Integrating Strategic Management Practices in Public Sector Reform in Kenya

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Abstract: The public sector is under increasing pressure worldwide to increase outcomes and improve outputs of their organizations, while simultaneously improving efficiencies and effectiveness. To meet these considerable challenges, public sector organizations must revisit their strategic management processes and measurement systems. Strategic management is concerned with formulating and implementing strategies hence public organizations need to develop action plans for implementing particular strategic initiatives to ensure that projects are carried out to completion. Strategies for improving public sector performance include; total quality management, performance-oriented civil service, customer-driven government, quality and standards e.g. ISO certification, policy management, organizational strategic management, adequate resource utilization, training and human resource capacity building. Change in public sector is inevitable and it is a continuous process. It determines the long-term direction and performance of the organization by ensuring that careful formulation, effective implementation and continuous evaluation of strategy take place, to ensure access, affordability and equity. Strategic management plans are expected to evolve further, with particular developments around technology, data, people and customer expectations. This paper therefore aims at establishing an understanding of strategic management as a driver of change which is an important aspect of public sector reforms.

Key Words: Strategic Management, Public Sector, Performance and Change.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The public sector is under increasing pressure worldwide to increase outcomes and improve outputs of their organizations, while simultaneously improving efficiencies and effectiveness. Stakeholders want to know they are receiving value for money at a government agency that may be unique and unable to benchmark against other agencies except those operating in other countries.

Many developed countries, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, are beginning to focus on the public sector by introducing strategic management and performance measures, particularly in the wake of the economic downturn. McKinsey and Company suggests this is crucial, stressing that the public sector faces a decade of radical and ongoing change. The nature and scale of these trends make the coming decade a defining period for the public sector, (Barber, Levy & Mendonca, 2007).

To meet these considerable challenges, public sector organizations must revisit their strategic management processes and measurement systems. Notable public sector strategist, John Bryson, argues that 'leaders and managers of public sector organizations must become effective strategists if these organizations are to fulfill their missions, meet their mandates, satisfy their constituents, and create public value in the years ahead', (Bryson, 2004). The challenge comes with the low profile of strategic management in the sector, not because it is not considered important, but rather because the process has been considered too difficult within complex organizations in the sector, and there are few appropriate strategic frameworks. Gaining an appreciation of strategic management though can be confusing, argue Bryson and fellow strategist, Henry Mintzberg, (Clarke, 2007). Bryson suggests that 'the vast majority of public sector organizations already claim to engage in strategic management, but exactly what they mean is unclear', (Bryson, 2004). While financial sustainability is part of the equation, strategic management embraces more; it covers the future and the kind of community individuals would like their grandchildren to live in.

2. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT:

Strategic management is a process by which top management determines the long-term direction and performance of the organization by ensuring that careful formulation, effective implementation and continuous evaluation of strategy take place. It's therefore the process of coordinating and integrating the management functions in an organized manner in order to achieve organizational goals and objectives.

Strategic Management can simply be defined as planning for effective allocation of the organizations scarce resources and efficient utilization of those resources with the aim of achieving organization's vision or future intended dream (Johnson and Scholes, 1993).

Strategic management is a process by which top management determines the long-term direction and performance of the organization by ensuring that careful formulation, effective implementation and continuous evaluation of strategy take place. It's therefore the process of coordinating and integrating the management functions in an organized manner in order to achieve organizational goals and objectives. Is concerned with complexity arising out of ambiguous and non-routine situations with organization-wide rather than operation-specific implication: A systematic approach to a major and increasingly important responsibility of general management to position and relate the firm to its environment in a way which will assure its continued success and make it secure from surprises (Ansoff, 1990). The decision process that aligns the organization's internal capability with the opportunities and threats it faces in its environment (Rowe et al., 1994). ―Strategic Management can simply be defined as planning for effective allocation of the organizations scarce resources and efficient utilization of those resources with the aim of achieving organization's vision or future intended dream.

Johnson and Scholes, 1993) Exploring Corporate Strategy Public administration is the lawful exercise of discretion by public administrators within a structure of governance (Scott 1998), that is, a constitutionally appropriate formalization of managerial discretion intended to enable government to affect the will of the people. Public management is a craft of skilled civil servants….as an institution of constitutional governance (Weimer, 1995). One meaning of managing change is to making changes in a planned and managed or systematic fashion. External events may also necessitate organizational change. Public sector- the part of the national economy controlled by government or quasi-government institutions In production or service delivery.

