

---

**The quest for the “elusive” public goods excellence: Kenya’s experience with public service reforms**

Simmy M. Marwa, Asst. Professor & KT Expert, Hamdan Bin Mohammed e-University Mohamed Zairi, European Centre for Total Quality Management (ECTQM), School of Management, University of Bradford

---

## Abstract

*The paper tracks performance-oriented Civil Service Reforms (CSRs) in Kenya, noting hurdles and opportunities prevalent and suggests a robust model to inculcate a performance-oriented reforms culture. The article is informed by a review literature on civil service reforms and applications of performance measurements in civil service reforms in Kenya. Current performance-oriented reforms/practices and challenges therein are tracked to establish current status, obstacles/gaps to effective implementation identified, opportunities for improvement isolated and a robust model to inculcate a performance-oriented culture suggested for application. While noticeable progress has been made in the implementation of CSRs in Kenya, there evidently remain obstacles to implementation of performance-oriented civil service reforms. Civil service reforms ought to revolve around performance measurements; rewarding good performance and realigning resources to support desired changes and simultaneously stimulating competition amongst public entities so as to support superior public service delivery.*

*The paper gauges civil service reforms in Kenya and particularly the extent to which the drive towards performance-oriented reforms has fared over time and suggests a holistic model to entrench a performance-oriented culture.*

## Introduction

The subject of public service reforms (PSRs) in Africa evokes different emotions and continues to be controversial amongst the academia, practitioners and African governments. Gauging PSRs success in Africa is even complex as it is compounded by a plethora of arguments and counter-arguments put forth (Ayee, 2005; Olowu, 1999; AEGM, 2003; CODESRIA, 2005; DPMN, 2003; Mhone, 2003 and Owusu, 2005). Nonetheless, in this article we delve into the literature to explore the extent to which performance oriented PSRs are entrenched in Kenya. We establish impediments and challenges thereto by focusing on varied performance-oriented civil service reforms pursued in the recent past and suggest a model for engraining a performance-oriented reforms culture.

## Performance measurement

The continuous need to improve both efficiency and effectiveness of public sector in a situation of scarce resources and rising public expectations in the public sector remains a major challenge to the public sector worldwide, hence the need for performance measures (Ancarani and Capaldo, 2001; Hoque, 2008). Similarly, Black et al. (2001) contend that performance measures have become important in the public sector because of the need to improve public service, particularly from the “citizen” perspective. Hence, Bruijn (2002) contends that performance measurements in the public sector promote: transparency (*organisation makes its output clear*), learning (*know what is done well/poorly and why*), appraising (*gauging staff performance*), and sanctioning (*either*

*positive/negative consequences following performance*). Echoing similar sentiments, Zairi (2003) too asserts that performance measures are required since “one cannot manage that which cannot be measured” and more so to: determine what to pay attention to and improve, provide a scoreboard for people to monitor their performance levels, give indication of the cost of poor quality, give a standard for making comparisons, and comply with the core organisational objectives. Evidently, managing and measuring performance has been one of the key drivers in the reform of the public sector in recent years. Such performance measurements provide data on how effectively and efficiently public services are being delivered. Voicing similar sentiments, Greiling (2005) further argues that in the context of public sector, performance measurements are credited with: modernising public budgeting, boosting obligatory or voluntary reporting, stimulating contract management, enabling inter-administrative comparisons/benchmarking, promoting internal diagnosis system and creating a strategic management system. Likewise Jarrar and Schiuma (2007) assert that since the public sector management has become increasingly result and customer-focused, there is a growing unwillingness among communities and governments to accept the continuation of historical commitments simply because they are historic. In a nutshell, there is, today, diminishing differences between the private and public sector, resulting into a push for the public sector to embrace customer-centric approach so as to justify its existence. Consequently, in the public sector perspective; performance measures provide organisations with means for planning and implementing strategies; for

influencing behaviour, and to focus, compel, monitor and reward people; for communicating with stakeholders both internally and externally, and for adopting and developing principles of learning organisations.

These are the same reasons and features that make performance-oriented civil service reforms in Kenya a necessity, if the anticipated reform benefits are to be realised. In a sense, therefore, performance measurements systems are critical to civil service reforms. No reforms can yield desired benefits without measurement of their impact and suitability, and application of results towards better management of such reforms. This is why ECA (2003) recommends application of Total Quality Management principles by Africa governments so as to deliver superior public service via *performance-oriented and customer-driven* civil reforms. The ECA lists the key components of a performance-based management as: the development of a reasonable level of agreement on mission, goals and strategies for achieving goals; implementing performance measurement systems of sufficient quality to document performance and support decision-making and using performance information as a basis for decision making at various organisational level. Similarly, NPR (2007) suggests that if government services are to be customer-driven they must be judged based on public’s expectations and be in line with best practice principles (Leong, 2002), namely: survey customer frequently to find out what kind and quality of service they want, post service standards and results measured against them, benchmark performance against the best in class, provide choice in both source of service

and delivery means, make information, services and complaint systems easily accessible, handle inquiries and deliver services with courtesy, provide redress for poor services, and provide pleasant surroundings for customers.

