had a cutting edge dimension to them as well: Uganda were one of the first countries to adopt a semi-autonomous revenue agency in Africa, for instance, and their efforts to introduce medium-term budgeting in the early 1990s predated efforts to do so in other African countries (including South Africa, where medium-term expenditure frameworks were only introduced in the late 1990s).



The civil service reforms were initiated through creation of the Public Service Review and Reorganization Commission (PSRRC) whose report acted as a blueprint for the reforms. The PSRRC report was approved by National Resistance Council (NRC) as basis of civil service reform. The objectives of the public service reforms were to reduce number of ministries; downsize; eliminate 'ghost workers'; military demobilization; recruitment freeze create a lean structure with competent staff for improved service delivery. These reforms resulted into reduction in the number of Ministries and Departments through implementing a top-level rationalisation of its structure by combining 34 individual Ministries and Offices into 20 Ministries and 3 Offices. Under this phase, the nonperformers, irregular entrants, computerized payroll and establishment management controls of salaries and pension; overdue leavers and "ghost" workers were also removed from the payroll.

By reflecting on achievement of the reform objective during the first phase rampant corruption, one can conclude that the government moderately made some achievements albeit with glaring failures along the way. The revenue collection since the reforms was enhanced to over 11 trillion Uganda in 2012. The government has been able to finance its budget to a tune of 80% with the rest supported by development partners. On financial management, government has failed to effectively focus on key productive sectors of the economy which include agriculture. Military expenditure has continued to skyrocket at the expense of other service sector reflected in poor social service delivery including the appalling situation in the health and education sectors. While government initially succeeded in reducing the number of ministries, the core objective of creating a lean government has long been abandoned in preference of a larger and politically accommodative government that tries to include politically vocal constituents within the ruling Government thus increasing on administrative expenditures at the expense of service delivery. In this regard, government reforms have proofed counterproductive with a reversed achievement given the initial objectives. The other failure has been the inability to eliminate 'ghost workers' who have continued to populate the government pay roll. This was seen in the military, education and health sectors. It is hoped that with the ongoing National Identity Card registration exercise, this malady may be effectively addressed. Whereas government succeeded in the recruitment freeze to create a lean structure, the existing public service has continued to perform poorly considering the Presidents public reprimands on how civil servants have frustrated government programmes. One of the successes registered has been the demobilization process in the military. Government has maintained a strong control over this institution through its professionalization strategy thus giving the national army regional and international recognition. In general, one can conclude that achievement of the reform objectives under this phase was moderately below average (If we adopt a scale ranging from below average, average, and above average). At this juncture, I now focus on the second phase of the reform which ran from 1994 to 1997.

Phase II: 1993 to 1997

In the second phase, further rationalisation and review of Ministries and Offices took place with four core objectives namely; 1) Identifying non-core services and functions in the Central Government that needed to be divested; 2) Determining the right staffing levels for executing the functions; 3) Rationalising the placement of various Central Government functions within respective Ministries to avoid duplication and unnecessary overlaps; 4) Further streamlining financial management. Government introduced pay reforms in the civil services accompanied



by Results Oriented Management and Staff Performance Appraisal to improve performance. In addition, the recruitment freeze was lifted. Government also adopted Decentralisation as the main instrument for improving services delivery and this was legally mandated under the Local Government's (Resistance Councils) Statute, 1993 and later the Local Government Act. The new Constitution of 1995 was promulgated to back up these reforms. Further financial management reforms aimed at improving expenditure tracking with creation of the Auditor General's office. The Public Expenditure Reviews (PERs) were introduced in different sectors; some included public expenditure tracking studies (PETS); and the MTEF was used to integrate planning and budgeting using the Output oriented budgeting tool. In the same phase of reforms, government introduced the Universal Primary Education program. On the social part, government initiated the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP); and Poverty Action Fund (PAF) created targeting the war ravaged north and eastern Uganda. These programmes created a need to hire teachers thus partly justifying the recruitment freeze lift.

