

# **KENYA INSTITUTE OF ADMINISTRATION**

## **WHAT ROLE FOR MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTES IN AFRICA**

A PAPER PRESENTED  
DURING THE BIENNIAL GENERAL MEETING

BY

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## **THE ABSTRACT**

MDIs have been part and parcel of the growth of African governments. Although they have had serious challenges impacting negatively on their performance, they still remain important pillars upon which public service reform and development in Africa is founded on.

On the other hand, it is the position of the paper that in the immediate term governments must address the weaknesses affecting the MDIs in order to realise meaningful public service delivery. Although the private sector may complement efforts of public sector MDIs, it should be understood that effective culture change and value system institutionalization in Africa can only be successfully done by public MDIs.

This paper reviews literature and discusses the role of MDIs in the delivery of services by the public. Capacity gaps, challenges and possible interventions are presented.

The paper concludes by pointing out that enhanced participation of MDIs in public policy formulation and management plus increased networking and benchmarking are identified as key to the success of MDIs.

## **WHAT ROLE FOR MDIs IN AFRICA?**

### **Background Information**

The realization of socio-economic growth and development is intrinsically linked to an efficient and effective civil service. In improving African Public Services Series No.3 July 2006, in a topic, "Transforming African Public Service", the Heads of African Public Services meeting in London (2006) focused on the new partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the role of the African Public Service in implementing the African initiative for economic growth and development.

The meeting also recognized and endorsed the need to strengthen the machinery of public services in Africa to respond to global challenges.

African public services must transform if they are to support countries in meeting targets set under MDG's. The heads of public services meeting in London (June 2004) asserted that public services must balance the complex roles between regulatory and direct service delivery.

The Management Development Institutes (MDI's) play a crucial role in capacitating public service employees to deliver effective service by providing management education and training; they play the crucial role of Public service culturization for enhanced performance; this explains why governments the world over have established and continue to invest in MDIs or what in some countries like Britain, the US, and New Zealand is referred to as the Schools of Government.

### **Capacity Gaps, Needs and Challenges in Public Sector Management (PSM)**

Smith (1999) identified investment in educational infrastructure as critical for Africa's growth strategies: African governments needed to increase the skill pool and literacy and increase the capacity of technology absorption in order to develop their economies. Gichuki (1999) underscored the need for significant training budgets commitments in order to enable staff achieve strategic objectives.

Kenya's strategy paper (2001) on performance improvement in the public service recognized that *public servants are the most critical resource for the attainment of improved performance*. Through training and capacity building, *the government would have in its employment a motivated workforce who would be able to perform*. In order for this to happen, the government developed the recruitment and training policy which details the systematic process of identification, implementation and evaluation of training activities in order to equitably and efficiently benefit those targeted for training and the recipient public service.

In the policy document, the government underscores the need for continued capacity building in the public service. In addition, the government commits itself to redirect budgetary resources towards improved staff performance.

Nyong'o (1999) identified China's success and economic growth as resultant from the state's substantial investment in education, training and infrastructure – whose payoff would be felt in the long term. The government of China provided the necessary services, infrastructure and training to spur economic growth. Consequently the author averred that the future of African countries lay in evaluating China's approach.

In line with this thinking, Kenya's current development strategy's success was hinged on the capacity of the human capital in the both the public and private sectors to deliver results; this meant investing heavily in the MDIs in Kenya and engaging in partnerships with development partners. Over the last 4 years, the government through the Ministry of state for public Service has spearheaded rapid human resource capacity building in order to accelerate the achievement of results.

### **Results Oriented Public Service**

The key benefits of public sector reforms, as identified by Kones (1996) are:

- A government with a streamlined bureaucracy
- A more motivated, more efficient and more effective public service
- A more private sector friendly service
- A government culture of facilitating economic growth

Such achievements would only be possible if governments systematically developed, nurtured and managed the public sector reform agenda. One of the critical strategies for the success of the public service reforms in Africa is training and capacity building. For example, the government of Kenya resolved to increase staff and pay attention to the training and human resource development in order to enable public servants to play their envisaged roles in the reform agenda more effectively. In this regard, the government sought to improve the physical facilities in the existing MDIs.

