OVERVIEW OF ISSUES, CHALLENGES, AND PROSPECTS OF EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

As the target date for MDG goals move closer, and coupled with the global recession the competing priorities in developing countries and the development goals has heightened the pressure to perform with limited resources. Africa has been beset with capacity problems and its Public Services require human resources that can effectively respond to the acute development needs of countries. Organisational effectiveness is dependent on human resource management, which in turn impacts on national development performance. Sooner this is realized the faster the efforts to build a professional cadre of public servants on the continent. This paper looks into the management of human resources in the public service in Africa and is premised on the view that until the significance of the human resource function is fully realized, the challenges the discipline faces will continue. Africa in particular cannot ignore the benefits associated with the effective management of human resources.

1 INTRODUCTION

In June 2010 the World Cup will be hosted by an African country for the first time in the history of International Football Association (FIFA). Central to the success of this effort is the role of the Public Service, which is the primary planning and implementation arm of the State. Long after the ‘bells and whistles’ of this momentous occasion, the demands on the African Public Service take on more frightening connotations when seen against the impact of the global recession and the increasingly close deadline to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Intertwined in all of this is the inexorable challenge to meet the development and security demands of Africa’s teeming population. With the growth of emerging democracies in Africa, African governments are seeking pragmatic ways to provide services to alleviate poverty and provide services. The responsibility over decisions that affect the poor always rests on the state, and the ability of the African Public Service to execute all its responsibilities depends on the availability and effective management of its human resources.

This paper attempts to give an overview of the human resources management in Africa. With such a vast table of experience in Africa, each unique in their own right, it will be almost impossible to capture the multi-dimensionality of efforts, prospects and challenges of human resources management in Africa. To begin to do some justice to this topic, this paper will thus limit itself to human resources management within the context of public sector reform, drawing from experiences in three African countries: South Africa, Nigeria and Southern Sudan. While the political, historical and social character and context of African states differ, there are however acknowledged shared experiences and generic challenges that resonate across the continent. This paper will give an overview of these common issues, while locating them within the context of the MDG goals.

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HOW PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM IS CHANGING THE FACE OF HR IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

The process of globalization has made it almost impossible for African states to resist global trends especially from the powerful international aid agencies and financial institutions, which harp on public service reform as a benchmark for investment and cooperation. Public service reform has thus become vital in developing economies at national and local government levels.

Firstly, in an effort to utilize limited and in some cases shrinking human and financial resources, it has become necessary for governments to reengineer and reinvent the administration of government. For more than 50 years, public service has been undergoing changes to strengthen government delivery. The burgeoning of innovation and research in public service management has also resulted in adoption of human resources management practices which emphasize employee training and development, performance management, effective labour relations and revised remuneration standards to mention but a few. Secondly, as society changes and knowledge expands, the degree of consensus on the need for public service reform has grown. Thus as society develops, public service management has adapted orthodox prescriptions into more ingenious principles. By default, human resources management in the public sector has also been undergoing a transformation process. For instance the distance between politics and public administration has blurred as public administrators have become more involved in the formulation of state policy. Merit principles have been challenged by the growing need to include minorities and the disadvantaged (e.g. women and people with disabilities) in government, the professionalization of public service and the growing strength of trade unionism and collective bargaining. Weber’s hierarchical control has given way to new human resources management developments such as devolution of authority and more flexible HR management.

Finally, the main objective of reform is to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services through the search of workable and sustainable service delivery options. However, as will be seen the next section, public service reform and by implication human resources management in Africa is encumbered by multiple layers of issues. Thus, challenges of public sector human resources in Africa should be considered within the context of the overall institutional, socio-political and cultural realities, economic development as well as levels of services such as health care, infrastructure and education. Specific and important in terms of the paper, are the political and social dimensions of individual state polity and policy, and the pressure from globalization for public service reform in African states.

HISTORICAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND SOLID POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF AFRICA’S BURGEONING HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT REGIME

The institutional make up of the public sector in post colonial African states was inherited from colonial government systems. For Anglophone Africa, it was the British model of government at the time and for Francophone African states, the public sector was modeled along the lines of French government systems. Nevertheless, it is important to note that British and European models of the public service have themselves organically modified over the years in response to social and political change. For instance, the Second World War resulted in a great reliance on planning. Additionally, the workforce was highly self motivating, driven by nationalistic sentiments. However in the years after the war, as personnel attitudes began to change and with the priority of supporting a war out of the way, the public service began to move from rules and planning as a form of control towards performance and management contracts relying largely on market competition and driven by costs.