In terms of government performance under objectives of this phase, one can objectively rate it as average. While the non-core functions of central government were placed under the different agencies, there has been duplication of functions in some of the ministries. Cases in point are the parallel functions housed in the Office of the President which relate to youth programmes; essential drugs monitoring unit among others. These structures create additional expenditure lines while at the same time duplicating efforts and uncoordinated interventions in public service delivery. Devolving other central government functions to districts was partly successful albeit with weaknesses in the way the process is currently managed given the multitude of non viable administrative units created. Even with the numerous financial management measures put in place, hemorrhage of public funds have continued unabated. One of the recent financial scandals (2013) in the Office of the Prime Minister clearly show the inefficiencies in the systems.

Phase III: 1998 to 2002

This phase put emphasis on financial control systems and anti corruption measures through enactment of the Budget Act; the Leadership Code Act; and the Inspectorate of Government Act (IGA). In order to track public finances, the quarterly Budget Performance Report was introduced. It should be noted that like in all phases of the reform process, the common features have been introducing new legal framework to facilitate improvement of functionality of government systems and processes. This means that at any given moment, there are enabling institutional frameworks but the hindrances is in their operationalization; which is a human factor. To this end, the primary intentions of this phase can be rated as below average since efficiency in public service has remained poor and poverty level seem to be raising unabated.

Phase IV: 2003 to 2012

These reforms aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public servants and involved further rationalization of government structures and improvement in staff performance. Furthermore, it aimed to improve in the operational systems including financial and procurement management, records and archives management and building staff capacities through trainings. This phase of the reforms emphasized the need for public servants to adopt new management systems, which were necessary for efficiency and effectiveness in public



service delivery. It further focused on building on the moral and psychological beliefs of the staff to operate within the physical capabilities of institutions.

The phase focused on enhancement of performance management through new reforms in staff appraisal processes, implementation of the human resource policies, public management systems and instituting an institutional environment that facilitates development and poverty reduction. The reforms further facilitated an enabling environment for the private sector growth. Other concomitant sector reforms implemented by other Ministries included Legal Reforms; Economic Reforms i.e. Foreign Exchange Reforms; Currency Reforms of 1986; Decentralization; Health sector Reforms; Land Management Reforms, Liberalization of the economy, Road and Water sector Reforms; Procurement and Disposal of Assets Reforms; Divestiture reforms; adoption of alternative modes of service delivery like Agencification, Privatization, partnerships among others.

After 2003, several other administrative and financial management reforms were instituted. For examples, in 2003, there was an enactment of the Public procurement and disposal of Public Assets (PPDA) act which reformed the public procurement systems of the country especially at the central government level. In 2006, public procurement reforms at the local government level were also reformed through abolishing tender boards which were managed by politicians replacing them contract committees which were managed by technical staff. Before the public procurement reforms, procurement was centralised, with contracts above a threshold value of US\$1,000 being awarded by a Central Tender Board in the Ministry of Finance, on the basis of regulations that had been approved in 1977. There were separate tender boards for the Police and Military. Procurement of many items on behalf of ministries was undertaken by the Government Central Purchasing Corporation. The Corporation had been set up by statute in 1990, replacing a central purchasing organisation within the civil service. While these arrangements offered the advantages of consolidated purchasing and central control, the Central Tender Board was unable to keep pace with the expansion of government activities and their attendant procurement requirements. There was a consequential backlog of tender submissions and the procurement process became protracted. International and foreign aid organisations, which account for nearly half of all development expenditure in Uganda, considered public procurement to be a key obstacle to effective service delivery and development.

