PROFESSIONALIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGION

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ABSTRACT

Background: Public service delivery in Africa has been hijacked by politicians who want to advance their political interests and deploy people, not based on how they can contribute to public service delivery. Most countries in Africa have been classified as corrupt states because of corrupt public officials.

Purpose: The purpose of this article is to show the importance of professionalizing public service delivery by ensuring that the public servants in Africa put the citizens first.

Objective: The objective of this article is to provide suggestions on how African governments can professionalize public service delivery. Public servants should not see their employment as means of their survival to earn a salary but as a calling to serve the people.

Research methodology: The study collected the existing data that is related to public service delivery in the countries of the Southern African region. Secondary data was collected to reach the findings and conclusions of this study.

Results: The study found that the existing gap in public service delivery in Africa is based on public servants themselves not owning up to their responsibilities, they need to offer the services to the public the same way they would expect the public services to be delivered to them.

Conclusion: The focus of this article is not on the processes and documentation required by public servants to be seen as professional individuals but the focus is on the existing gap.

Keywords: professionalization, corruption, public servants, African governments, politicians.

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PROFISSIONALIZAÇÃO DA PRESTAÇÃO DE SERVIÇOS PÚBLICOS NA REGIÃO DA ÁFRICA SUL

RESUMO

Antecedentes: A prestação de serviços públicos em África foi sequestrada por políticos que pretendem promover os seus interesses políticos e mobilizar pessoas, e não com base na forma como podem contribuir para a prestação de serviços públicos. A maioria dos países em África foram classificados como estados corruptos por causa de funcionários públicos corruptos.

Objetivo: O objectivo deste artigo é mostrar a importância de profissionalizar a prestação de serviços públicos, garantindo que os funcionários públicos em África colocam os cidadãos em primeiro lugar.

Objetivo: O objectivo deste artigo é fornecer sugestões sobre como os governos africanos podem profissionalizar a prestação de serviços públicos. Os funcionários públicos não devem ver o seu emprego como um meio de sobrevivência para ganhar um salário, mas como uma vocação para servir o povo.

Metodologia de investigação: O estudo recolheu os dados existentes relacionados com a prestação de serviços públicos nos países da região da África Austral. Dados secundários foram coletados para chegar aos achados e conclusões deste estudo.

Resultados: O estudo concluiu que a lacuna existente na prestação de serviços públicos em África se baseia no facto de os próprios funcionários públicos não assumirem as suas responsabilidades, precisam de oferecer os serviços ao público da mesma forma que esperariam que os serviços públicos fossem prestados. eles.

Conclusão: O foco deste artigo não está nos processos e na documentação exigida pelos servidores públicos para serem vistos como profissionais, mas sim na lacuna existente.

Palavras-chave: profissionalização, corrupção, funcionários públicos, governos africanos, políticos.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is an intergovernmental organization that was formed in 1992 with the aim of promoting economic development and cooperation among its 16 member states (Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe). The organization’s focus is on regional integration and development, and it has made significant progress in the areas of trade, infrastructure, and political stability. However, there are still challenges to be addressed, particularly with regard to institutional capacity. This article focuses on the ways to strengthen the institutional capacity of the SADC in order to ensure its continued success. Institutional capacity refers to an organization’s ability to perform its functions effectively (Oppong, 2011). For the
SADC, this means its ability to promote economic development and cooperation among its member states. There are several areas where the SADC can strengthen its institutional capacity: Leadership is a critical component of institutional capacity. The SADC needs strong leadership that can provide strategic direction, ensure effective implementation of policies, and promote accountability. The organization should also develop a clear succession plan to ensure continuity and stability. Human resource development is another critical area for institutional capacity. The SADC needs to invest in training and development programs for its staff and member states to ensure that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their roles effectively. This will also help to build a culture of excellence and professionalism (Zeng, 2015).

Good governance is essential for institutional capacity. The SADC should ensure that its governance structures are transparent, accountable, and effective. This includes developing clear policies and procedures, monitoring and evaluating performance, and promoting stakeholder participation. Financial sustainability is critical for the long-term success of the SADC. The organization needs to ensure that it has a reliable source of funding to support its operations and programs. This can be achieved in several ways. Diversification of Funding Sources: The SADC should diversify its funding sources to reduce its reliance on donor funding (Ghimire, 2001). This could include exploring alternative funding mechanisms such as public-private partnerships, innovative financing models, and tapping into the resources of member states. The SADC should also focus on cost-effective operations to reduce its expenditure. This could include streamlining its organizational structure, improving its procurement processes, and reducing unnecessary expenses.