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2 Fox and Miller 1995:3
4 Paul Collier 2009 Rethinking the Provision of Public Services in Post-Conflict States
This shows that public service is adaptable to changes and reform and applicable to contexts and environment.

By contrast, public service and management practices in many African states have been straining under an institutional culture still reminiscent of colonial institutional systems. In this case, the public service is governed by unremitting and rigid rules which govern every aspect of behaviour and depends on conformity to strict hierarchical dictates. State institutions and organizations are outsized and cumbersome with poor job design (description and specification), rigid work procedures and weak span of control. The result is redundancy as the bulk of work is done by a few while a large number of workers idle. The institutions inherited from colonial times produced a bureaucratic system which has allowed for weak accountability and responsibility in the development and implementation of government policies and programmes. In Nigeria the colonial structure of the public service was structured to benefit colonial interests in its highly hierarchical two tier structure of senior and junior cadres. Like in most African states, developing a strong public service human resources became a major focus of post colonial reform in Nigeria. Review of salary structures, conditions of service and training were part of reform focus 10-15 years after independence in 1960. However, right after independence, in many African states efforts to rationalize the public service inherited from colonisers was continuously undermined by political instability and wars.

From the 1990s globalisation and regionalization, and its forced neoliberal prescriptions demanded less government and greater efficiency in government. For African countries the challenge was even greater. Compounded by the excesses of a colonial structured public service, pressures to conform to the neoliberal dictates from donor communities, human resources in the public sector also suffered under the weight of political instability, economic deprivation and dependence. For instance, Nigeria had initiated considerable public service reform processes over the years, however the malady of military rule post independence from the 1960s to the 1990s, seemed to undermine efforts made towards improving human resources management through public service reform.

The transition in South Africa in 1994 from apartheid to post apartheid was a transition from an outdated colonial paradigm of social interaction to a more appropriate mode which is more in tune with prevailing norms and practices world-wide. The democratic government of South Africa inherited an oppressed society where persons were treated in a discriminatory way based on the colour of their skin, and HRM practices were designed to enforce oppression and marginalize persons representing the majority of South African citizens. There were many inequities in terms of race and gender, and the policies were largely designed to favour the white elite. Different salary scales applied to educators in white and black schools, and there were 300 salary scales which were arbitrarily determined. HRM transformation had to be viewed from the perspective of the transformation of the Public Service and the South African society as a whole. These conditions paint a picture of the historical and institutional challenges that the transformation of public service human resources management in South Africa has had to grapple with. Unlike countries in East Timor where no public service was in place and Somalia where the public service had collapsed, public service structures were in place in South Africa, albeit serving the interests of the white elite.

From the late 1990s into the new millennium, politically, there seemed to be a level of stability taking hold in many African states. South Africa became a democracy in 1994, Rwanda emerged from a civil war of genocidal proportions into democratic government in 2003, the Nigerian elections in 1999 ushered in a democratically elected President, the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the government of Sudan and the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM) in 2005 ended the longest civil war in Africa and there was relative stability in the Democratic Republic of Congo through the South African mediated peace process. The emergence of democratic leadership seemed to signal good prospects for the public service and public servants in these African states as internal and external pressures necessitated the move towards the restructuring of moribund and

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6 Reconstruction of Public Service and Governance Systems in Post Conflict situations. Prof Katorobo. 2008
ineffectual public services. Thus one sees that in discussing public service and human resources management in Africa, practices, challenges, efforts and issues are informed by a range of issues from the historical and institutional to the socio-political as will be discussed subsequently.

Turning to the politically charged environment of conflict and war in Africa, political instability on one end and outright war on the other can render severe impacts on human resources in Africa. Examples can be drawn from the state of civil service human resources in recent post conflict states like Sudan and experiences from Nigeria, rocked with political instability for more than 30 years after its independence until recently in 1999 from when it seems to be enjoying a certain level of political stability.