On further streamlining the financial and procurement management aspects, government created the office of Accountant General, enacted the Public Finance and Accountability Act and introduced the integrated finance management systems (IFMS) through pilots. The Local Governments Financial and Accounting Regulations were introduced and Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit (BMAU) created in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

It should be pointed that from the mid-1990s, policy attention focused principally on pay reform with the ultimate goal of paying public servants living wages, with further voluntary retirement schemes for civil servants. A new Public Service Reform Programme was launched in 1997 with the aim of reviving reform momentum. In July 1998, pay reform was designated as one of five national priority programme areas. The recruitment freeze was lifted in December 1998, largely to accommodate the need for large-scale recruitment of teachers for the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme launched the previous year, and to hire in new staff where shortfalls had emerged.



As an integral part of the effort to combat corruption, the government strengthened existing institutional mechanisms and created a series of new institutions that were responsible for ensuring probity and integrity in the public service. Existing institutions included the Office of the Auditor General, the Department of Public Prosecutions (DPP), and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). Years of neglect and underfunding had weakened their effectiveness and their legitimacy had become compromised by corruption and inefficiency. The NRM government sought to reinvigorate these institutions through infusion of financial resources and capacity building, largely funded by aid donors.

One of the other key institutions created by the NRM government to address problems of corruption was the Inspectorate of Government. It was established in 1986 as an independent institution charged with promoting adherence to the rule of law in public administration and responsibility for eliminating corruption and abuse of authority and public office, reporting directly to the president. The 1995 Constitution strengthened its powers of investigation, arrest and prosecution, and increased its autonomy, requiring it to report directly to parliament rather than any individual or authority. The Inspector General of Government (IGG) can only be removed from office for gross violation of power by the president on the recommendation of a special parliamentary tribunal. The IGG is also responsible for implementing the Leadership Code of Conduct which was initially promulgated in 1992 and affirmed in the constitution, requiring government officials and MPs to declare their income, assets and liabilities on a yearly basis. This provision provides the IGG with the powers to enforce the code and prosecute officials found guilty of corruption and abuse of public office, though legislation was not introduced until 2002. A new Inspectorate of Government Act in 2002 clarified and strengthened the powers of the IGG in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. The IGG was restructured in 2001 to strengthen its work and improve its effectiveness in discharging its constitutionally mandated duties. This reorganisation took place in response to public and donor criticism of its poor record in prosecuting corruption cases and inefficiencies in its management structure. Information technology has been employed to improve its speed and efficiency in handling cases. National Anti-corruption strategy, 2004-2007 was launched, the Anti-corruption court became operational with its attendant Anti-Corruption Act, the Whistleblowers Protection Act all under the National Strategy to Fight Corruption and Rebuild Ethics and Integrity in Uganda 2008-2013. The Code of Conduct and Ethics; and Anti-Money Laundering Act; and False Claims Bill were also put in place.

Many legal measures were introduced in the 1990s to strengthen the mandate and powers of these existing institutions. The auditor general's (AG) office was to be charged with auditing public accounts and submitting reports to parliament for scrutiny and deliberation through the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). Its reports are shared with the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) and the Inspectorate of Government (IoG) for follow-up action and investigations. The Office of the Auditor General is a semi-autonomous body established under the constitution. The AG is appointed by the president, who has the power to remove the post holder on the grounds of misconduct or incompetence. Unlike the Uganda Human Rights Commission, there is no independent board that makes or ratifies appointment decisions. The AG has some degree of independence in formulating a programme of work, but only to a limited extent in staff recruitment and appointments, which are largely determined by the Public Service Commission in line with other government departments. The AG's budget used to be submitted to MoFPED, which then proposed an allocation that was endorsed by the cabinet,



subject to the constraints imposed by the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework. This position has now been revisited and the office of the auditor general is independent from the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

The previous position of the office of Auditor general was different from the practice adopted in other countries where the AG is funded through a direct parliamentary appropriation that does not require executive endorsement. In the late 1980s, there were significant delays in reporting to parliament with backlogs of several years, which circumscribed the scope for identifying and acting on corrupt practices. The AG lacked qualified staff and used out-of-date methods for collecting and analyzing public expenditure data. Over time, the AG was able to recruit more capable staff with accountancy qualifications and to modernize systems through computerisation and the development of modern auditing methods.