The guiding principles in any strategic management process, whether in the public or private sector, are about understanding what changes are needed, how to implement and manage these changes, and how to create a roadmap for sustaining improvements that lead to better performance. The difficulty in strategic management is the challenge of laying a foundation for success in the future while meeting today's challenges, (Liam & Robert, 1994). The primary tools available to organizations - for understanding, implementing, delivering and managing services and change – are outlined in Diagram 1. This diagram is a brief overview of a common public sector strategic management model, (John, 1988), (with the addition of change management tools) used in the strategic planning process. This provides a dynamic method - not just a planning model - for evaluating the success of public sector organizations in meeting customer demands in the new public management.

The application of this model helps to identify the components for success and the capabilities of an organization in its strategic management planning. As illustrated, the first step is information gathering, which identifies key market, industry and internal organizational trends and opportunities that will impact the organization. Where "market", in the public sector contexts, refers to all relevant stakeholders. The organization's ability to respond to these critical strategic issues and challenges is manifest in their vision and the mission statement describing what they do, with/for whom they do it, their distinctive competence and why they do it. The strategic goals and specific strategies for achieving these goals should be formulated in an operational plan that also addresses change management issues. From this point, a review of this process and performance should be on going.

3. STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR:

Strategic planning is concerned with formulating strategy. In his seminal book on strategic planning in the public and non-profit sectors, Bryson presents strategic planning as a set of concepts, processes, and tools for shaping "what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why it does it" (Bryson , 2004). In the long run, its purpose is to promote strategic thinking, acting, and learning on an on-going basis. Thus, strategic planning takes a "big picture" approach that blends futuristic thinking, objective analysis, and subjective evaluation of values, goals, and priorities to chart a future direction and courses of action to ensure an organization's vitality, effectiveness, and ability to add public value.

Strategic planning has served in these cases to involve managers in thinking systematically about the future of the organization and the environment in which it operates; to promote learning and discussion about what is important, what the priorities should be, and what will work and what will not work; to build consensus around and commitment to strategic initiatives; and to communicate direction, overall strategy, priorities, and plans to broader constituencies inside and outside the organization.

Strategic planning is based on the premise that leaders and managers of public and nonprofit organizations must be effective strategists if their organizations are to fulfill their missions, meet their mandates, and satisfy constituents in the years ahead, (Bryson, 1995). Strategic planning is, in the military sense, an ancient science of warfare. Military campaigns and battles are typically referred to in historical literature as large-scale stratagems to confront and engage the enemy. However, strategic planning in the management and administrative context is a modern concept and process identifiable within both the corporate and public arenas. (Young, 2001).

Strategic planning is simply a formal yet flexible process to determine where an organization is currently and where it should be in the future. There is agreement, as evidenced in recent literature, in both theory and practice, on the general steps that are involved in a strategic planning process.

4. THE FUTURE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING:

If public organizations are to use strategic planning processes more effectively, however, they need to avoid the kinds of traps identified in Mintzberg's (1994) classic critique, which argued that strategic planning in the private sector often spoils rather than facilitates truly strategic thinking as a result of overly formalized planning systems, the central role played by professional planners as opposed to managers, overreliance on quantitative data, and the detachment of strategists from the realities of the "nuts and bolts" at the operating level and the world that surrounds it.

If planning is to be done well in the public sector, strategy needs to be formulated by top executives and line managers, with planners in support roles; the analysis of strategic issues must be based on extensive intelligence gathering including "soft" data rather than intensive number crunching; and strategy formulation should be influenced by experience, intuition, inspiration, and even hunches, as well as a keen sense of political feasibility.

Thus, strategic planning processes need to facilitate understanding of the forces driving issues, explore options in terms of their feasibility and likely consequences, and stimulate candid discussions regarding the costs and risks associated with various alternatives. If managers can engage in these kinds of assessments and develop genuine consensus around strategies among the "power players" within the organization and outside in whose support or active involvement is essential for success, the strategies arrived at stand a much better chance of success in moving the organization in the desired direction. Regarding this last point, public organizations need to make greater efforts to be more inclusive in their strategic planning, inviting key external stakeholders to become involved in parts of the process or making greater efforts to solicit input from outsiders through surveys, focus groups, executive sessions, or other forums.

