

ABSTRACT

Human resource development has become an essential component the development process. This is due to the fact that any development process is driven by the human factor. It is in this spirit that the Uganda Public Service Training Policy was designed.

In this paper, it is argued that human resource development /training policy, like any other policy, must be supported by appropriate institutional mechanisms and tools if it is to achieve its intended objectives. It is further urge, that policy formulation is a journey with challenges. The strength of the policy implementation lies in identifying such challenges, and finding ways of overcoming them. Lastly, the discussion reveals that human resource development is closely linked to other human resource factors that pertain at a given period, such as recruitment policies, labour market patterns, the age and experience of staff etc. Human resource development policies therefore must be reviewed from time to time to keep in step with the changing environment.

This paper presents the key components of the human resource development / training policy in the Uganda Public Service and the assumptions made. It also highlights the key challenges faced, the lessons learnt and the way forward in enhancing sustainable human resource development in the Uganda Public Service.

Human Resource Development Policy/Training Policy and Practice in the Uganda Public Service.

1.0 Introduction

Human Resource Development policy in the Uganda Public Service has evolved from the early stages of organization of colonial administration in the early 1920s. During that period, vocational training was regarded as the most appropriate for the Ugandan Public Officers, since these only provided support services to the Europeans who occupied strategic positions in the administrative system. For a long time, education and training for Ugandan Public Servants remained undeveloped until the time when Ugandans started to demand for higher positions in the bureaucracy. The quest for higher education then became an issue that was later strongly pursued towards independence and after. From 1990 when the Public Service Reforms were introduced, there was a rush by Public Officers and Political leaders for further education and training as a way of surviving the employment competition.

A study on training needs assessment conducted by Crown Agents in 1998 revealed that the Uganda Public Service is generally staffed with highly educated Officers. The existing challenge is the mismatch between the acquired qualifications and performance! The need to regulate training became a necessity as various weaknesses leading to waste of resources were identified as highlighted in the sections to follow. This gave birth to the current Training Policy for the Public Service that was approved in 2006. While the policy supports continuous training for Public Officers, it calls for order, proper planning and evaluation of the training policy in order to achieve value for money in the use of training funds. To- date, human resource development for Public Officers is viewed as an important intervention for national development. The National Development Plan (NDP) – 2010/11 – 2014/15 in particular emphasizes the strengthening of the capacity of Public Officers both at the Central and Local Government levels in order to empower them to provide evidence based agenda and innovation for the attainment of the NDP objectives. Hence the idea for *“targeted Capacity building”* and *“competence based training”* have become popular, meaning that human resource development should be

targeted towards addressing national development concerns and that it should be geared towards making Public Officers to master their jobs as opposed to merely academic papers.

This paper provides a chronology of events that have influenced Human Resource Development policy in the Uganda Public Service from the colonial period to date. It also highlights the key features of the current human resource development policy for the Public Service, the challenges experienced, lessons learnt and the way forward. The discussion is based on the interpretation of human resource development. In the Ugandan context, the Government Standing Orders views human resource development as all activities undertaken to equip public officers with competences (knowledge, skills and right attitudes) to enable them to diligently perform their duties and responsibilities and to prepare them for future/higher responsibilities. The aim of human resource development is to make the Public Service an efficient and effective government organ of government capable of initiating and implementing development policies.

In this paper, human resource development will therefore encompass training, education, coaching, mentoring and any other activity that facilitates the learning and advancement of public officers.

2.0 Human Resource Development policy in Uganda Public service: A historical perspective.

A review of the public Service before and after colonialism and the period that followed up to date reveals that Human Resource Development policy is influenced by human resource factors that pertain in the country especially the recruitment policies and practices in place, as well as the attitude of the leaders.

2.1 Human Resource Development during the colonial regime

Education and training of Public Officers during the colonial period was greatly underdeveloped. At that time, Ugandans were excluded from high positions in the bureaucracy and were confined to vocational education to respond to the manpower needs for junior positions. The strategy for the

colonial masters was to avoid providing higher education to Ugandans because this would result into opposition of the empire. Besides, it was perceived at that time that Africans were incapable of coping with higher education due to a perceived limited mental ability. The Europeans, who occupied high positions, possessed higher education particularly a University degree.