The initiatives from donor agencies and communities in post conflict states like Southern Sudan have concentrated on public service reform. The dearth of skilled personnel in Southern Sudan had necessitated the importation of skills from other African countries. The UNDP and the World Bank in Southern Sudan have thus undertaken massive human resources capacity development programmes and projects. The UNDP\(^7\) in 2008 initiated a project to build capacity for decentralized government in Sudan through the realignment of central ministries to a decentralized context and building the capacity of state training institutions. Largely the development of human resources in the public sector in post conflict states is impacted by the unique and fragile nature of governance and systems such as the destruction of physical and social infrastructure and the loss of human life. These states are heavily dependent on donor sponsorship of reforms and capacity building initiatives. However, this dependency also raises some institutional reform implementation problems. In a meeting with World Bank African region vice president, Ministers from Liberia, Rwanda and the DRC noted the following as some of the challenges:

- donors prioritizing support for primary and secondary education, and not higher education;
- donors pressing a “one size fits all” approach on countries, trying to replicate programs that were successful elsewhere;
- the failure by expatriate advisors in civil service posts to transfer their knowledge and skills to local counterparts;
- tension among returning members of the Diaspora and local populations that stayed behind, partly around incentive structures for civil service; and
- an urgent need to deliver skills-training and create job opportunities for young ex-combatants\(^8\)

What these identified challenges from these countries indicates is that there seems to be a general disconnect between the needs of individual states under reconstruction and the agenda of donor and funding communities. Collier\(^9\) argues that reform approaches to human resources management which may have been successful in Europe are unsuitable to post conflict African states particular. This is because the norms and values of public service is sometimes a product of time and circumstance. For instance whereas there may be a bigger capacity for self motivation in other political and social contexts, in post conflict states, capacity and resources constraints mean that rewards and other incentives are limited and thus its application may indeed be overtly politicized, a recipe for the breakdown of built up trust in a fragile political environment.

The Nigerian Civil war was a telling milestone in Nigerian public service history. After the war there was a rapid expansion of civil service as states were created to pacify post war sentiments of ethnic

\(^7\) UNDP 2008 Support to Public Sector, decentralization and capacity building Project(PSCAP)
\(^9\) Paul Collier 2009 Rethinking the Provision of Public Services in Post-Conflict States Centre for the Study of African Economies, Department of Economics, University of Oxford September 2009
marginalization. Between 1960 and 1995 Nigeria had 7 public service review commissions or committees set up by successive military governments and dictatorships. Although far reaching, these reviews were not well received by government employees for whom there was little incentive to effect change. Moreover there was modest effort and resources put into the promotion of these reforms which ranged from issues around professionalisation of the civil service, authority, responsibility and accountability in the public service and decentralisation and delegation. Military rule in Nigeria ultimately amounted to the slow deterioration of early post colonial efforts towards growing a career based, professional and visible public service in Nigeria. Draconian laws and an equally harsh penalty based system of government created a brand of civil servants, who were very limited in innovation and strictly bound to conform.

By 1999, Nigeria once again turned to a democratic rule and the 4th republic\textsuperscript{10} was born. The Obasanjo administration like administrations before it made efforts to initiate an overhaul of the public service. Obasanjo’s reform plan also included human resources targeted objectives such as the downsizing of government, capacity building, innovative government through encouraging the decentralisation of decision making processes, privatization of public enterprises, and performance management and public service pay reforms.

Nevertheless public service is a slow and sometimes drawn out process. While there have been efforts towards the overhauling of public human resources management in Nigeria, the impact of these reforms on human resources challenges in Nigeria such as skills acquisition and retention, low productivity and a disincentivized work force should be regard from the complex history of reform in Nigeria. Thus, while there have been reforms introduced from 1999 have been geared so far, these efforts have been met with challenges. Likewise, twenty years since former President Nelson Mandela was released from a 27 year stint in prison, and 15 years since the advent of democracy, the South African public service is still beset by human resource challenges, and compounding the challenge is the lack of capacity in human resource management. Despite a range of legislative frameworks and policies that were put in place since the advent of democratic rule in 1994, “sadly Public Service is not at a point today where it can confidently say that most of its managers are adequately competent in HR. A permeating reason for many of the challenges that still exist is the low status accorded to the HR function with human resource management not being taken on board as a key management function”.\textsuperscript{11} For states coming out of protracted civil war like Southern Sudan, the challenges as mentioned above are greater and more nuanced.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE APPROACHING MDG TARGET DEADLINE**