Furthermore, given that public policy is often determined and carried out in networked environments rather than by single organization, strategic planning will need to be applied increasingly to collaborative enterprises (Bryson, Crosby and Bryson, 2009). Recognizing the importance of other public as well as private and nonprofit organizations to the advancement of their own strategic agendas, public organizations often assess critical external stakeholders' support for or opposition to their plans and then develop strategies as part of those plans to capitalize on or recruit supporters while accommodating or making end-runs around opponents in order to move those plans forward more effectively (Nutt and Backoff, 1992). Although it may be more cumbersome and challenging, it may be much more effective in the long run for the organization in question to attempt to convince these other organizations to work collaboratively in developing a strategic plan for the larger network and then work within that process to try to ensure that the plan that results reflects its own substantive objectives to the extent possible.

More immediate, however, public managers need to link strategic planning much more closely with performance management processes in response to continued pressure for accountability as well as their own commitment to managing for results. More specifically, we will need to effectuate three fundamental changes in the way in which we manage public organizations over the next decade:

1. Shifting from strategic planning to strategic management
2. Moving from performance measurement to performance management
3. Linking strategy and performance management more effectively

Making these three transitions will be essential to enable public agencies to focus attention on the most appropriate goals and to manage effectively to achieve those goals.

5. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC SECTOR PERFORMANCE:

 a) *Total Quality Management*

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management technique that emphasizes high-quality service (Performance-Oriented Civil Service) and customer satisfaction (Customer-Driven Government). TQM entails the constant improvement of product or service quality and reliability, combined with shorter and more reliable response times through the production and sales chain or service-provision process. It also involves increasing flexibility of response to customer requirements and a constant concern about efficiency through waste elimination, the removal of duplication of effort, and curtailing overlaps of roles and responsibilities. Management commitment is the sine-qua-non for a successful TQM strategy.

TQM will not be successful without line management ownership, active involvement and leadership by example. The commitment of ministers and senior officials has been identified as a major influence on implementing successful public service reforms. Such commitment must involve a willingness to indicate a clear preference for a better future and also entail the willingness to take responsibility, and to accept praise and blame.

b) *Performance-Oriented Civil Service*

One solution that has been proffered for the problems of inadequate resources and the increasing demand for effective services, low levels of public trust, and increasing demand for accountability in government, is termed performance oriented civil service. Performance-based management requires that managers develop a reasonable level of agreement on programme goals and strategies for achieving these goals. Managers should develop performance measurement systems to document performance and support decision-making. This performance information is then used for managing the organizations and programmes and also for providing feedback to key stakeholders on improved performance.

The key components of performance-based management are:
1. Developing a reasonable level of agreement on mission, goals and strategies for achieving the goals;
2. Implementing performance measurement systems of sufficient quality to document performance and support decision-making; and
3. Using performance information as a basis for decision- making at various organizational levels.

c) *Customer-Driven Government*

NPM places emphasis on serving individual customers. In applying TQM, the organization should focus on what the population (customers) want, not what administration thinks they need. To improve efficiency, productivity and integrity in the public service, efforts should be primarily focused on creating a culture of commitment to identifying and meeting customer requirements throughout organizations and within available resources. It follows that serving the customer is more important than serving the organization.

This strategy has been the main focus of reforms in Malaysia, Namibia, Singapore and the United Kingdom. The Malaysian Government has emphasized throughout the public service that the customer is paramount. The Citizens Charter (United Kingdom) provides specific targets such as hospital waiting times and train delays. Customer-driven government became formal policy in the USA in 1993 through the National Performance Review (NPR) report. The Clinton
Administration used the NPR report to set a goal of "providing customer services equal to the best in business".

Transparency International (2003) has recently reported that the Mauritius Citizens Charter was designed as an aid to increasing popular awareness of corruption. The main objective was to devise and disseminate a document with guidelines that individuals can follow to prevent corruption and promote integrity. The Charter also attempts to inform and advise the general public on the nature and forms of corruption. Central to the premise of the Charter is the imperative of making the general populace aware of its collective and individual responsibility to fight corruption.

d) *Quality and Standards*

Public sector management reforms would be incomplete without addressing the issue of the quality of products delivered to the consumers. The private sector, as the engine of growth, cannot provide satisfactory services and products without the active participation of a public sector that controls quality and standards. An example of a standards authority in Africa is the Quality and Standards Authority of Ethiopia (QSAE). QSAE was established in 1970 to promote quality management practices as one of its central objectives. In addition to standards development, certification, metrology and testing, the vision of the organization is to be an internationally recognized quality, standards, metrology and testing organization that supports the national effort towards economic development and

social progress. The Authority has a quality policy, which is committed to continuously satisfying the needs and expectations of its customers in a process of continuous improvement.