The Directorate of Ethics and Integrity (DEI) was created in 1998 following a review led by the vice-president (on the recommendation of the president) to look into the functioning of existing anti-corruption bodies. The review found that there was a lack of effective coordination, which undermined the effectiveness of anti-corruption initiatives. The DEI is charged with responsibility for setting policy and standards, capacity building, monitoring and coordination across the 'accountability sector'. The creation of a central coordinating body that would report to the president was envisaged to increase its political clout and raise the profile of anti-corruption efforts in the government. Recruitment to the new body was intended to be at a high level so that it could exercise authority and engage effectively with senior government officials and politicians. It was a small organisation with just seven professional staff positions, headed by an official holding the rank of permanent secretary. It is represented in cabinet by a minister of state.

In rating performance under this phase, one would regard it as below average on the following grounds. Corruption is still rife with public officials having too much discretion while executing their public duties. The political environment is characterized by patronage resulting into impunity; and the rules and regulations are poorly defined and disseminated and changing rapidly without the people being adequately informed. Even with the numerous anti corruption laws, their inadequate implementation fails the efforts to minimize corruption. Lack of political will coupled with the culture of silence and being complacent in regard to use of public resources is rooted from citizens viewing government as a virtual organization (TIU 2011). The public procurement process has continued to stifle service delivery given the protracted processes involved.

Constraints to PASR in Uganda

Most of the successes in civil service reform were registered in the five-year period from 1992 to 1997. Halving the size of the civil service proved relatively easy, since it was possible to achieve significant reductions through elimination of non-existent staff and those who had reached retirement age, and offering incentives through a generous voluntary retirement scheme largely financed by aid donors and higher salaries. The trade unions were unable to prevent large-scale redundancies of group employees in the downsizing initiative of the early 1990s, largely because this category of casual staff was not unionised.

Resistance to government efforts to reduce the numbers of public servants was undermined by attractive severance packages (Harvey and Robinson 1995). Many of those retrenched from the civil service already had access to other sources of income. Moreover, there



was little public support for the pay demands of civil servants on account of perceptions that they were corrupt and self-serving elite. Decentralisation has steadily reduced the number of civil servants in the core line ministries, which further reduces their visibility and political significance. Since the late 1990s, the momentum of the reform process has slowed. Compared to the early success in downsizing the civil service, the results in terms of pay reforms and efficiency gains were much less impressive.

The presidential commission's target of achieving a minimum living wage for civil servants by 1996 was not achieved. Public sector salaries remain well below the private sector despite progressive salary increases, averaging 42 per cent of comparable jobs in the market. These differentials are even higher for specialized technical and professional cadres such as accountants, lawyers and doctors, and contribute to growing problems of recruitment.

The strong political support from the president that gave rise to all three reforms Initiatives proved to be short-lived. Once the initial, more visible, objectives had been achieved, presidential attention turned to other priorities, such as service delivery outcomes and the war in the north. Ostensible commitment to and interest in governance reform is offset by public pronouncements that bear witness to presidential dissatisfaction with the slow pace of reform, the weakness of institutions established to spearhead the reform effort, and the perceived intransigence of civil servants.

It would be too strong to claim that the institutional design of governance reforms intentionally embodied these underlying political imperatives. But the evidence presented in this paper suggests that design flaws and the failure to anticipate political motivations have created opportunities for patrimonial behaviour that has in turn undermined the early success and promise of Uganda's governance reforms. The failure to sustain the momentum of governance reforms may impact adversely on Uganda's wider achievements in terms of economic recovery, poverty reduction and political stability, as the political prerogatives of regime maintenance prevail over pragmatic developmental objectives.