### **MDI's Contribution to Enhancing Public Service Delivery**

Armstrong M. (2001) avers that the overall purpose of human resource management is to ensure that an organization is able to achieve success through people. This means that organizations must be committed to taking steps to assess and satisfy the future people needs and to enhance and develop their capacity for performance and employability by providing learning and continuous development opportunities. In order to achieve this, Burger J.E. and Muller J.J. (1999) recommended for continuous education and training in order to reduce the possibility of employees finding themselves with obsolete skills.

Management education and training used to refer to the system of policies, programmes and organizational activities established to develop and enhance the skills, competencies and capacity of personnel in public and private organization in

order to meet customer needs (Africa Journal of Public Administration and Management Vol.XVI No.1 January 2005 Pg.V).

MDI's in Africa have been heavily involved in reform. In Nigeria for example, MDI's have been involved in advancing broadened public sector reform programmes. MDI's play a central role in training, capacity building and knowledge transfer (Kauza, 2006 Pg.116). They are also logical vehicles through which new paradigm and changes in the agenda and understanding regarding public administration and public sector reform are disseminated (Abdulla and Van Dyk Robertson, June 2007).

### **The Case of Kenya**

Ominde S., et al (1964) identified the role of education as a tool for nation building and economic development. In addition, they underscored the role of professional training institutions in Kenya, which were vehicles through which different service organisations would develop their staff.

Taking cognizance of these positions by scholars, the government of Kenya established the government training Institutes [GTIs] (what is referred to as MDIs; immediately after independence; the Institutes' initial mandate was to kenyanize the civil service in order to maintain efficiency in the work place.

In 1987, the Kenyan Government adopted the district focus for rural development strategy whose success was dependent on the ability of the public servants to competently meet the challenges posed by the new approach to development. The strategy paper posited that the success of the district focus strategy depended to a large extent on the capability of the staff involved. In order to enhance this capability, training had to be provided to personnel at all levels. The paper went further to confirm that the Institutes would play that crucial role of training and monitoring the implementation of the development strategy. The Kenya Institute of Administration became the focal point through which the government would implement, monitor and evaluate the strategy.

Kamunge J., et al (1988) in their report on Education and Manpower Training in Kenya observed that education and training of human resources in Kenya is an important determinant of social and economic development of the country and its ability to respond to emerging challenges. Since independence, training had been carried out for different purposes including kenyanisation of the public service and transformation of the public service to become an agent of national development. Different Institutes had been established to address the training objectives and so far have continued to play that role effectively; in fact as observed by Wamalwa W.N., et al (1978 – 9), KIA successfully met the objectives set for its establishment that over the years, new objectives had to be set for it. Consequently, in 1996, the Institute was incorporated as a semi autonomous agency of government to carry out training, and offer research and consultancy services for the public, private and NGO sectors in Kenya and beyond.

## **Challenges Facing MDI's in their Delivery Role**

Some of the challenges slowing down the ability of MDIs to perform their role effectively include:

### *1. Inadequate Resources*

Lawton and Rose (1990) argue that although governments have varied sources of mobilizing resources for the public sector use, the resources realized remain inadequate. Due to these resource limitations, governments are forced to concentrate resources on providing essential services like education, healthcare, law and order. In addition, whereas budgets are prepared to give a projection of future activities and their costs, effective management of budgets in the public sector becomes difficult due to the uncertainty implicit in public sector operations. Going by these arguments of the authors, it can be assumed that resource inadequacy and unpredictable budgeting processes have negatively affected the operations of MDIs in Kenya. Studies have shown that the training vote is the first victim of government budget revisions. For example, during the financial year 2003-2004, the Kenya government withdrew from Ministries over 80% of the allocation for training.