e) *Organizational Strategic Management*

Organizational Strategic Management (OSM) integrates all major activities and functions of an organization and directs them towards advancing an organization's strategic agenda. It integrates all other management processes to provide a systematic, coherent and effective approach in establishing, attaining, monitoring and upgrading an agency's strategic objectives. Given the dynamic political and institutional environment within which many public agencies operate in
Africa, an effective strategic management capability is essential for maintaining or strengthening the links between the organizations, external stakeholders, and managing for results (Poister and Streib, 1999). African Public Service agencies need to formulate their strategic plans and use the plans as a basis for effective public service management.

f) *Policy Management*

Policy management is the process of policy initiation, analysis, formulation, approval, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in the public sector. Policy analysis skills have been identified as a key weakness within the civil service in many developing countries, particularly Africa. In Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Zambia, this has been addressed by strengthening the Offices of the President, Prime Minister and Cabinet through the creation of Policy Units. In Ghana and Malaysia, inter-ministerial committees have been set up for special policy issues, supported by national forums involving the private sector.
The new culture of policy management emphasizes participation, accountability and transparency. It hinges upon the involvement of the private sector and civil society in policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, and on the recognition that all stakeholders in the policy development process must be involved in order to enhance support and ease of implementation.

Some of the main features of policy management include:
1. Conducive policy environment, which implies trust on the part of policy makers and avoidance of over-emphasis on confidentiality, among others;
2. Organizational and institutional infrastructures that can co-ordinate the various policies of government; and
3. Policy analysis capacity.

Stakeholder involvement Public services cannot expect to serve their clients and customers effectively without their full involvement in policy initiation, analysis and formulation. The stakeholders in the public service include:
1. The private sector, including the informal sector
2. Professional associations and trade unions
3. Non-governmental organizations
4. Regulatory bodies
5. Multinational corporations
6. International financial institutions
7. International development institutions
8. Foreign Governments and Agencies

In the twenty-first century, citizens and other stakeholders are demanding to be heard with greater frequency. The development of partnerships with these stakeholders is therefore paramount to effective formulation and implementation of public sector reforms and strategies for public service delivery. If the ultimate goal of the public sector is to satisfy the needs of the population, then any credible programme should ensure that it represents the interests of the people. Gergis (1999) has dwelt on the need to empower and engage relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process in Botswana. Citizen economic empowerment is defined as a socio-economic process through which the Botswana people are motivated to enhance their belief in self-efficacy, to improve their abilities to control their own resources, and to unleash their creative and productive energies to achieve sustainable improvement in their living standards. Effective empowerment requires multilateral communications and two-way power relations among government, policy makers, private sector organizations, and other civil society organizations at the international, national and local levels. Gergis concludes by stating that the involvement of stakeholders will increase the transparency and accountability of any process.

g) *Adequate Resource Utilization*

Poor productivity and lack of efficiency in African public services is, in most cases, attributable to inadequate allocation and utilization of human, financial and material resources; shortcomings in management practices; and poor planning and budgeting. The key concern for reform programmes, therefore, is how to increase efficiency and effectiveness. The concern for efficiency underpins many reform programmes in Africa and rests on the fact that inefficiency within government organs leads to decreased national productivity. Therefore, the civil services need to be refocused towards clear lines of financial, managerial and fiscal accountability.

h) *Training and Human Resource Capacity Building*

Any framework for reshaping attitudes of government officials must involve staff training and development. Traditionally, training programmes have had a skills based focus, but recent trends in customer-oriented civil service require an attitudinal-focused training. This has led to the need for a pragmatic approach to training and development so as to develop the capacity of public servants for improved service delivery. The government has to invest in public servants in
order to:
1. Equip managers with the necessary skills to handle new responsibilities;
2. Develop skills for customer oriented civil service;
3. Improve the standards of service delivery; and
4. Adapt to new technologies and new working techniques, methods and process.

6. MANAGING STRATEGIC CHANGE IN PUBLIC SECTOR:

Public sector organizations worldwide are under pressure to increase efficiency while delivering improved and integrated services. The public sector remains a central vehicle for delivering development for both developed and developing countries; within a framework crafted to realize economic and allocative efficiency; equity, justice, fairness; security; competitiveness and contestability. The system should also guarantee sustainability of service even in competitive markets; mitigate against potential failure of privatized services while reducing transaction costs.

The Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and the New Public Management (NPM) programmes designed to deliver on these objectives have realized mixed outcomes, in particular those that still maintain hierarchical structures of service delivery. Governance and diffusion of political power in particular remain the critical pillars for effecting change in developing countries public sectors. Change is inevitable and it is a continuous process. It determines the long-term direction and performance of the organization by ensuring that careful formulation, effective implementation and continuous evaluation of strategy take place, to ensure access, affordability and equity. This paper presents the different strategies of implementing strategic changes in public sector, drawing on SAPs and NPM strategies and lessons thereof. Change is based on the assumptions made; and can be Top-down, Transformational or Strategic. Changes can also be incremental or big bang, with response mechanisms either adapt or evolve in case change is incremental or undergo reconstruction or revolution in the event the change is substantial. A number of mechanisms have been employed in effecting strategic change in the public sector in Africa since the structural reforms of the 80s.

Central to the change process are the level of stakeholder (beneficiaries, providers, funders) involvement and participation, Marketization, regulation and political control, differentiated service delivery levels, shared corporate management and authority, costs and responsibilities, competition and benchmarking, new modalities of service delivery. In any event no one size strategy fits all public sector changes. Different countries apply the structures differently depending on their unique circumstances. The guiding principles for process change in change management are centred on politics, systems, coalitions, culture and communication. But Politics and culture remain critical to any strategic change in public sector. Leadership, coalitions on need for change, stakeholder involvement, levels of accountability and application of technology are central in delivery of public service. To remain viable, efficient and effective in responding to the dynamic needs of the citizens, it has to embrace strategies that can enhance improved productivity and the quality of services delivered. Towards this end, a number of strategies to enhance public sector performance are proffered for adaptation by African governments.

Kenya since the 80s had embraced political, economic and social strategic changes influencing public sector service delivery. The defining moments of strategic public sector delivery mechanisms relate to Liberalization and privatization anchored on Sessional Paper No1 of 1986, on Economic Management for Renewed Growth. The biggest

achievement of the amendment of the constitution in 1991 not only democratized the political field but more importantly the entrenchment of a fixed 2-term presidency, freedom of information, independence of the judiciary; separation of powers of the different arms of government and the prominence given to the citizens, civil society in demanding for accountability. The constitutional provisions of Rights and obligations, equity, political representation, freedom of information including the vetting processes of appointments and accountability measures will go a long way in consolidating benefits of accountability. Technology facilitated service delivery in light of the globalizing social, economic and cultural aspects of life call for E-government service delivery for timely action in a fast moving environment.

7. THE FUTURE OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT:

Strategic management plans are expected to evolve further, with particular developments around technology, data, people and customer expectations. Technology will play substantial role in future strategic management plans, with new metrics and the relationships between analyses and scorecards fine-tuning the strategy. It is anticipated that data will be treated more as a commodity as organizations increasingly grow aware of a new paradigm of competition involving data. Organizations will push the boundaries of analytics in their products, services and business models. Analytics may be offered to customers as a value added service in years to come, (Davenport & Harris, 2007). In turn, there will be a greater need for analytically oriented people – some highly trained professionals and a larger group of less trained people. With the growing use of analytics, organizations may also increase the use of outsourced and offshore analytical services, (Davenport & Harris, 2007). Ever-increasing customer expectations will continue to impact the public sector, which will become a significant challenge given their resource constraints.

8. CONCLUSION:

Strategic management plans must be relevant, timely, accurate and flexible to allow an organization to remain agile in a world of uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. Existing systems offer capability for management, analysis and information reporting for strategy delivery and for making decisions on performance improvement. But, the information revolution is providing new methods for managing and analyzing vast amounts of data into meaningful, timely and continuous feedback, empowering public sector organizations with new ways of offering value to their many stakeholders.

Notwithstanding this, a strategic management plan and a measurement system will not deliver a highly effective public service organization. Marr (2008) suggests that the final piece of the performance management puzzle is to create the right organizational context and appropriate processes to turn information into meaningful insights and learning, (Marr, 2008). Fostering a performance-driven culture, leveraging performance management software applications and learning from current performance management practice are all part of this equation A robust strategic management system, together with a comprehensive measurement solution, offers significant advantages to public sector organizations in delivering improved corporate performance.

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