There is an acknowledgement of improvements in the development indicators identified for reaching the MGDs in Africa. For instance, the 2009 MDG report shows that levels of people living in extreme poverty has reduced from half of the developing world population to slightly more than a quarter\textsuperscript{12}. Additionally, there were substantial improvements in education levels in the developing world, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where primary school enrollment increase by 15% between 1990 and 2007. These developments are significant for the future of effective Public Human Resources management in Africa. This because while the achievement of most of the MDG goals is largely reliant on developmentally focused, equitable and effective government, the process of formulating and ensuring the implementation of appropriate policy towards the attainment of these goals is highly dependent on a skilled and motivated workforce. Equally, milestones such as mentioned above (reduction in poverty and child mortality, achievements in universal primary education) attained

\textsuperscript{10} The fourth republic represents the 4\textsuperscript{th} effort towards democratic elections and consolidation in Nigeria since independence.

\textsuperscript{11} Republic of South Africa. 2009 Public Service Commission Assessment of the State of Human Resource Management in the Public Service. September 2009

\textsuperscript{12} UN 2009 The Millennium Development Goals Report New York 2009
towards the achievement of MDG goals, will in turn maintain a skills and labour base for governments to continue to deliver services.

Despite these achievements the MDG report however acknowledges that there needs to be added momentum towards the achievement of these goals as more is yet to be achieved. This means that political office bearers, state institutions and public service must improve performance to push for the achievement of these goals. This is especially so in the face of the current global recession and its possible impact on fragile democracies in Africa. Although there have been political and economic reforms being witnessed across African states since the 1990s, corresponding good governance principles and practices such as responsive and accountable government are still lacking. The Economist’s Economic Intelligence Unit 13 2008 democracy index shows that half of the 44 states in sub-Saharan Africa were still classified as authoritarian, despite the fact that many of these states may be considered ‘democratic’ on the basis of undertaking a democratic electoral process. Moreover, public perceptions of states institutions in Africa still show a considerable percentage of Africans are disappointed with levels of services and the conduct of public officials. The Afro barometer surveys of 12 to 18 countries across south and west Africa between 2004-2005 show that while about half of Africans place a lot of responsibility on the state to take care of them, few view state policy responses and institutions effectiveness14. This is especially in areas that have to do with public service delivery such as welfare, water electricity and so on.

In an environment of an approaching MGD target date, the global efforts to emerge from one of the harshest recessions in recent history, the erosion of public confidence on state agency and the need for accountable and transparent leadership, the challenge of managing public human resources effectively becomes imperative.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF HRM ESSENTIAL TO AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

This section explores challenges and opportunities for HRM which are essential to development in Africa. By way of introduction, this section will first provide a global view of HRM challenges in Africa. It will then focus on four aspects of HR in the public service which we see as central to the achievement of the development goals of Africa as enumerated in the MDG goals. These are recruitment and selection, Compensation Management and Conditions of Service, performance management and corruption in the public service. It is suggested that within the challenges facing the HR terrain lays the recipe for its future success. Achieving good human resource management is primarily about applying sound processes to employ appropriate people, develop them, reward them properly and keep them motivated.

In the figure below, the cylinders 15 depict responses to a survey conducted in 2005 by PricewaterhouseCoopers regarding what the challenges for Africa over a period of 7 years. The third cylinder makes predictions on challenges that will be facing HR management in 3 years. In other words the last barrel would reflect today’s challenges as foreseen than. Based on the findings of this survey, change management seems to be the challenge of the past and the future in HRM in Africa. The monitoring of effectiveness of HR, learning and leadership development and succession planning seem to feature as areas of great concern with the public service HRM.

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13 The Economist 2008 The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Index of Democracy 2008. Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) www.eiu.com
14 Afrobarometer 2006, Where is Africa going? Views from below. by the Afrobarometer Network compiled by Michael Bratton and Wonbin Cho Working Paper No. 60
Figure 1: Evolution of the HR Challenges

Significantly the, challenges identified in the 7 year period as seen in all 3 cylinders are similar to the challenges highlighted in the 2009 Knowles survey\textsuperscript{16} and in a most recent report in the South African Public Service\textsuperscript{17} on the assessment of the state of HRM in South Africa. In this case, just like the above survey, change management, succession planning, skills development, employee health and wellness are key challenges which also need prioritization. This suggests that the challenges of HRM management in the past 7 years have changed very little. More importantly the fact that these same challenges are being highlighted four years after the survey, point to the fact that contrary to the predictive data on HRM by the survey, the challenges of HRM at least in South Africa have indeed remained the same.