The SADC should actively engage in resource mobilization to increase its funding base. This could involve identifying potential donors, building partnerships with other organizations, and leveraging its networks to attract funding. Strategic partnerships are essential for the SADC to achieve its objectives. The organization should build strong partnerships with other regional organizations, donor agencies, and the private sector. This can be achieved in several ways such as the collaborative programs. The SADC should collaborate with other regional organizations on joint programs and initiatives. This will help to leverage resources, avoid duplication of effort, and increase the impact of its programs (Oshikoya and Hussain, 1998).
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The professionalization of public service delivery is an important aspect of effective governance in any country, especially in developing regions like Southern Africa. Public service delivery refers to the provision of services and goods to the public by the government, such as healthcare, education, water, and sanitation. In the Southern African region, the professionalization of public service delivery is crucial for achieving sustainable development goals and improving the quality of life of citizens (van Bochove and Oldenhof, 2020).

This article discusses the professionalization of public service delivery in the Southern African region, focusing on the challenges, strategies, and potential solutions to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public services. The article begins by defining the concept of professionalization and its significance in public service delivery. And then examine the challenges that hinder professionalization in the region, including political interference, corruption, inadequate funding, and limited capacity building. The article also explores strategies for enhancing professionalization in public service delivery, such as institutional reforms, human resource management, performance management, and citizen engagement. Finally, the article will conclude by highlighting the potential solutions to improve the professionalization of public service delivery in the Southern African region (Afegbua, 2015).

Professionalization refers to the process of enhancing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes of public service providers to improve the quality and effectiveness of services. In the context of public service delivery, professionalization is aimed at enhancing the capacity of public servants to deliver services that meet the needs of citizens, are cost-effective, and are based on ethical principles and best practices. Professionalization is critical for achieving sustainable development goals, promoting good governance, and improving the quality of life of citizens (Plant, 2015).

The professionalization of public service delivery is particularly important in the Southern African region, which faces numerous challenges in providing basic services to its citizens. These challenges include poverty, inequality, low levels of education, inadequate infrastructure, and weak institutions. Professionalization can help to address these challenges by improving the quality and efficiency of public services and enhancing the capacity of public servants to respond to the needs of citizens. Moreover, professionalization can help to promote accountability, transparency, and ethical conduct.
in public service delivery, which are essential for building trust between citizens and the government (Obushna, Korchak, Evsyukova, Selivanov and Petrynska, 2022).

Despite the importance of professionalization in public service delivery, the Southern African region faces several challenges that hinder the effective implementation of this process. These challenges include political interference, corruption, inadequate funding, and limited capacity building. Political interference is one of the major challenges to the professionalization of public service delivery in Southern Africa. In many countries in the region, political leaders often interfere in the day-to-day operations of public service providers, such as hiring and firing decisions, procurement processes, and service delivery priorities. This interference often undermines the autonomy of public service providers and can lead to a lack of accountability and transparency. Corruption is another significant challenge to the professionalization of public service delivery in Southern Africa. Corruption occurs when public service providers abuse their power for personal gain, such as soliciting bribes, embezzling public funds, and awarding contracts to cronies. Corruption undermines the effectiveness and efficiency of public services and can lead to a lack of trust between citizens and the government. Inadequate funding is also a significant challenge to the professionalization of public service delivery in Southern Africa. Many countries in the region face budget constraints that limit their ability to invest in infrastructure, human resources, and technology. This inadequate funding often leads to a lack of resources for public service providers and can result in poor service delivery. Limited capacity building is another challenge to the professionalization of public service delivery in Southern Africa. Many public service providers in the region lack the necessary skills, knowledge, and expertise (Kaizer, 2022).

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is a regional intergovernmental organization comprising 16 member states. One of the main objectives of the SADC is to promote economic growth, social progress, and poverty alleviation in the region. The public service is a critical component of any country’s governance structure, and its professionalization is essential to achieve these objectives. However, the professionalization of public service delivery in the SADC region has been facing significant challenges, leading to limited success. This article aims to discuss the reasons why professionalization of public service delivery is failing in the Southern African Development Community (Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012).
The colonial legacy in the region has a significant impact on public service delivery. The colonial governments created a bureaucracy that was not accountable to the people, but rather to the colonial powers. After independence, the new governments inherited this bureaucracy, which they tried to transform into a public service that was accountable to the people. However, this process has not been easy, as the colonial bureaucracy was not designed to serve the interests of the people but to maintain the colonial status quo.

Political Instability Political instability is a significant challenge to the professionalization of public service delivery in the SADC region. Many countries in the region have experienced political turmoil, such as coups, civil wars, and social unrest, which have undermined the efforts to professionalize public service delivery. Political instability has led to the loss of institutional memory, as experienced public servants are often replaced by political appointees. This situation has weakened the institutional capacity of the public service and reduced its ability to deliver quality services to the public (De Vries and Nemec, 2013).