Nonetheless, Black et al. (2001) list specific problems in the use of performance information namely: conceptual misdevelopment, limitation in recognising the needs of different stakeholders for such information, data shortage difficulties and both technical and analytical underdevelopment of practice. Equally, Cornell University (2006), citing (David and Gaebler, 1992), contends that as society becomes more complex and diverse, the needs and preferences of customers are no longer homogeneous, yet governments still provide standardised services as though all their citizens will be equally satisfied. Ironically, while on one hand the majority of public sector reform programmes places a strong emphasis on performance measurement and management systems (PMMS) and regard it as one of the key drivers of public sector modernization (OECD, 1997; Sanderson, 2001), reality, though, reveals contrary results. Citing (Lawton et al., 2000; Julnes and Holzer, 2001; Sanderson, 2001), Sotirakou and Zoppou (2006) assert that many public organisations have not developed PMMS and even fewer use these systems as instruments for performance, thereby limiting their successes. Likewise, Wilson (2000) sounds a caution and observes that although there is a positive linkage between objectives, drivers and key performance measures, the challenge lies in moving performance measures from being something that keeps scores to something that helps people and teams improve their

performance. Clarity of communication of results is imperative, and the PMS should be needs-driven rather than technology-driven. Pidd (2005) too cautions that over-reliance on performance measures may encourage performativity. That is people whose performance is being measured may find ways to operate that will maximise the chance of a high score in performance indicators being used without necessarily there being a corresponding rise in performance, or a subtle change through which the performance as measured, comes to define reality. A similar caution is given by Bruijn (2002) who argues too that performance measurements can have a number of negative consequences: promotes game playing (gaming the numbers without any significance increase/decrease), adds to internal bureaucracy (heavy reliance on procedures/provisions), blocks innovation (*“cash-cow thinking” so as to maximise gains without any motivation to take risks*), blocks ambitions (*cherry-picking of inputs and refusal of problematic ones*) and kills systems responsibility (*unwillingness to share best practices amongst components in the system so as to up their scores*). Likewise, Harmer (2007) outlines what he calls *“seven sins”* associated with performance measurements: *vanity* (use measures that invariably make the organisation, its people and especially its managers look good), *provincialism* (letting the organisation’s boundaries and concerns dictate performance metrics), *narcissism* (measuring from one’s point of view rather than from customers’ perspectives), *laziness* (measuring without giving much thought to the measures), *pettiness* (measuring only a small component of what matters), *inanity* (implementing metrics

without giving any thought to the consequences of these metrics on human behaviour and ultimately on enterprise performance) and *frivolity* (not being serious about measurements in the first place). These “sins” are indeed the sort of challenges that today’s public sectors are grappling with (Jarrar and Schiuma, 2007) necessitating, prudence and firm commitment on the part of public servants if performance measurements are indeed to yield the returns expected, otherwise, PSRs will largely remain cosmetic and an exercise in futility and a continuous drain to public scarce resources.

Therefore, of priority to the Kenya government is to pursue performance-oriented reforms, optimally using performance measures objectively and aggressively tackling flaws associated with performance measurements by ensuring that only useful measures are captured and applied in decision making to avoid clogging its systems. It is a delicate balance; particularly considering that this calls for a mind-shift towards proper usage and accuracy of performance measures. Inevitably, though this is a war, the government cannot afford to lose if the reforms currently being pursued are to realise tangible benefits to the citizenry.

### **Public Service Reforms in Kenya**

The public service reform programme (PSR) was first launched in Kenya in 1993 (Sawe, 1997; Obongo, 2007) with the main objective being to improve efficiency and productivity of the civil service. Following the launch, the government created a steering committee on the Civil Service Reform Programme (CSR) at the national, provincial and district levels as well as in each ministry with a national

secretariat as its operational arm. The government then held seminars at all levels to ensure that all actors in the reform process were properly and adequately sensitised (Nzioka, 1998). The reform programmes were designed to be implemented in three phases:

- Phase I (1993-1998), which focused on containment
- Phase II (1998 –2001), which focussed on performance improvement
- Phase III (2003 - to date), whose focus will be refinement, consolidation and sustenance of reforms

The policy issues dealt with under Phase I of the reforms included:

- Staffing – *cutbacks and management approach*
- Civil service organisation – *flexibility and professionalism, decentralisation, privatisation, unification and consolidation of functions etc*
- Training and capacity building – *demand driven training, strengthening government training institutes and use performance appraisal technique, Financial management – reallocation of more resources to operations and maintenance*
- Performance management – *a shift from executive appraisal to performance based appraisals*

- Pay and benefits – *setting up a standing committee to review salaries and other perquisites periodically*

Based on the experience gained in the implementation of Phase I reforms, Nzioka (1998) observe that some constraints were encountered while at the same time vital lessons were learned. The constraints encountered were:

- Implementation of the Voluntary Early Retirement Schemes (VERS) was done before undertaking staff analysis to determine lower levels/cadres (Job Group A) requirements and retrenchment targets, which resulted in uneven distribution of lower cadre staff amongst ministries/department
- Lack of reliable personnel information system, resulted in failure to delete those who had been retrenched from the payroll, hence creating loopholes for misuse of public resources
- Reduction of staff through natural attrition without replacement and VERS implied that the remaining civil servants had to take a disproportionate share of available workload, which affected delivery of public service
- Morale of remaining civil servants was affected, there were no improvement of terms and conditions of service to correspond with increased workload

- Ministries/departments lacked internal capacity to carry out informed staff rationalisation, resulting in uneven distribution of workloads across ministries
- Vested interest and internal conflicts in the existing organisational set-up and reluctance by ministry staff to view the exercise from an objective standpoint caused resistance to change
- Shortage of funds to mount demand-driven training programmes resulting in capacity inadequacy
- Lack of clear policy on ploughing back into the ministries/ departments savings resulting from VERS led to idle capacity