Undoubtedly while there are countries in Africa that are still grappling with more ‘mundane’ issues like dearth in human resources, what the survey clearly represents is the rapid growth of HRM practice and reform. It also shows that for Africa in particular, there is a double barreled challenge which is to consolidate the basic applications of HRM management in the public service while at the same time incorporating the growing global demands to conform to HRM best practices.

Moreover, the above priorities and challenges indicate the breadth and complexity of the challenge facing human resource management. Juxtaposing the challenges with the priorities indicate that sufficient attention to the priority areas should overcome the challenges experienced. However, with the many juggling priorities in the African public service the sustainable holistic focus becomes challenging, often demanding that HR practitioners focus on the transactional administrative functions rather than the more strategic one. However, attention to transactions should not be viewed as negative\textsuperscript{18}, they are integral to the foundational aspects of sound human resource management. Having given an overview of the challenges in the subsequent discussion, the paper takes a closer look at some of these challenges in detail. Human Resources Management is such a vast area in both practice and discipline that to attempt to cover all aspects of HR in the public service will be difficult.

\textsuperscript{16} Knowledge Resources, HR Survey, 2009
\textsuperscript{17} Republic of South Africa. 2009 Public Service Commission Assessment of the State of Human Resource Management in the Public Service. September 2009
\textsuperscript{18} Reilly, P and Williams, T. Strategic HR: Building the Capability to Deliver
Recruitment and selection

Essential to the human resource value chain is effective recruitment and selection. Failure at this stage erodes the rest of the human resource value chain: bad appointments will inevitably lead to poor performance down the line, as well as inadequate service delivery. Governments around Africa have realized the importance of recruitment and in many cases succession in the overall management of human resources in the public sector. More than this, that the appropriate recruitment and selection of public employee is a good step towards the achievements of the goals of the public sector. Tied to this is the issue of skills development and retention, which is a huge problem in a continent in dire need of requisite skills for meeting MDG goals by 2015. The irony is that Africa has skills potential given the abundance of human resources base given its population. However, the challenge of human resources management and development in Africa has been effectively tap into this human resources base, develop skills and competencies, and retain them for the benefit of the development in Africa. This will depend on the capacity of state institutions to identify vacancy needs, fill post and positions timeously with the right people and in a transparent manner. However, recruitment and selection priorities, challenges and efforts will differ depending on country specific needs in this area. Staff-turn over is one of the most persistent challenges that the Public Service faces and must be seen in the context of retention, associated vacancy rates, and skill shortages. Combined effects make it difficult to recruit and retain staff. Apart from the huge monetary cost of losing staff, associated with the loss of skills and institutional memory, the impact on service delivery is often immeasurable: a factor Africa public services can ill afford. Both the Nigerian and South Africa public services are the largest employers of labour in their respective countries. However, one in five of all posts are vacant in the South Africa Public Service. It goes without saying that in a country with high unemployment rates and huge service delivery backlogs, this is highly problematic.

Table 1: Number of posts filled and vacant in Public Service as at October 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Departments</th>
<th>Provincial Departments</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Posts filled</td>
<td>300 673</td>
<td>869 371</td>
<td>1 170 044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts vacant</td>
<td>45 328</td>
<td>261 037</td>
<td>306 365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>346 001</td>
<td>1 130 408</td>
<td>1 476 409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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After its democratic elections in 1999 the high levels of staff redundancy and an imbalance in terms of the mix of skills and competencies in Nigeria, meant that priorities of public service human resources management was geared more towards issues of rightsizing or ‘service cleansing’, succession planning and the management of redundancy. In Sudan a state under reconstruction after a protracted civil war, there is the issue of chronic lack of skills, especially in Southern Sudan which bore the brunt of the war. Employees working on government/donor funded projects, like the Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Southern Sudan (MDTF-SS) were recruited from other East African countries. In this case HR unlike in South Africa and Nigeria, where the challenges tended more towards systemic and process based issues, the major issue was a chronic lack of human resources. For Sudan emphasis in recruitment goals will be geared towards short, medium and long term strategies to build up a skills pool that will feed into the fragile public service. While the issue of training and human development is important in terms of recruitment, for South Africa and Nigeria a greater skills pool means that efforts should also be made towards developing recruiting and selection systems that can attract the appropriate skills for the job.