Ugandans therefore associated higher education with power and as a means to access higher positions in the administrative system. Around 1938, Ugandan natives started pressurizing for higher education. Discussions of the subject matter hence started amidst strong resistance from the colonial masters except the then Governor and his immediate staff. Allowing native Ugandans to access higher education would be a policy shift that would most likely see the Ugandans access higher positions in the bureaucracy. Hence the proposed new policy shift was out rightly opposed especially by the most vulnerable, the colonial Officers in lower positions.

From 1941 to 1949, provision of higher education for native Ugandans was further discussed and approved in principle BUT implementation was postponed with the excuse of war and on grounds that a lot of preparation was needed for successful implementation of the new policy shift. During the decade of 1949 – 1959, Governor Cohen took a decision to expand higher education for Ugandans and the dominance of vocational education started to suffer a setback. It should however be noted that the opportunities for Ugandans to undertake higher education were still very limited and regulated. Although a degree education was established at Makerere in 1949, entry into and graduation from this higher education programme was very restricted in numbers, never reaching a double digit. Besides the degree programme, there was also shorter term training programmes (diploma and certificate level) started under different technical departments such as Agriculture, Health etc.

2.2 Post colonial era

The few Ugandan graduates from Makerere College took over the positions of the colonial masters in the management of the Public Service following

independence. Most of them, if not all, were still very young without working experience. The attainment of independence (1962) created a heavy demand for the kind of manpower possessing higher education. As the colonialists left the country, vacancies were created. Recruitment standards were lowered in order to realize the numbers required to fill the manpower shortages. Hence, the Public Service was staffed by a few graduates without experience and the majority of staff had limited educational background. Clearly there was a training deficit that needed to be addressed. In this regard Ugandans benefitted from a number of Commonwealth and other scholarships to study in Britain, Russia and other developed countries.

The situation was made worse during the period of political instability 1970s to 1985, first with the expulsion of Indians and the introduction of sectarian considerations in the recruitment of Civil Servants, and secondly due to brain drain arising from the exodus of Ugandans into exile due to the political instability at the time. No wonder the Public Service during this period greatly deteriorated and was characterized by inefficiency, ineffectiveness, unresponsiveness and waste.

2.3 Public Service Reform era

From the aforementioned, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) which took over power in 1986 inherited an inefficient, ineffective, unresponsive, demoralized Public Service which was generally not delivering public services of the required standard. Government therefore set up the Public Service Review and Reorganisation Commission (PSRRC) to undertake an analysis of the Public service and propose ways of improving the performance of the Public Service. This was against the background of launching the rehabilitation and development Plan, 1987/88-1990/91. In order to realize the aims and aspirations embodied in the development plan, it was necessary to rehabilitate the Public service, to make it an effective and dependable instrument of government to competently develop and implement government policies and programmes.

One of the major concerns of Government was on the way human resource development/training was being handled. As confirmed by the PSRRC,

management of human resource development/training in the Public service was weakened by the following factors:

- + Lack of planning and professionalism
- + Poor coordination
- + Lack of career training milestones
- + Unclear responsibility centres for the management of the training and development function
- + Training being largely supply driven
- + Discrimination in availing training opportunities to Public Officers
- + Training geared towards satisfying individual and not organizational wants
- + The aim of training was focused on attaining academic papers
- + Training often used as a reward or sanction
- + Training a means of getting allowances to supplement the meager salaries
- + Emphasis for training being mainly theory and not practice
- + Training and development only confined to conventional classroom type ignoring work based methods

To address these problems and to bridge the human resource development gaps in the Public service a number of training projects were initiated and implemented, namely; the Public Service Performance Improvement Project that mainly addressed leadership and management across the Public Service and the sector specific projects to deal with professional training needs. Some of the human resource initiatives involved study tours to United Kingdom, Malaysia and other developed countries geared towards exposing senior managers at head of department level and above to modern ways of management.