On the other hand, the lessons learned from the execution of Phase I reform programme were:

- Need for careful planning before any reform programmes are executed (prioritise activities, allocate time/resources prudently)
- Action plan for reform implementation should be flexible enough and responsive to perceived needs of beneficiaries
- Training and capacity building are vital ingredients for any reform's success
- Need to build acceptance of reforms amongst top level managers in the civil service

- Pay reforms should form an integral part of any PSR
- Need to adopt new ICTs to facilitate timeliness, communication and decision making
- Acceptable balance between short-term (often politically motivated) fixes to industry and more sustainable, long-term responses that will contribute to the achievement of national objectives

Reflecting on his experience, Nzioka (1998) further argues that if PSRs are to herald the emergence of a civil service that is efficient, productive and result-oriented, in consonance to the then prevailing Kenya's vision of being "Newly Industrialised Country" (NIC) by 2020, then they must be geared towards: debureaucratisation, decentralisation, forging strategic alliances with the private sector, development of a quality culture, and globalisation and information technology. These sentiments are pretty similar to those shared by other stakeholders. For example, while reacting to the pace of PSRs in Kenya, the KCG (2003) meeting maintained that some challenges lay ahead of reforms in Kenya, and suggested that the government should work towards:

- Accelerating implementation and results delivery of reforms – however, development of implementation capacity in Kenya is fragile
- Gauging the pace of reform in such a way that private sector is able to assume the responsibilities previously undertaken by the public sector
- Speeding-up privatisation efforts to include agricultural and livestock marketing parastatals that represent a significant drain on public resources
- Well, the phase I reforms programme ushered in the Phase II reforms towards 1998. Strictly speaking though, while in theory phase II reforms started about that time, they were sluggish without much impact on the ground and only gained momentum following the ascendance into power of a new pro-reforms-oriented National Alliance Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government in 2003 (Obongo, 2007). According to Obongo, the objectives for the Phase II reforms (which are still continuing) were to:
  - Improve the quality and timeliness of delivery of public service (through civil servants competence improvement)
  - Sharply focus government financial and human resources on efficient performance of clearly identified core functions
  - Reduce overlap and duplications within and between ministries
  - Improve pay and benefits of civil servants
  - Improve recruitment, retention, motivation and work ethos of civil servants, and
  - Improve planning, budgeting, monitoring, management and accounting systems

Towards the fulfilment of the phase II reform objectives, a series of ministerial and/or sectoral initiatives (Nyamweya, 2007; GOK, 2007) were launched, namely:

- *Reforms in government* - several institutional frameworks were developed to instil desired change and particularly mount war on corruption. Towards this end the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs was set-up, a cabinet committee on Anti-Corruption established, Anti-Corruption and Economic Crimes Act was enacted in 2003 and the Public Office Ethics Act was enacted in 2003, amongst others.
- *Launch of Governance, Justice, Law and Order Sector Reforms Programme (GJLOS) in 2003.* This provided a coherent and prioritised approach to addressing chronic problems relating to governance in the civil service
- *Judicial reforms* – these were undertaken in 2003 to ensure rapid dispensation of justice, transparency and accountability by judicial staff to the public. Measures were put in place to expedite the disposal of cases, restoration of meritocracy in recruitment of judicial officers, as well as the establishment of an Ethics Committee (to oversee ethical concerns within the judiciary)
- *Capacity building and training* – under the auspices of GJLOS the government initiated various training programmes aimed at empowering in the civil servants
- *e-governance* – Kenya embarked on an ambitious e-governance strategy in line with the national development strategy for wealth creation (Mitullah and Waema, 2005). The e-governance priorities focussed on communications channels that included: Government to government (G2G), government to business (G2B) and government to citizen (G2C). In 2004, the government released an e-government strategy and so far all ministries, several local government authorities and parastatals are providing varying degrees of e-governance services. Nonetheless, Kombo (2007) noted that confidence in democratic structures in government was a prerequisite for the adoption of the e-government concept which if adopted could speed up public sector reforms and sustainable innovation in Kenya.
- *Launch of the Results Based Management programme (RBM) in 2003* - an initiative by the government through which the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Vision 2030 and Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS) were to be delivered (Nyamweya, 2007; World Bank, 2007). As a result of the RBM programme, several Rapid Results Initiatives (RRIs) have been implemented in ministries, parastatals, local governments and others are still on going (Obongo, 2007). In the Ministry of Health, for example, RRIs have been implemented since 2006 and realised desired results in

immunisation and HIV/AIDs management (MOH, 2007)