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20 Adegoroye p 26.
There are many obstacles to the proper management of the recruitment and selection process. Poor selection processes and procedures have major implications such as: failing to place people with the right skills and competencies in the right places, non-delivery on mandate due to failure to attract/source suitable skills, work overload, capable employees ending up demotivated and resigning to find work in high performance environments. All this serves to strain the value chain further, and escalate problems to other HR focus areas. Apart from some of the ones mentioned above, one of the long term HR challenges for Africa rests in the area of education. Research has shown that education institutions (Universities, Schools of Technology and training colleges) are prominent sources for new skill entrants into the public sector. In Nigeria alone 83 percent of total new incoming staff to the Health sector in 2005 came from Universities. The 2007 Mo Ibrahim index on human development based on indicators such as primary school completion rates, progression to secondary school and tertiary enrollment rate shows that many African states are making moderate scores on education, however, when matched with the levels of sustainable economic opportunities, there is a serious short fall of opportunities in relation to talent. High staff turn-over and vacancy rates clearly show that the public service finds it difficult to attract and retain staff. Thus going into the future, we will need ‘smart recruitment’ policies to effectively utilize skilled human resources. Additionally, more than ever before, there is a need to continuously interrogate how best to make public services across Africa learning spaces to nurture, refine the raw talent coming in from the Universities, technology and training colleges. This is critical especially in reconstructing states as the issue of transfer of knowledge in the public service was one of the challenges identified by Ministers from Liberia, Rwanda and DRC.

Finally, African public services need to increase their existing skills pool to ensure continuous and enhanced service delivery. Better emphasis must be placed on advertisements to recruit staff with required skills and competencies, and marketing the public service in such a manner that it is regarded as an employer of choice.

Compensation Management and Conditions of Service

Remuneration and conditions of service play a very important part in recruiting and retaining employees with the right skills. This becomes even more acute in an increasingly volatile market where premiums are paid for scarce skills. However, the current economic uncertainty makes forecasting of salary movements problematic, and the possible decline in employment prospects in the recession period will have marked impact on pay levels, resulting in increases less than predicted. This current environment requires a comprehensive view on remuneration vis a vis market comparisons and market segments, and developing a reward strategy and philosophy that adopts a consistent approach to making pay decisions that serve to attract and retain high caliber employees. This requires of HR to actively change the paradigm from a narrow focus on annual increases to one in which there is a holistic view of the remuneration benefits within the business. The South African transformation agenda placed a huge responsibility on public managers, and the state recognized the critical role management plays in the effective and efficient functioning of the Public Service. In addressing the remuneration and conditions of service a senior management service (SMS) was ‘developed out of the recognition of the critical role that senior management plays’ and that ‘the challenge for the Public

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24 The Mo Ibrahim index on human development which uses a combination of indicators from different data and statistical sources to rate levels of good governance in African countries
Service is to recruit, develop and retain competent leaders and managers and to reward them for good performance. In addition to the challenge of the current economic climate, another critical challenge in this area is the growing powers of labour movements. The South Africa public service is highly unionised with a progressive labour rights legal framework, where remuneration and conditions of service are subject to negotiation, and conclude with multi-year salary agreements providing some basis for labour stability. Addressing the specialized groups, an Occupation-Specific Dispensation has been introduced which amongst others creates career paths and salary progression possibilities for various occupational categories. The holistic view of remuneration is made up of fairly attractive pension and medical benefits for state employees. For example, through the Government Medical Scheme (GEMS) lower paid government employees have access to 100% government subsidized medical aid.

Performance management

Performance management is a strategic management tool which serves the purpose of tracking employee strengths and weaknesses and is also tool for identifying and rewarding good performance and managing poor performance. The concept of performance management is drawn from a theoretical base that views employee motivation as critical in human resources management. By linking goal setting to motivation, performance management aims to strategically align individual employee task and work to the goals of the organization. Nevertheless, although performance management is touted as supportive and responsive supervision, where it is not properly introduced, there is a tendency for poorly performing employees to view it negatively or see it as a tool for punishment rather than reward.

Performance management is a growing area in human resources management in Africa. In the context of the approaching MGD target deadline, performance management is seen as a strategic tool for management in the public sector. Performance management will ensure an organized, focused approach to implementing public sector goals towards the delivery of services and achieving the targets of the MDG goals. However, performance management as the experience in South Africa has shown is not only a complex process but one whose implementation is fraught with challenges.