In 1998, a comprehensive training needs assessment exercise was undertaken with the help of Crown Agents. Although the study revealed that the civil servants were highly educated, the competences to perform their duties effectively had gaps. Hence the idea of competence based training started to emerge.

All the above findings justified the review of the training policies and procedures. Besides, there was need to regulate training in the Public service to control the craze for training that was created by the reform pressure. Following the massive retrenchment of Public Servants who were regarded as “unfit” for the Public Service for various reasons including lack of basic academic qualifications, which were overemphasized for recruitment and promotions, Public Officers rushed to attain qualifications in Universities and Tertiary institutions to be able to survive the job competition. This craze sometimes left the Public Service to suffer as public officers spent much of their time outside office attending training programmes. This trend was also true with the Political leadership. Ministers, Members of Parliament were absent from office in sufficient numbers attending classes at various institutions. This became a key issue of concern to government.


A new training policy was therefore developed in a consultative manner, and was approved by Cabinet in 2006.

3.0 Key features of the Human Resource Development/ Training Policy, Progress and challenges in implementation

In view of the above weaknesses, and the obtaining craze and rush for training by Public Officers and Political Leaders, a training policy for the Public Service was designed and approved by Government in 2006. The policy is based on the principles of professionalism, transparency, equal opportunity, affirmative action (where necessary), demand driven approach, and value for money. The aim of the policy is to build and maintain a Public Service as an efficient, effective and professionally competent administrative machinery of government capable of originating and implementing government programmes. The key features of the policy are:

-  **Application to both Civil Servants and Politicians:** The general policies apply to both civil servants and the political leaders. However there are some specific areas where different conditions apply. For example, professional development and pre-retirement training may not apply to political leaders while these are a must for the civil servants. The duration of training for


Political leaders is limited to a short duration while the civil servants may undertake long term training on full pay. The understanding is that the politicians have a tight political agenda on policy direction and their absence for a long duration would seriously affect the government operations; and that by the time they are appointed to these top positions they have the training and experience that is required.


 **Clear institutional framework for managing the training function:** The policy identifies key institutions and lists their respective tasks. Ideally every Ministry, Department and Local Government has a role to play in the management of the training function. However the following Ministries/Departments have cross-cutting roles in addition:

- Ministry of Public Service has overall responsibility over the training function. Therefore it is the Ministry which formulates and reviews training policies, sets the training standards and builds the capacity of other Public service entities to manage the training function.
- Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development, undertakes to ensure budgetary provision for training and to protect training funds from reallocation.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs undertakes its diplomatic functions of negotiating for training opportunities for Public Officers and providing necessary support to Ugandans undertaking training abroad.
- The Public Service Commissions both at the Central and Local Government levels are responsible for approving study leave for Public Officers who proceed for training of a long duration.

To some extent each of these institutions has played its role except in the case of the management of scholarships and

fellowships, where various Ministries have continued to administer scholarships and fellowships. The Ministry of Public Service needs to assert its coordination role in this area. This is important because there is need to document the skills that exist in the Public Service and this becomes easy if all opportunities are channeled through one centre that should monitor and maintain a database of the skills acquired. To date Public Officers train abroad and the origin of the scholarships or fellowships lies with different Ministries.

 **Emphasis on effective Coordination:** In order to avoid wastage of resources and duplication of effort, the policy emphasizes coordination both at the level of the Public Service and at the levels of the Ministry, Department and Local Government. At the level of the Public Service, the Ministry of Public Service, being overall in charge of human resource management function in the Public Service is the Coordinator. A Training Liaison Officer position is also established to coordinate training issues within an entity. The Training Liaison Officer function however is an assigned duty as there is no such designation in the Public Service.

 **Emphasis on the role of the managers:** The role of supervisors in training their staff is emphasized in the policy. The finding was that supervisors were only interested in the output of their staff and not the training of their staff. Through an interactive performance appraisal process, the supervisor and the supervisee discuss training needs and sign up to them. Besides the supervisors are reminded of their role to coach staff at work and to provide the necessary support that the officers will require in order either undertake the training or to put into practice what they have learnt. Training needs are identified regularly through the performance appraisal process. However there are complaints to the effect that no follow up is made by the supervisors. Sometimes officers end up undertaking training programmes

which are different from the needs identified during the appraisal process. This area therefore needs strengthening.