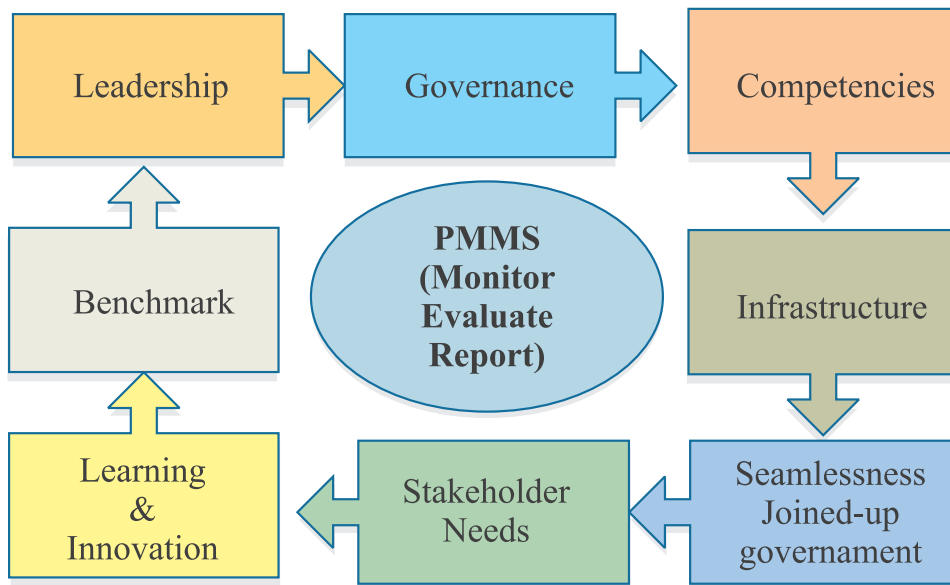
- *Participation in Quality Awards* – since the inception in 2000 of the Kenya Quality Award (KQA) and the Company of the Year Award (COYA), public sector entities have actively participated and a handful have won the treasured Quality Awards in various categories (KIM, 2008)
- *Reintroduction of performance contracting* - Kenya reintroduced performance contracting in 2003 (Kobia and Mohamed, 2006) and appointed a Steering Committee to spearhead their implementation. Initially, state corporations were placed on a pilot study in 2004, and by April 2005, the government had placed 175 local authorities on performance contracts, with 5 of the major municipal councils having completed pilot implementations by September 2005. As suggested by Kobia and Mohamed, the expected outcomes of this new initiative were to: *improve performance, decrease reliance on the exchequer funding, increased transparency and accountability, linking reward to performance, reduction of confusion resulting from multiplicity objectives, clear apportionment of responsibility for action, improvement of correlation between planning and implementation, greater autonomy and creating an enabling legal and regulatory environment amongst others.* Following implementation of these

reforms it has been reported that state corporations have improved performance and profitability with a noticeable increase in service delivery to the delight of Kenyans.

Thus, while the Kenyan government has made remarkable progress in growing a performance-oriented civil service reforms (a progress that is recommendable), there remains room for improvement, and much more remains to be done. It is hoped that rigorous application of the suggested recommendations, would enable the government engrain a performance-oriented PSRs culture and thereby satisfy the growing aspirations of Kenyans.

### **Towards performance-oriented PSRs**

Well, while few African nations have recorded major strides towards the realisation of performance-oriented PSRs objectives such as Botswana and Ethiopia, several others including Kenya are struggling and have only recorded modest success (Kiragu, 2002). Several impediments still stand on the way of successful performance-oriented reforms in Kenya. Such reforms inevitably requires robust transformational strategies that should sustain the gains made from on-going reform initiatives and simultaneously launching new effective reform initiatives, while at the same time embracing changes in the public sector service delivery. Perhaps by embracing and applying with dexterity the suggested critical ingredients as encapsulated in the suggested model (Fig. 1), will the Kenya government be able to bolster civil service performance with resultant improvement in public service delivery.



*Figure 1: A performance measurement-oriented PSR model for Kenya*

The suggested model is hinged on the creation of robust performance measurement systems for each ministry and by extension respective departments and parastatals therein. The model revolves around eight core elements, each of which influences and shapes respective Performance Measurement & Management Systems (PMMS) and by extension the quality of public services. The epi-centre of the model is the PMMS, which, as argued by Halachmi (2002), ought to be customised to suit each ministry/department stakeholder base, while at the same time providing horizontal or cross-ministry/department collaborations. Importantly, performance measures should not be viewed as something that keeps scores, but rather something that helps

people and teams improve their performance (Wilson, 2000). The PMMS in Kenya's civil service should promote clear communication of results and be needs-driven rather than technology-driven (Hoque, 2008). Hence, which performance measurements are used, when and for what purposes they are used should be entirely the issues dealt with at the delivery (department/parastatal) level without necessarily losing sight of the need for continuous improvement that is informed by the eight elements. Significantly, the model is cyclical (implying cyclical influence) with each of the eight elements having a bearing on the others and ultimately shaping the ministry/department's PMMS and quality of public service delivery.

## Leadership

That leadership is key to successful implementation of PSRs is not in dispute given the plethora of arguments provided in support of the same (Olowu, 1999; Wescott, 1999; Palidano, 2001, Kiragu, 2002; Shepherd, 2003; Lodge & Kalitowski, 2007). To be successful, therefore, Kenya's PSRs should focus not only on management but also on leadership; cultivating talents through effective mentoring programmes so as to create the requisite capacity to steer successful reforms. To begin with, the Kenya government must embrace merit-based leadership rather than political patronage in its civil service. A revolutionary breed of leadership is required that will consistently promote efficiency, honesty, productivity and the quality of public good while fiercely standing against illegitimate political forces that lurk in the corridors of power calling the shots. Meritocracy rather than ethnicity/tribalism or indeed political party patronage must therefore continue to reign supreme in the civil service appointments at all ranks, even in this current environment of a coalition government. As argued by Lodge and Kalitowski (2007), the Kenya government ought to speedily correct the apparent skills deficit in its civil service establishment through a combination of approaches including: changing the recruitment criteria so that it focuses more on leadership and management qualities, perfecting the open recruitment process thereby encouraging outside talents, reinforcing performance contracts, developing head-hunting capacities to target particular candidates (whatever their point of service) and reforming the pay system towards performance-related pay. Focused training programmes should be

conceived and implemented in line with the national human resource needs as well as structured departmental mentoring policies to grow or attract local talents (Mhone, 2003). Moreover, since public organisational change is inevitable, its leaders must carefully weigh change and adapt to the civil service's changing missions, new requirements or environmental forces, while staying competitive by embracing the latest innovations and technology so as to continue providing quality service to Kenyans (CIPS, 2007). Importantly, such civil service leaders need to prioritise building acceptance of reforms amongst top-level managers in the civil service, if such reforms are to succeed (Nzioka, 1998).