Another related challenge affecting MDIs is the failure by decision makers to agree on priority budget items. In some cases, resources are allocated depending on the political might of the sponsor; in other cases training has been treated as among the least priority area for attention.

### *2. Relationship with Government.*

There has developed a trend to privatize MDI's in most Anglophone Africa. Privatisation has had far reaching consequences on the performance of MDI's privatization brings with it the concept of self-sustainability. This has resulted in pressures brought to bear on the mix of traditional offerings and tasks of MDI's. Some MDI's offer degrees, short courses, research and consultancy; others have opted to offer only short courses because these bring higher returns. Therefore, one can argue that the guiding principle is profit and not quality services to enhance the human resource capacity of client organizations; this situation has made it impossible for MDI's to address adequately their research and consultancy portfolios.

*How then are these institutions expected to be think tanks, advisor to the Government in matters of public policy and capacity building?*

The staffing arrangements in most MDI's comprise of small core of permanent staff with most of the professional staff either being outsourced temporary. This does not augur well for these MDI's because in some occasions, the outsourced services may not meet the quality demanded by the clients.

### *3. Quality of Leadership*

Leadership has been identified as a critical characteristic of a responsive public service (Lawton and Rose, 1990). Leadership is seen as an enabler that clarifies the organizations' values and goals, directs the organization's efforts to the achievement of a defined vision and ensures unwavering commitment to that vision. In this regard, the leader's competence and management style is key to enabling the organization to achieve its objectives.

The leadership of MDIs in some countries have been politicized and hence compromised the quality of performance of the affected organizations.

### *4. Underdeveloped ICT Infrastructure*

Another challenge affecting MDIs is slow deployment of ICT infrastructure to modernize the operations of MDI's; most MDI's have not embraced distance and E-learning, global wide classrooms, in order to tap from a wider market, cut down on costs and benchmark with internationally recognized best practices; proper use of improved resource centers, updating and strengthening of course contents and being part of virtual knowledge networks would enhance the ability of the MDIs to respond to changing needs and tastes of their clients.

### *5. Passive involvement in Public Policy Activities*

MDI's in most African countries have not performed their role as drivers of change efforts in policy formulation. For example in Kenya, in the 1970's there was inadequate supply of qualified professional, technical and managerial personnel to match the institutional expansion of the 1960's, insufficient evaluation of training and its impact on job performance and lack of coherent national approach to training. This was in spite of the fact that there existed MDI's, which could have provided policy direction in developing a comprehensive policy document to guide public service training. The MDI's watched from a distance as training in the public service continued to be done unsystematically culminating in unharmonious levels of training which in turn led to limited impact in public service performance.

The MDI's have played a very passive role in formulating a policy that provides direction on how to manage the training function in the public service; what happened to the leadership role that they were expected to exhibit?

According to Kauzya (2006 Pg.116), MDI's play a central role in training, capacity building and knowledge transfer. They are logical vehicles through which new paradigms and changes in the agenda and understanding regarding public administration and public sector reform are disseminated. They are expected to become embodiments of the latest thinking. However, going by the state of public service delivery in most African states where MDI's exist, one can probably argue that these institutions have not effectively played their leadership roles in the latest thinking.

What do the delegates think?

The actual impact of African MDI's in policy reform and research has been negligible. The status of MDI's has diminished because it is hard to make appointments and maintain staff comprised of experienced and respected practitioners. The longer-term knowledge formation activities in research have been scaled down in favor of the income generating activities such as training; consequently, knowledge base deteriorates and the MDIs become less relevant and appealing as policy advisors and think tank capacity builders for African Governments.

#### 6. *Shift in Training Approaches*

Over time there has been a consistent dilution and redirection in the traditional market of MDI's; Most Government bodies in Africa have been seen to establish "in-house" training operations thus taking away business previously done by MDI's. This is as a result of liberalization and privatization of MDI's. This situation has forced some MDI's to engage in training activities, which do not address capacity gaps in the public service. In most MDI's, choice of offerings are responsive to market dynamics led by available donor money rather than being informed by a comprehensive and strategic response to the needs of the African state. Hence the financial prospects for MDI's to survive on the buying power of its dominant client (the government) are severely compromised.