Performance management has enjoyed some longevity in the South African public service, thus some South African perspectives in terms of lessons will suffice. President Zuma in his 2010 State of the Nation Address promised a performance-oriented state with improved planning and performance monitoring and evaluation where “Government must work faster, harder and smarter. We will expect the executive and the public service to comply with this vision.” He has promised to performance contract with these Ministers to improve service delivery. This will be no easy task, especially given that the culture of performance management in the South African public service has not been satisfactory up to now. Findings show widespread failure to uphold the performance management system’s underlying principles. Many managers appear not to have a thorough grasp of the constituent elements of the system and lack the necessary time, dedication, and skills to make it work. There is

31 Republic of South Africa. State of Nation Address. President Jacob Zuma. February, 2010
hardly any ongoing monitoring of performance, with resultant absence of regular manager-employee communication, performance feedback, guidance, coaching and mentoring. These challenges will have to be addressed if the true benefits of performance management are to be reaped.

At the most senior administrative level, Directors-General have either not concluded performance agreements or do so long after the due date, and much of the blame for this behaviour must rest at the door of the Executive. One can only hope that the elevation of performance contracting will introduce a seriousness lacking up to date. Performance of senior managers has a direct bearing on the delivery of service delivery mandates, and is directly related to the governance challenges and meeting the MDGs. The special focus now promised in this area should assist in defusing the mounting pressure to improve public services delivery and realize a more citizen-centric orientation. This can only be achieved through raised performance standards and good leaders within the state machinery. Failure to do so will increase criticism about poor service and lack of responsiveness. A comprehensive performance management system for the public service is seen as an important instrument to enhance service delivery, provided it is implemented properly.

In 2004 after the Nigerian government established the Bureau for Public Service Reform, the BPSR, as one its goals in reforming Human Resources Management the BPSR focused on an ‘installation of a new Performance Management Scheme’. Also, advocacy for the implementation of performance management strategies is growing from public service experts in Nigeria. Although the aim of human resources management in reconstructing public services in post conflict states is centered mostly on the issue of training and building competencies, the issue of motivation of public service employees is also a growing concern. Apart from developing appropriate remuneration standards and building skills, performance management with its elements of incentive and learning should also be stressed as part of an integrated approach to human resources development in re-constructing and fragile states.

**Combating Corruption**

An overview of two continental governance surveys (the Mo Ibrahim Index and the Afro Barometer) targeting expert based assessments and statistical based data and citizen perceptions respectively shows that corruption is one of the biggest drawbacks in implementing public service goals and public policy in Africa. The accountability of public service employees is paramount as a public perception of corruption in the public service is high. An Afrobarometer survey of public opinion in local government in Nigeria shows that only 22% of Nigerian citizens see local government as using public revenues for service delivery and not personal gain. In South Africa, major protests over service delivery have risen from 27 in 2008 to 100 in 2009, according to data compiled by Municipal IQ. The vulnerability of reconstructing states to this corruption malaise is all the more challenging. Issues such as the tensions between returning citizens in the Diaspora and the local population and the fate of young ex-combatants necessitates that human resources management be handled in the most transparent and equitable way. Indications from the Mo Ibrahim index shows that post conflict states score very low rates in the area of safety and the rule of law of which public accountability and corruption in the public services are indicators. Although the possibility of these low scores may be dependent on corresponding indicators which measure levels of safety and rule of law, the general low

34 Adegoroye 2006
37 Afrobarometer 2008 Public Opinion and local government in Nigeria, Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 53
39 Mo Ibrahim Website
scores (DRC 31.43, Sudan 23.83\textsuperscript{40}) also show that in these states, there is the big challenge of balancing underlying tensions post conflict the good governance goals of reconstructing the state. However, states where state reconstruction has been managed over longer periods like Rwanda (55.53) and Liberia (45.74) seem to score higher.

Combating corruption has emerged as a strong component of public service reform across Africa. And recent trends across Africa in terms of public perceptions of corruption show that perceptions of official corruption are sharply down\textsuperscript{41}. Curiously, while it seemed that perceptions of the public on corruption had declined, perceptions of state institutions’ efforts at combating corruption were still seen as ineffectual\textsuperscript{42}. A recent World Bank report has stated that ‘quiet corruption’ of absenteeism and poor management, especially in the education and health sectors is undermining service delivery and development in South Africa and other African countries. World bank Chief Economist Shantayanan Devarajan says there is a ‘direct link’ between quiet corruption and MDGs for 2015.