## Governance

Kenya's civil service must make concerted efforts towards driving painful cultural changes (including rooting out tolerance to corruption and the "big man's" syndrome) if it has to deliver desired results (Ayee, 2005; Therkilsden, 2001; Mhone, 2003). As argued by Ayee; Kenya's PSRs should be premised on the core public service values, namely:

- Revaluation of learning, integrity and competence
- Emphasis on merit system, while paying due regard to affirmative action in favour of minorities, and historically otherwise disadvantaged groups
- Growing sensitivity towards and respect of citizen needs

- Low tolerance to laxity, corruption and crime
- Increasing recognition for the need to acknowledge and reward industry, loyalty, accomplishment and merit
- Increasing recognition for the neutrality of the value of civil servants and the need to secure a degree of autonomy of public personnel management from external pressures
- Increasing recognition of the value of cross-cultural and international links as the means towards improvement of the professional image and performance of the public service
- Participation of ministries and government departments and parastatals in National Quality Award scheme
- Workers and users are properly involved and consulted in shaping such reforms
- It encourages partnerships between the public and private sector – where private sector can be a source of both money and expertise to spearhead reforms
- Changes to public service delivery do not result into low service quality – public service reforms must not be guided by cost cuts/savings; rather they must be geared to meet Kenyans’ needs

Additionally, the Kenya government should continue to promote wide usage of ICTs to enhance the delivery of public service (Saxena, 2005). As aptly summed up by Coleman (2005), the government’s e-governance strategy should be premised on three key principles:

- Citizen owned, combining traditional methods of accountability with modern techniques of e-governance
- Developed in partnerships with private sector, which should be involved in providing skill training and community-level capacity building as well as hardware and software
- Evaluated regularly in terms of its contributions to more transparent, accountable, inclusive and efficient governance

It is encouraging to note that in 2008, four parastatals (government companies) emerged winners of the Company of the Year Award (KIM, 2008); a premier quality award in Kenya, namely: Kenya Wildlife Services (*leadership & corporate governance practices*), Kenya Commercial Bank (*corporate citizenship practices*), Mumias Sugar (*environmental improvement practices*) and Kenya Airways (*strategic planning practices*). It is perhaps with these core values in mind that PSI (2001) contends that Kenya’s public sector must be redesigned to suit the needs of the nation and its people so as:

- Not to destroy or weaken the public service philosophy

### **Competence development**

Kamonche (1997) posits that public sector reforms must recognise the centrality of

human resource management, and in particular, skills management through the creation of human resource competencies. Competence creation improves labour productivity within organisations and also leads to improvement in the quality of skills. Obongo (2007) observes that there is need to focus on improving the quality and timeliness of delivery of public service through civil servants competence improvement. Echoing similar sentiments, Nzioka (1998) avers that training and capacity building are vital ingredients for any reform's success. Therefore, since training remains a key driver for revamping the skills base of Kenya's civil service; training courses should be geared towards the development of leadership and management, so as to build capabilities and capacity (Lodge & Kalitowski, 2007). Towards this end, the Kenya Institute of Administration (KIA), a government school, should be at the forefront of understanding what skills and competencies Kenya's civil servants want and tailor training programmes to meet them (KIA, 2008). Similarly, KIA should forge win-win collaborations with Kenya's universities, effectively tapping into local expertise, while allowing for sharing of knowledge and best practice so as to improve its programmes and build its research capabilities. KIA should also design short programmes to ministers, assistant ministers and parliamentarians, particularly after elections to usher in an informed parliamentarians' lot that will participate effectively in parliamentary proceedings. Such specialised training programmes should work in tandem with those championed by the Parliamentary Service Commission and the Speaker of the national assembly's training regime (PSC, 2008).

## **Infrastructure**

The Kenya government needs to overhaul its governance systems to make them competitive and democratic where Kenyans' themselves are actively involved in their construction with collaboration with external partners (Olowu, 1999). Reforms should be tailored to specific organisations and must be home-grown and involving national teams that are competent. The PSRs being pursued must be flexible taking into account Kenya's specific infrastructural constraints and ought to be demand-driven rather than supply driven, internationally consistent, and duly coordinated on the national policy level (Ayee, 2005). Supporting the same sentiments Obongo (2007) agrees that there should be a sharp focus by the Kenya government towards financial and human resources; particularly efficient performance by departments through clearly identified core functions and reduction of overlap and duplications within and between ministries. Additionally, there should be continuous monitoring of public governance using robust performance indicators to support such reforms. For example, the government's "Kenya Bribery Index", which gauges specific aspects of corruption and governance abuse in some ministries/departments, ought to be deployed throughout the civil service (Chene, 2008). By embracing post bureaucratic organisational structures that use disaggregated and actionable governance indicators, Kenya will be able to assess performance and effectiveness of measures so as to build effective performance-based monitoring and evaluation systems desperately needed. This will make it easy to track results or lack thereof and pinpoint action while

realigning incentive systems to support further performance.