✚ **Introduction of Training Committees:** The policy introduces training committees. Each Ministry, Department and Local Government has a training committee which approves training plans on behalf of the Chief Executive. Although Training Committees exist in every Ministry, Department and Local Government, training is still authorized without the decision of training committees especially training abroad.


✚ **Introduction of Professional Development Committees:** The policy establishes Professional Development Committees for each category/profession which provide advisory services to parent Ministries on professional and career development of staff.

✚ **Emphasis on induction:** Induction of new staff and those promoted is mandatory, so that they can know what is expected of them at an early stage to be able to serve with dignity, pride and joy. To aid this condition the Ministry of Public Service issued an Induction Manual for newly appointed officers to guide Ministries, Departments and Local governments in organizing induction training for newly appointed Officers. There have been significant improvements in inducting Public Officers on the basis of the guideline under the policy and induction manual. However induction on promotion remains a challenge. Induction of new staff has also taken the conventional classroom approach. We realize that the new officers need further guidance on the job hence the role of the supervisor in coaching and mentoring the officers. A coaching and mentoring guide has been developed by the Ministry of Public Service to aid the process of coaching and mentoring in the Public Service as a means to human resource development for effective performance.

✚ **Introduction of pre-retirement training:** This is an interesting innovation in Human Resource Development. Pre-retirement training has been one of the most popular training

programmes for Public officers. It is conducted every year for officers who are 55 years and above with the aim of assisting them to cope with the world outside active employment with the Public Service. This is a centralized training conducted by the Ministry of Public Service. The current argument is that this training should not be limited to older public officers but that it should be conducted right from the early stages of one's career so that public officers should start planning for retirement to avoid living decently during retirement. The training covers legal, medical, financial management, investment, project management issues among others. A preretirement manual has been developed to guide the service.

 **Limitation of overseas training:** Given its high cost, overseas training has been limited to top, senior and middle level officers who need to learn from cross-country experience as a way of widening their horizon and those whose training requirements cannot be offered in-country. Implementation of this area of the training policy remains challenging as it is a source of motivation for Public Officers as it is a means of supplementing the meager salaries with the reasonable allowances associated with travel abroad.

 **Emphasis on obtaining authority to undertake training:** The policy requires both Civil Servants and Politicians to seek for authority to undertake training. This is in view of the fact that there is a cost to Government in terms of finances and time. In addition, there must be a balance between training and government business to ensure that the latter does not suffer. The authorizing officer must ensure that not many officers are released to train at the same time to avoid a paralysis of government business. This is a policy area that has been well implemented. It is now very rare if not impossible for a Public Official including the Politicians to proceed for training without authority from the relevant authority.

✚ **The need for bonding:** Given the fact that training must be undertaken to bridge a performance gap, it was found necessary to bond Public Officers to work with Government for three years following the training. The assumption is that within three years the trained officer will have build capacity for taking over his/her duties. A bonding agreement was designed by the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs which is signed by the officer before he/she undertakes the training. The Auditors have been briefed and have been very helpful in enforcing this area as they do not approve payment of tuition without an attachment of the bonding agreement. Officers who breach the agreement are made to pay back the cost of training (tuition + salary received during training). Capacity building after training is still a challenge as officers who undertake training do not in most cases share their learning with colleagues. The Ministry of Public Service needs to come up with a framework to enforce this.

✚ **Institutionalizing self sponsorship:** Officers who sponsor themselves must do so within the limits of the policy i.e. they must be authorized, they must be granted study leave by the Public Service Commissions, they must sign a bonding agreement, etc. This is based on the assumption that even in the case of self sponsored officers, there is a cost to Government in one way or the other – time, allowance paid, salary paid during the training period.

✚ **Increasing and protecting the training budget:** The policy recommends a budget for staff training within the range of 2-4 percent of the wage bill. Since training and staff development are geared towards increasing performance it should be pegged to wage, which is compensation for performance. At the time of developing the policy, the training budget under the Government budget was approximately 1 per cent. However, this is heavily supplemented by scholarships, fellowships and grants and project budgets.