In specific terms, the challenges that have faced administrative reforms in Uganda include the following:-

- (i) Resistance to administrative reforms by certain bureaucrats
- (ii) Limited Financial resources to fully implement all the reform initiatives
- (iii) Lack of education, expertise and information by all stakeholders on administrative reforms
- (iv) The presence of corruption, patronage and clientelism at the central and local government machinery of government
- (v) There has been a poor attitude of some staff in reformed administrative units and this has affected the speed of reform implementation
- (vi) Lack of coordination for certain reform initiatives among different government departments has also been a common challenge
- (vii) Lack of a process of comprehensive consultation and buy-in of key stakeholders especially civil society organizations
- (viii) Political patronage: In Uganda, decentralization has been over politicized thus resulting into numerous districts which do not have enough resources to deliver public services.
- (ix) Corruption

- (x) Globalization moving faster than Governments are able to implement the reforms
- (xi) Donor dependency thus lacking the muscle to decide on key priorities
- (xii) Poverty that spurs corruption
- (xiii) Poor policy implementation (duplication of services e.g. NAADS and President's Office banana programme; patriotism programme outside Ministry of Education and Sports; Presidential Unit on drugs and medical supplies monitoring versus National Drugs Authority e.t.c)

Strategies for addressing PASR constraints in Uganda

There is general fatigue within the civil service given the sequential and numerous reforms over time. Reforms are accepted not on the basis of what they come to do but what they come with i.e. allowances. The reforms are donor driven and cannot roll out when donor funds dry out. In addition, they tend to aim at changing the systems and processes but do not seem to target the mind sets of the human resource who are actually supposed to operationalize them. This attitudinal perception has continued to erode the efforts of the reform process. If it is not addressed, the future of the reform process will remain bleak; and blame will continue to be heaped on civil servants as saboteurs.

Political commitment and donor support are integral for the success of any reform effort. This support is particularly needed in early stages of the reforms. High-level political commitment is clearly an essential prerequisite for initiating reform, but this simultaneously presents a potent source of vulnerability in a political culture with a powerful legacy of authoritarianism and personal rule. This should come in the form of resource allocation and actual funding of identified priorities.

Public and other stakeholder engagement is critical. The effectiveness of administrative reforms lies on the buy-in of key stakeholders and this need to be consulted from the beginning to the end. For example, institutional innovations to combat corruption potentially offer the greatest scope for galvanising public support, since corruption affects most citizens who are forced to pay bribes for services at all levels of government.

Successful reform requires the government incentives governing the motivation and behaviour of individual civil servants. It is important that government improves on remunerations for civil servants to benefit from the minimum wage bill. Any efforts to combat corruption with an under paid civil service will be self defeating. In addition, government should minimize promotion of individuals within institutions; it is predictable that the reform process will continue to falter now and in the distant future. Operational autonomy for institutions responsible for implementing governance reforms is a sound design principle that must be considered but it is susceptible to political manipulation. Excessive autonomy can lead to problems of agency compliance and create distortions in public sector pay and benefits. But current forms of operational autonomy for the URA and anti-corruption bodies provide inadequate insulation from political predation. These bodies are insulated from societal influence by virtue of their status and mandate, but this limits the oversight and accountability functions exercised by the legislature and civil society. A more active and engaged civil society would help to engender greater accountability on the part of top bureaucrats and political leaders. In theory, a more competitive party system should provide opportunities for greater deliberation and oversight of reform implementation.



Conclusion

The lessons arising from the Ugandan experience may well have broader implications for the design and implementation of governance reforms in comparable political environments elsewhere, despite the uniqueness of the Ugandan administrative systems of governance. In this paper, efforts were made to discuss the different phase in the public administration system reform process. The discussion notes the levels of achievements of objectives under each phase and delves into the constraints and finally proposes solutions that the country can adopt to improve on the reform process. In summary, successful public administration system reform processes will require strengthening of institutions and giving them autonomy to operate as well as providing them with the requisite resources lest the process will be pursued in vain. For God and my country.

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