### **Seamlessness/Joined-up government**

Like other developing countries, the Kenya government seems fashioned in “departmental silos” or structures characterised by bottlenecks and hurdles (between departments) even in the face of challenges (local and national) that today require a unified government response that cut across all department/ministries/agencies. Mixed responses to today’s complex challenges whether (repetitive/contradictory/competing) not only water down the thrust and impact such responses ought to have, but could also be a wasteful use of scarce national resources. To build seamlessness or joined-up civil service, Lodge & Kalitowski (2007) suggests such measures as: developing horizontal liaisons with cross-cutting coordinating policy and delivery units with clear targets, pooled budgets and horizontal ministerial portfolios similar to what the current Prime Minister’s Office undertakes; coordinating and supervising all government ministries (GOK, 2008). Additionally, the government should strive to integrate performance management processes with the budget processes (within ministries/departments) so as resource allocations correspond and/or are informed by ministry/departments performance against agreed objectives, as is the case in Sweden where performance management and financial controls are linked throughout. A focussed funding in support of departments/ministries with improved performance should hopefully stimulate further performance and healthy competition from others. Well, though performance contracting can induce public service to become more oriented towards

customers, markets and performance, more remains to be done. Kobia and Mohammed (2006) recommend:

- Solid legal framework that sets out basic premises thereby avoiding ad hoc and fragmented solutions
- Provision of resources to support and motivate higher performance to thwart political interference by fortifying ministerial/departmental autonomy
- Performance contracts that are accompanied by corresponding performance-oriented change in the public service structure
- Complementary initiatives such as transparency, accountability and service charters to compliment performance contracting amongst other measures, and
- Regular review and continuous improvement of performance contracts by fixing apparent drawbacks and enriching contracts to stimulate higher performance

### **Stakeholder involvement**

ECA (2003) argues that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century citizens and other stakeholders are demanding to be heard with frequency. Development of partnerships with these stakeholders is therefore paramount to effective formulation and implementation of PSRs. AEGM (2003) too observes that there is need for African governments to understand assumptions underlying public sector management such as the right of citizens as owners and customers, setting priorities, politicisation of change, and

accountability. Therefore, Kenya must make concerted efforts to involve the civic society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the public sector management and delivery of public goods and jointly work towards improving relations and competencies (Leong, 2002). In improving efficiency, productivity and integration in the public service, efforts should focus on creating a culture of commitment to identifying and meeting citizen requirements by labouring to understand the voice of the customer. Similarly, NPR (2007) contend that all public departments/agencies that deliver services directly to the public should: identify who their customers are; survey their customers on services and results desired and on satisfaction with existing services; survey front-line employees on barriers to, ideas for, matching the best in services and reporting the results of the survey to top leadership to inform decision making. Sharing similar sentiments Langseth (1999) advocates effective management of service delivery surveys, which are a useful tool for improving public service delivery. Such surveys, it is argued, will provide Kenya's public service providers (managers of public sector) critical information to promote reforms, provide the Kenyan public with a voice and allow Kenyans to exert pressure on service providers to deliver high quality services in addition to creating a pool of data for future use. It must be borne in mind though that in capturing the voice of the customer in the public sector, there is need to balance between customer perceptions and expectations in order to clearly ascertain the respective gaps of both perceptions and expectations (Wisniewski, 2001). Nonetheless, if performance measurements are to increase

transparency for citizens, then there should be concerted efforts to improve external reporting systems and avoid overloading Kenyans with so many indicators, most of which may be difficult to comprehend (Greiling, 2005; Rantanen et al., 2008; Black et al., 2001).

### **Learning and Innovation**

Effective implementation of PSRs in today's knowledge economy requires development of capacity to manage the knowledge and intangible resources. Since most of the public operation processes are based on capabilities and competences, which are rooted into the intellectual capital of public stakeholders (Jarrar & Schiuma, 2007) it is important that these are effectively preserved and deployed. Therefore, Kenya's civil service ought to develop effective knowledge management strategies that cope with the ever-increasing staff mobility while at the same time preventing the loss of corporate memory. Given its relatively high staff mobility on account of retrenchments (Obongo, 2007) Kenya needs to learn from both successes and failures of PSRs elsewhere, by ensuring preservation of institutional memory, whose loss could seriously undermine delivery of public service. Kenya's civil service must embrace policies designed to nurture and encourage innovation. There must be deliberate attempts to capture and systematically analyse the innovation that is out there. The civil service needs to act as a "talent spotter", absorbing ideas and spreading knowledge about what works and what drives change (Lodge & Kalitowski, 2007). Within ministries and departments, specific staff should be assigned to collate and coordinate

innovations and channel them through the innovation pipeline safely, while soliciting funding for such initiatives on a routine basis. Potentially, there may be a need to set-up specific centres of excellence in government where innovations can be shared, examined and potentially rolled out elsewhere, so as to engrain a performance-oriented culture in the civil service.

### **Benchmark**

Learning from the best practice is invaluable; so, Kenya should purposefully capture and apply the best practices from within and without and use them to improve its public service delivery. The World Bank (2001) calls public sector organisations to set minimum standards “floors” below which performance will not be permitted to fall. Then they need to benchmark their output/performance within and without, from best practice, whose performance exceeds such floors. Likewise, NPR (2007) contends that Kenya’s civil service departments/agencies should benchmark performance against the best in class (whether within or without) so as to provide choice in both sources of service and delivery means. Were benchmarking to be implemented in Kenya’s civil service, it would foster competition, attract potential private investors and raise the cost of harbouring poor performance to the delight and benefit of the people of Kenya.