✚ **Emphasis on monitoring and evaluation of training:** The policy recognizes the fact that the training function has failed to attract its due attention especially as it relates to budget allocation because there has been no proof of the benefits. The policy therefore asserts that training must be evaluated before, during and after. This has been a challenging area which the Ministry needs to enforce. Training is usually evaluated immediately after the training programme by filling the “happiness sheets” which is only useful to help the organization of future similar training programmes. Impact assessment remains undone.

✚ **Increased use of non conventional methods of training and development:** The policy encourages the use of coaching, mentoring, attachments, study visits, taskforces, twinning programmes and other work based methods of learning and development. These are known to be cheaper in most cases and more valuable in improving performance of individuals by the fact that they are work based and therefore expose the officers to real life situations that can be applied to own work environment.

4.0 Key lessons learnt

A number of lessons can be derived from implementation of the training policy in the Public Service which to a great extent are applicable to other policies. The key lessons include:

✚ There is need to identify and work closely with strategic allies for successful implementation of the policy. In the case of the training policy for the Public Service in Uganda for example, the Auditor General has been very helpful in ensuring the implementation of bonding public officers who proceed on training and ensuring that all training supported by government is authorized by the relevant offices.

✚ Policies need to be supported by enabling instruments. The training policy guidelines, the induction manual, the coaching and mentoring guide, the pre-retirement manual, the

performance appraisal scheme and instrument etc. have been useful instruments to support the implementation of the training policy in the Public Service of Uganda. Otherwise the policy can easily be well designed by suffer from implementation paralysis.

- ✚ New policies must be accompanied by a vigorous Information, Education and Communication campaign. Distribution of the policy document alone does not suffice especially in the African context where the reading culture is not very strong.
- ✚ Academic qualifications alone do not assure good performance. Human resource development, in addition need to be work based as this is easily applicable in the work place for improved performance. Human Resource Development policies therefore need to focus on both theory and practice as these mutually support each other.
- ✚ Performance appraisal, if undertaken in an objective manner, is an important tool for Human Resource Development. Through interaction of the appraiser and appraise, personal development needs are identified and addressed. Performance appraisal schemes therefore need to be carefully designed to ensure dialogue.
- ✚ Policies need to be monitored by competent bodies that should endeavor to build capacity of others to implement. Short of this, good policies can remain on paper and do little to change practice.

5.0 Way forward

In view of the challenges highlighted in section 3 above, and considering the need to design Human Resource Development policies as a means for national development, the following interventions are planned:

5.1 Establishment of a National School of Government as a centre for public service excellence for training and policy research

Preparatory works for the establishment of a National School of Government are in advanced stages. The school will focus on on-job performance improvement training that is essential for new techniques, re-orientation and attitudinal change for Public Officers to keep them up to date with the changing demands of the Public Service. The training activities at the school will include mandatory induction courses for new recruits, leadership and management development courses at various management levels, cross cutting training programmes to address new initiatives in the Public service and any other training that may be found necessary. The school will collaborate with local and international training institutions, undertake research in pertinent areas of concern to Public Service Management, and any other human resource development activities that may be necessary. The training centre shall focus on in-service training needs that are practical as opposed to being theoretical so that learning is directly translated into the workplace for performance improvement. Much of the training shall be facilitated by experienced practitioners who share their experiences thus providing relevant lessons to civil servants for performance improvement. The focus for the training will be on developing job competences other than achieving academic qualifications. In summary, the National School of government will target civil servants from entry to exit.

The National School of Government will be an important enabler to the implementation of human resource development/training policy in the Public Service through the provision of continuous training to Public Officers, induction training and competence based training for performance improvement.

