

Policy adjustment to improve Quality of Public Service in Uganda



UGANDA MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

Executive Summary

The general public in Uganda continues to register dissatisfaction with the quality of services and professional conduct of public servants yet Uganda's education system is globally appreciated and enrolment into the Ugandan civil service requires high academic and professional qualifications.

Two policy research studies; 1) Examining the Role of the Education System in Shaping the Quality of the Public Service in Uganda, and, 2) Uganda's Education and Socialization Systems, Quality of Population and Public Service, were commissioned by Uganda Management Institute through the Uganda Policy Development Management Forum to investigate the reported declining quality of public service in Uganda and explore policy options to mitigate the phenomenon of public dissatisfaction.

Both studies based on secondary data to trace the behavior, perceptions, beliefs and attitude towards service among stakeholders and across the civil service spectrum.

The findings were disseminated at a public policy dialogue on November 30, 2017 attended by the Minister of State for Gender Labor and Social Services, senior technocrats from Ministries,

Departments and Agencies (MDAs) including the Ministry of Education and Sports. The participants identified causes of the decline in quality of service delivery and prescribed pragmatic policy interventions.

Participants identified shifting values at family, community and schooling levels as the curators of individual perception of values on which the quality of public servants is hinged. Pragmatic policy adjustments in the sectors of Education and Social Development were recommended to improve quality of the public perception of values, personal discipline and service above self.

Rationale

Cases of deliberate ineptitude leading to corruption, absenteeism, procurement malpractice, insensitivity and other vices have been variously reported about the public service in Uganda (Bukuluki, 2013). Remedies instituted by government have not yielded the expected results over the years yet research to provide policy guidance is minimal.

The Final Report on the Comprehensive Review and Restructuring of Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (2017) indicts the Ugandan school

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curriculum and socialization system for producing youth who lack the required skills mix for effective public service delivery (Nuwagaba, A. 2012).

Additionally, the complaints against civil servants reflect an absence of non-technical but crucial social skills foundationally mounded at family level and consolidated in schools. Cases of unfairness, dishonesty, irrational rigidity, sectarianism and many other social vices that the public complains of are more of socialization than technical shortfalls. Higher Education is crucial but may not independently influence individuals' attitude to service and personae (Byabashaija & Katono, 2011). Members of the Uganda Policy Development Management Forum commissioned this policy research with this consideration in mind.

Globally, the 2017 Transparency International Annual report ranks Uganda among the most corrupt public service systems in Africa (TI reports 2007-2017) and the public consider themselves subordinate to the public servants, which fans their exploitation (MoPS, 2011). Some public officials are reported to suffer social pressure from families and friends to 'make use' of their positions to get illicit wealth (Mafigiri, 2017).

With the young and youth population making 78% of Uganda's total population (UBOS 2017) and with an annual population growth rate at 3.0% (UBOS 2018), the family system in Uganda is overwhelmed by youth demands yet deliberate government effort to inculcate values among young people is minimal. Demand is increasing for society to provide a foundation for values that will guide the public service

transformation agenda and entrench service-driven conduct.

Methodology

Document review of published empirical evidence was conducted, capturing emerging issues that affect the quality of population and public service in Uganda. A public policy dialogue was held to validate the research and generate more policy ideas through debate. The ideas from the discussants and plenary were incorporated into the existing study findings. An analysis of the development agenda as understood by scholars and public policy implementers was done.

Policy concerns

The policy research studies observed that emphasis of the six broad aims of education suggested in the Education White Paper (1992) is minimal across institutions of education and structures of socialization. These six broad aims include;

- o Promoting national unity, patriotism and cultural heritage;
- o Inculcating moral, ethical and spiritual values, self-discipline, tolerance and human fellowship;
- o Inculcating a sense of service, duty and leadership through group and community activities;
- o Promoting scientific, technical and cultural knowledge, and skills needed for development;
- o Eradicating illiteracy and equipping the individuals with basic skills to exploit the environment for self-employment and national development;
- o Contributing to the building of an integrated, self-sustaining and independent economy.

Policy Recommendations

1. Institutionalization of the socialization process
Ugandans are socialized through largely informal processes and structures yet these can be institutionalized to have fairly predictable outcomes to foster national development.

Positive transformation of the public service may require that the knowledge of the desired public conduct is channeled through socialization structures many of which are currently informal. Ministry of gender, labor and social development may consider working with informal social structures at community level to deliberately inculcate and monitor social values such as honesty, personal discipline, fairness, etiquette, integrity, patriotism among others.

2. Merging of education and socialization process

The ministry of education should review existing policy to;

- a) Integrate community based socialization systems in the curriculum purposely to entrench core social values and,
- b) Expand the role of school teachers to include monitoring of the socialization process at community level to integrate the school and community role of shaping public conduct.
- c) Introduce mandatory annual trainings in ethics and integrity for public servants

Conclusion

At recruitment, minimal attention is given to non-technical skills and personality traits that are influenced by socialization. While education and training provide the technical attributes of service, the influence of other socialization agents like family and community on quality of public service cannot be underestimated. Inculcation of values and ethos by the family, religion,

the community and the school system are largely done informally and minimally documented.

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