### **Conclusion**

While it is encouraging to note that ingredients of a performance-oriented civil service reform culture are gaining currency in Kenya, there still remain pockets of resistance to change that must be worked on. Kenya’s public service should work

towards a total overhaul of the existing governance structures and systems so as to permit excellence in public service to thrive rather than engaging in fire-fighting/ patchy (quick fixes) that have the potential to stifle a pro performance-oriented reform culture that is still at its infancy. Experience gained in managing existing reform initiatives should be applied to launch further aggressive reforms while sustaining the already made gains. This way a pro performance-oriented culture will gradually be imbedded in the design and implementation of PSRs. There is no turning back; Kenya’s public service must create an amenable environment that permits the development of the requisite capabilities and competencies. Only by continuously improving its processes, public service deliverables and people will Kenya’s public service meet the growing aspirations of its people. In sum, excellent public services should not be viewed as “add-on” piece-meal initiatives, but rather part and parcel of a purposeful developmental culture, where performance-oriented reforms are engrained in all aspects of public service processes, performances and deliverables. Application of the suggested model will hopefully permit Kenya’s public service to create the desired momentum and environment for change, otherwise superior public goods will remain an elusive dream.

## REFERENCES

- Ad-Hoc Expert Group Meeting (AEGM), (2003), “Reforms of public sector management: Lessons learned”, Addis Ababa, 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> May.
- Ancarani, A., and Capaldo, G. (2001), “Management of standardized public services: A comprehensive approach to quality assessment”, *Managing Service Quality*, Vol. 11 (5), pp. 331-341.
- Ayee, J.R.A. (2005), “Public Sector Management in Africa”, Economic Research Working Paper Series, No. 82, African Development Bank, November.
- Black, S., Briggs, S., and Keogh, W. (2001), “Service quality performance measurement in public/private sectors”, *Managerial Auditing Journal*, Vol. 16 (7), pp.400-405.
- Bruijn, H. (2002), “Performance measurement in the public sector: strategies to cope with the risk of performance measurement”, *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 15 (7), pp.578-594.
- Centre for Innovation in Public Service (CIPS), (2007), “Leading change, managing risk: the leadership role in public sector transformations”, The School of Public Policy and Public Administration, George Washington University.
- Chene, M. (2008), “Corruption and public sector reforms monitoring system”, Transparency International. Web page, [www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org) – (Accessed on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2008).
- CODESRIA (2005), “Why are Public Sector Reforms so slow in Africa”, New Public Sector Management Approaches in Africa – Africa Development Special Issue, No. 3 & 4 (2002), Dakar.
- Coleman, S. (2005), “African e-governance: opportunities and challenges”, Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford, Web page, <http://www.commissionforafrica.org/english/report/background> (Accessed on 12th Nov. 2007).
- Cornell University (2006), Restructuring local governments, - Web page, - <http://www.government.cce.cornell.edu> - (Accessed on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2008).
- DPMN (2003), “Charter for the Public Service in Africa”, DPMN Bulletin, May, Web page, [www.dpmf.org](http://www.dpmf.org) – (Accessed on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2008).
- Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), (2003), “Public Sector Management Reforms in Africa: Lessons learned”, Development Policy Management Division, Addis Ababa.

Government of Kenya (2007), “Reforms in governance in Kenya”, – Web page, <http://www.information.go.ke> – (Accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2008).

Government of Kenya (GOK) (2008), “Office of the Prime Minister of Kenya (PM)”, Web page, [www.statehousekenya.go.ke](http://www.statehousekenya.go.ke) – (Accessed on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008).

Greiling, D. (2005), “Performance measurement in the public sector: The German experience”, *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, Vol. 54 (7), pp. 551-567.

Halachmi, A. (2002), “Performance measurement and government productivity”, *Work Study*, Vol. 51(2), pp.63-73.

Hammer, M. (2007), “The seven deadly sins of performance measurement”, *MIT Sloan Management Review*, Spring, pp.19-28.

Hoque, Z. (2008), “Measuring and reporting public sector outputs/outcomes: Exploratory evidences from Australia”, *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 21 (5), pp. 468-493.

Jarrar, Y., and Schiuma, G. (2007), “Measuring performance in the public sector: challenges and trends”, *Measuring Business Excellence*, Vol. 11(4), pp. 4-8.

Kamonche, K. (1997), “Competence creation in the African public sector”, *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 10 (4), pp. 268-278.

Kenya Consultative Group (KCG), (2003), “Public sector reforms and institutional capacity building”, A joint statement by development partners at the Kenya Consultative Group Meeting, 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> November.

Kenya Institute of Administration (KIA) (2008), Web page, [www.kia.go.ke](http://www.kia.go.ke) – (Accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2008).

Kiragu, K. (2002), “Improving service delivery through public service reform: Lessons of experience from selected Sub-Sahara African Countries”, A Paper presented at the Second meeting of the DAC Network on Good Governance and Capacity Development held at the OECD Headquarters, February 14-15<sup>th</sup>.

Kobia, M., and Mohammed, N. (2006), “The Kenyan experience with performance contracting”, A Paper presented at the 28<sup>th</sup> African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) Annual Roundtable Conference, Arusha, Tanzania, 4<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> December.

Kombo, M. (2007), “Public sector reforms and the e-governance to foster sustainable innovation in Africa”, Public lecture delivered at the Information Systems and Innovation

Group, Department of Management, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

Langseth, P. (1999), “Involving the public in curbing corruption: the use of surveys to empower citizens to monitor state performance”, Paper presented at the launch of Transparency International, Centre for International Crime Prevention, Oslo, (October).