5.2 Addressing the issue of the values and attitudes in the public service

There is a proposal to introduce a mandatory National Service Scheme for all people of Uganda. This is geared towards building a value system and

culture that cherishes integrity, ethics and patriotism. There will also be specific programmes for civil servants. In addition, a proposal has been made to review school curriculum to include Civic Education, including inculcation of citizen rights and obligations and love for one's country. Introduction of such values at a tender age will go a long way in having the right population with the right service attitude, from which the Public Service draws its personnel. This is based on the belief that for one to perform diligently, he or she must have the right attitudinal orientation in addition to education and training.

5.3 Undertaking Targeted Capacity Building in priority areas of national development

Government will support training and research in key areas to bridge the current gap in strategic leadership and management skills, and enhance value addition to the country's raw materials and support economic growth. Initial findings of the study on targeted capacity building suggest that there is significant HR 'technical' capacity within Ministries, Departments and Agencies that should be associated with value addition. There are, for example, highly qualified and competent economists, chemists and agriculturalists working within the public sector. The HR capacity 'gaps' are associated with increasing the public sector's understanding of value addition; increasing understanding of the public sector's role in facilitating the private sector to undertake value addition; and the ability to apply existing 'technical' skills in the execution of this role.

With this in mind several areas have been identified as priority areas for HR capacity building. These include, but are not limited to : Understanding of public sector role in facilitating value addition in private sector, understanding of value chain integration, knowledge of specific sectors and sub-sectors; skills associated with coordinating government policy, understanding of standards for value addition; skills associated with conducting and interpreting the analysis of value addition opportunities and identifying, assessing long range economic and social trends that have implications for business, knowledge and skills associated with dissemination of information regarding value addition to private sector and other institutions and issues associated with development of strong

working relationships between public and private sector. Other priority skills that are needed for the transformation of the economy will be targeted. The idea is to have a critical mass of Public officers that possess the value addition skills such as agriculture, petroleum, energy etc.

Skills required under each of these areas will vary according to seniority. For example, while some individuals at lower grades may be required to undertake economic and social analysis for value addition opportunities, senior grades need to understand how to interpret such analysis.

5.5 Increase monitoring implementation of the policy

Government will increase monitoring the implementation of the training and development policies so that they can achieve their intended objectives. It is not enough to assume that the policy will be correctly interpreted once the policy document is availed. There is need to provide support supervision to the various Public Service entities to ensure correct implementation. The Public Service Inspection manual has therefore been reviewed to take into account Human Resource Development policy issues, among others.

5.6 Development of Schemes of Service and Competence profiles for jobs in the public service

As part of its strategy to strengthen the Human Resource Management and Development function in the Public Service, the Ministry of Public Service has embarked on a comprehensive review of schemes of service all Job cadres in the Public Service to take into account new developments in the job market and expectations of the Public Service. Each job category will have training milestones that are mandatory at each promotional level within the career as well as the key competencies required. The revised Schemes of Service will be used by all line managers, especially HR Managers, as a basis for HR Planning and succession management; Staff acquisition, establishment of performance gaps and advancement within the career structure on the basis of qualifications, knowledge of the job, and competence as reflected in work performance and results. They will also ensure proper

deployment and utilization of personnel in the Public Service whereby the individual competencies are matched with competencies determined for a given job.

In preparation for a competence based Human Resource Development in the Public Service, competency dictionaries are being developed to highlight and describe the technical and behavioural competencies that are required for each job and at what level. The generic competence dictionary was developed and disseminated. Currently the Ministry of Public Service is helping the sectors to develop a sector specific competence dictionaries, beginning with the agricultural sector.

6 Conclusion

The Public Service continues to undertake the needed changes to propel the nation towards achieving a developed status. These changes show a paradigm shift that encompasses not only the structure and systems but also the values, attitudes and mindset of Public Service employees. The catalyst to these changes is the rising expectations of the public and stakeholders that the Public Service will make a meaningful contribution towards the socio-economic development of the country. This therefore compels the public service to be open- minded and 'think out of the box' so as to produce a workforce that is knowledgeable and highly productive at all levels. Thus, the need to fortify efforts at formulating and implementing sound policies and procedures on Human Resource Development.

Although Human Resource Development is generally accepted and supported as a means of national development, it should be properly planned and coordinated. Short of this, training and development resources can easily be channeled to wants rather than needs.

I thank you.

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