In Nigeria for instance one of the main components of its public service reform strategies was focused the issue of corruption an endemic governance problem in Nigeria. This reform process has seen the institutionalization of accountability and anti-corruption measures through the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Code of Conduct Bureau and Code of Conduct Tribunal. For eternal skeptics of government reform in Nigeria there were doubts as to how effectively these measures will help in re-invigorating the Nigerian public service towards improving performance, adapting and adopting laudable public ethical practices and stamping out the cancer of corruption within the public service. However, it can be argued that unlike the environment of past reforms, the democratic climate of Obasanjo’s reform has provided the opportunity for some of these reforms to make some impact. However these efforts have been met with challenges. Ten years later, it seems that corruption remains a huge governance problem in Nigeria. Institutional factors may include the lack of clarity and distinction on some the roles, jurisdictions of the government’s major anti graft agencies. Additionally, poor public participation mechanisms at all levels of government as well as the endemic culture of public service corruption has tended to undermine even anti-corruption agencies of the state\textsuperscript{43}.

South Africa started with great promise. Emerging from a corrupt past characterized by unequal distribution of resources and services, the advent of democracy saw a concerted effort to fight the scourge of corruption and ensure a sound value system based on a strong human rights culture. Comprehensive anti- corruption legislative and regulatory frameworks were introduced, and broad based partnerships comprising government, business sector and civil society took collective responsibility for the fight against corruption. Anti-corruption mechanisms included the introduction of a Code of Conduct for the Public Service, Senior Management Services (SMS) system was introduced in 2001, Financial Disclosure Framework for senior public managers and a national anti-corruption hotline providing an anonymous access to whistleblowers. However, increases in service delivery protests and the growing number of tenderpreneurs\textsuperscript{44}, indicates that the fight against corruption will need to be re-invigorated, especially as it appears that the MDGs will be missed.

\textsuperscript{40} These scores are taken from a 100 percentile bases
\textsuperscript{41} Afrobarometer 2006 Where is Africa going? Views from below. by the Afrobarometer Network compiled by Michael Bratton and Wonbin Cho Working Paper No. 60
\textsuperscript{42} Afrobarometer 2006 ibid
\textsuperscript{43} An example is the graft allegations and counter allegations including nepotism, misappropriation of funds and bribery leveled against heads of national anti-corruption agencies like the EFCC. Nigeria News Service, ‘massive looting at EFCC, Waziri fingered findings messy 20\textsuperscript{th} May 2009 www.nigerianewsservice.com
\textsuperscript{44} Note: Tenderpreneurs is a term coined in South Africa referring to someone politically well-connected who has gotten rich through the government tendering system.
CONCLUSION: REDEFINING THE HR SERVICE AND ROLE TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES

This paper has attempted to highlight certain aspects of public service HRM in Africa. From the discussions, it has been established that for Africa in particular, the HR environment is challenging. This is not only because it deals with people issues, but also because of the institutional, political and social environment that HRM has to contend with Africa. Invariably HR practitioners find themselves facilitating the frustrations of management and the dissatisfaction of employees. The outcomes of these tensions often find a convenient scapegoat in HR. When the HR service is not meeting public satisfaction blame becomes easier, and often at times these may be justified. The future of HRM in Africa requires confronting the challenges discussed through sustained partnerships and networks across Africa. The African public service HR network needs to be strengthened and capacitated for knowledge sharing and transfer, as well as exchange of best practice.

There have been varied attempts to bolster the status and role of HR components and HR practitioners. This has been encouraged by the United Nation’s World Public Sector Report, ‘unlocking the Human Potential for Public Sector Performance’ where it discussed the critical role of human resource management and the fact that human resource management is causing organizational effectiveness. It is acknowledged that there have been efforts in many African states in strengthening HRM in the public sector. For instance, South Africa introduced specific interventions in an attempt to strengthen the HRM function in departments, which includes a generic organizational structure and post establishment model for HRM components, a competency framework for improving HRM functions, the alignment of training programmes on HRM with the competency framework, and a framework of key performance indicators against which departments can assess the functioning of their HRM components. While laudable, the successes and outcomes of these efforts will ultimately be when service delivery and development goals and policies become reality for the teeming population of African citizens.

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