The African Journal of Public Administration and Management (January 2005) highlights the problems of MDI's in Nigeria as:

- Most of MDI's business from Government has been taken away by roadside consultants (*what in Kenya are referred to as briefcase consultants*)
- Multiplicity of training institutions who partake in all kinds of training
- Insufficient funding of MDI's
- Lack of proper monitoring and evaluation of training Programmes
- Lack of coordination between MDI's and the organizations targeted for capacity building
- Conflicts between politicians and bureaucrats
- Limited time for MDI's staff to update their skills
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The same can be said of MDIs in Kenya; in a study carried out on MDIs in Kenya (*Munyali A, 2005*), Kenya's MDIs are to a large extent slowed down by:

- Inadequate resource allocation (which are also unpredictable),
- Ineffective leadership, and underdeveloped human resource capital
- The obtaining civil service culture of laxity and high dependence on GOK funding
- Resultant decline in financial performance, high staff turnover, declining student population and poor state of facilities and equipment expected to be utilized in service delivery.
- Declining confidence in the ability of the MDIs to offer quality service
- Liberalized training service delivery which has brought in private service providers to compete with MDIs

- Weak service delivery systems and processes
- Inadequate marketing strategy and capability
- Nonexistent policy /practices on benchmarking and networking

These problems can be generalized for all MDI's in Africa.

### *7. Historical Baggage*

According to Adedeji (2007), most Anglophone MDI's have a far-fetched standard institutional legacy of colonization; most of them were modeled in line with the MDI's in the former colonial powers. Therefore, one can argue that they were victims of colonial trappings and as such may not address effectively the training needs of changed socio-political situation; they were also expected to serve as think tanks for their respective Governments on matters related to public administration (Aberra 2002).

"How could such institutions with such profound colonial baggage perform the role of a modern think tank to government which is under pressure from the citizens to improve the quality of service delivery?"

### **Possible Interventions for MDIs**

In order to improve the ability of MDIs to perform their roles more productively, it is recommended that:

- Funding arrangements should be reviewed so that MDI's continue receiving Government subsidy and at the same time generate funds for operational expenses. This will go along way in causing pressure for self-sustainability that made most of MDI's abandon some of their core mandates like research
- The portfolio of offering should be linked to identified training needs
- MDIs should develop sound training plans in which training is proactive and informed by market demands
- Effective monitoring and evaluation of training programmes should be carried out periodically to ensure new gaps in public service delivery are addressed on time
- MDIs should urgently enhance use of ICT to increase service reach and consequent impacts on the public service.
- MDIs should move away from their traditional public business orientation to a performance based culture similar to private sector orientation
- Governments should involve the MDI's in forums to formulate policy and any discourse on critical national issues in order to enable the MDIs remain current and relevant; in essence, the visibility and influence of MDI's in public service reform management should be increased; MDIs should take the first step by being more proactive in responding to the needs of their countries
- Governments should strengthen MDIs as an area of priority for performance improvement in the public service (*Commonwealth Secretariat regional workshop on PMS*)

- In the spirit of NEPAD and other regional networks for development, MDIs should move fast to create forums for peer review and development networks; a mechanism for exchange programs (sponsored by respective governments) across Africa and the rest of the world could be a starting point from this forum
- Governments should institutionalize the participation of MDIs in all spheres of influence in public sector management especially policy formulation and reform initiatives.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the preceding arguments it may appear like MDIs are threatened; however, the challenges facing MDIs are surmounted to the extent that these organizations and the African countries refocus their energies to reengineering MDIs for a reforming African continent in fast moving technological world. More time should be spend in benchmarking across nations in order to enhance the impact of MDIs in directing the quality of public service delivery in Africa.

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