Leitner, C. (2003), “e-government in Europe: the state of affairs”, European Institute of Public Administration, Maastricht.

Leong, L.C. (2002), “Moving towards a customer-driven state”, Welcome address, Government Leaders Forum, Grand Corpthorne, Waterfront Hotel, Singapore, 9<sup>th</sup> April.

Lodge, G., and Kalitowski, S. (2007), “Innovations in Government: International perspectives on civil service reforms”, *Institute for Public Policy Research*, Web Page, [www.ippr.org](http://www.ippr.org) – (Accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2008).

Mhone, G.C.Z. (2003), “The challenges of governance, public sector reform and public administration in Africa”, *Governance and Public Administration in Africa*, Vol. X (3).

Ministry of Health, Kenya (MOH) (2007), “Achieving results through Rapid Results Initiative (RRI), Web

page, <http://www.health.go.ke> – (Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2007).

Mitullah, W., and Waema, T. (2005), “State of ICTs and Local governance in Kenya: Needs analysis and research priorities”, Concept paper, Local governance and ICTs Research Network for Africa (LOG-IN Africa), Conference, Nairobi, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> September.

National Performance Review (NPR), (2007) “Create customer-driven programmes in all departments and agencies that provide services directly to the public”, NPR ICSO1: Recommendations and actions, Web Page, <http://www.npr.gov.uk> – (Accessed on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2007).

Nyamweya, J. (2007), “Public service reform and development: How far we have come and where to from here”, Manuscript, Public Service Reform & Development Secretariat, Cabinet Office, Office of the President, Nairobi Kenya.

Nzioka, G. (1998), “Civil Service reforms in Southern and Eastern Africa”, Civil Service Reform Programme Secretariat, Nairobi, Kenya.

Obongo, S.O. (2001), “Productivity Improvement in the public service in Kenya: The status of reforms”, A Paper presented to stakeholders at the launch of productivity movement in Kenya.

Obongo, S.O. (2007), "Towards a Results-Based Management", Manuscript, Civil Service Reform Programme Secretariat, Nairobi, Kenya.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (1997), "Managing Across levels of Government Part 1: Overview", Web page, [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org) – (Accessed on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008).

Olowu, B. (1999), "Redesigning African civil service reforms", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 37 (1), pp.1-23.

Owusu, F. (2005), "Organizational culture, performance and public sector reforms in Africa", Paper presented at the International Conference on Shared Growth in Africa, Accra, Ghana.

Palidano, C. (2001), "Why civil service reforms fail", *Public Management Review*, Vol. 3(3), pp. 345-361.

Parliamentary Service Commission, Kenya (PSC) (2008), Web page, [www.bunge.go.ke](http://www.bunge.go.ke) – (Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2008).

Pidd, M. (2005), "Perversity in public service performance measurement", *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, Vol. 54 (5/6), pp.482-493.

Public Sector International (PSI), (2001), "Improving the effectiveness of the public sector – if not us who?" PSI Web page, <http://www.psi.org> – (Accessed on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2008).

Rantanen, H., Kulmala, H.I., Lonnqvist, A., and Kujansivu, P. (2007), "Performance measurement systems in the Finnish public sector", *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 20(5), pp. 415-433.

Sawe, A. (1997), Civil Service Reform (CSR) Programme: Case study of the Republic of Kenya", Web page, [www.kenya.go.ke](http://www.kenya.go.ke) – (Accessed on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2007).

Sanderson, I. (2001), "Performance Management, Evaluation and Learning in "Modern" Local Government", *Public Administration*, Vol. 79, pp.297-313.

Sexana, K.C.B. (2005), "Towards excellence in e-governance", *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 18 (6), pp.498-513.

Shepherd, G. (2003), "Civil service reforms in developing countries: Why is it going badly", A Paper presented at the 11<sup>th</sup> International Anti-Corruption Conference, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 25-28<sup>th</sup> May.

Sotirakou, T., and Zeppou, M. (2006), "Utilizing performance measurements to modernize the Greek

public sector”, *Management Decision*, Vol. 44 (9), pp. 1277-1304.

Therkildsen, O. (2001), “Efficiency, Accountability and implementation: public sector reforms in East and Southern Africa”, *Democracy, Governance and Human Rights Programme Paper No. 3*, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

Wescott, C. (1999), “Guiding principles on civil service reforms in Africa: an empirical review”, *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 12(2), pp.145-170.

Wilson, A. (2000), “The use of performance information in management of service delivery”, *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol. 18 (3), pp.127-134.

Wisniewski, M. (2001), “Using SERVQUAL to assess customer satisfaction with public sector services”, *Managing Service Quality*, Vol. 11 (6), pp. 380-388.

Wisniewski, M., and Stewart, D. (2004), “Performance measurement for stakeholder: The case of Scottish local authorities”, *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 17 (3), pp. 222-233.

World Bank (2007), “Applying the Rapid Results Approach in Kenya”, Web page - <http://www.worldbank.org>

– (Accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2007).

World Bank Operations Evaluation Department (2001), “Evaluating public sector reforms”, World Bank, Web page, [www.worldbank.org/html/oed](http://www.worldbank.org/html/oed) - (Accessed on 12th June 2008).

Zairi, M. (2003), Performance Excellence: A practical handbook, eTQM Publishing House, Dubai, pp. 5-21.