Corruption is a pervasive problem in the SADC region, and it undermines the professionalization of public service delivery. Corruption reduces the efficiency of the public service, as resources are misused and misallocated, and public officials are more concerned about personal gain than serving the public interest. Corruption has also led to the erosion of public trust in the public service, as citizens perceive public officials as being corrupt and self-serving. Lack of political will the lack of political will is another significant factor that has contributed to the failure of professionalization of public service delivery in the SADC region. Many governments in the region have not demonstrated a commitment to reforming the public service. This lack of political will has manifested itself in various ways, such as inadequate funding of the public service, failure to enact appropriate legislation, and lack of support for capacity building initiatives (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015).

Inadequate human resource management inadequate human resource management is a significant challenge to the professionalization of public service delivery in the SADC region. Many countries in the region face a shortage of skilled and experienced public servants, which has led to the hiring of unqualified individuals to fill critical positions. Inadequate human resource management also leads to inadequate training and development of public servants, which undermines their ability to deliver quality services.
Limited participation of civil society is another significant factor that has contributed to the failure of professionalization of public service delivery in the SADC region. Civil society organizations play a critical role in holding public officials accountable and advocating for public service reforms. However, in many countries in the region, civil society organizations are weak and lack the capacity to influence public policy (Ayee, 2005).

Lastly, the professionalization of public service delivery in the SADC region is facing significant challenges. The historical legacy of colonialism, political instability, corruption, lack of political will, inadequate human resource management, and limited participation of civil society are some of the factors that have contributed to the failure of professionalization efforts. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from governments, civil society organizations, and development partners to ensure that the public service is professionalized, accountable, and responsive to the needs of the people.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Secondary research methodology involves collecting and analyzing existing data and information from various sources, such as books, academic journals, government publications, industry reports, and online databases. This method is also known as desk research, as it is typically conducted from a desk, without direct interaction with participants or collecting new data.

The importance of secondary research methodology lies in its ability to provide a comprehensive and cost-effective way to gather information and data on a particular topic. Secondary research can help researchers to gain a broader understanding of the research topic by reviewing the literature, researchers can gain a better understanding of the research topic, the current state of knowledge, and the research gaps that need to be filled (Snyder, 2019). Secondary research can be conducted more quickly and cheaply than primary research, which requires researchers to collect new data from scratch. Secondary research can help to validate findings from primary research by comparing them with existing research on the same topic. Secondary research can provide context for primary research findings, helping researchers to understand how their findings fit into the broader literature. Secondary research can help researchers to identify trends and patterns in the data, which can be used to develop hypotheses and guide future research. Secondary research can also provide important information for decision-making in
business, government, and other fields. Therefore, this article applied secondary research methodology which is an important methodology that can provide valuable insights and information for researchers in a wide range of fields (Goddard and Melville, 2004).

4 FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Public service plays a crucial role in the development and governance of any nation, and Africa is no exception. As the second-largest continent with diverse political, social, and economic landscapes, Africa faces unique challenges in its public service sector. This article explores the new challenges facing public service in Africa, highlighting key areas such as governance, corruption, capacity building, and service delivery. Additionally, figure 1 provided to visualize the trends and patterns associated with these challenges. Governance Challenges: One of the primary challenges in African public service is governance. Many countries on the continent struggle with weak governance structures, characterized by limited accountability, transparency, and citizen participation. This undermines public trust and hinders effective service delivery. Weak governance often leads to ineffective policy implementation, mismanagement of resources, and a lack of political will to address public service challenges (Olaniyan, 2014). Corruption and Ethical Issues: Corruption remains a pervasive problem across Africa, posing significant challenges to public service. Rampant corruption erodes public trust, diverts resources from essential public services, and undermines the rule of law. Addressing corruption requires strengthening anti-corruption measures, promoting transparency, and fostering a culture of integrity within public institutions. This includes enforcing strict ethical codes, establishing effective oversight mechanisms, and ensuring the independence of anti-corruption agencies. The author of his article also found that the capacity of African public service institutions fails to deliver quality services. Insufficient human resources, outdated skills, and inadequate training programs hinder the effectiveness of public servants. Capacity building initiatives should focus on enhancing skills, promoting professional development, and attracting and retaining qualified personnel. Collaboration with international partners, sharing best practices, and investing in education and training can help address capacity gaps (Hope Sr, 2000).

Service Delivery Challenges: Efficient and effective service delivery remains a critical challenge in African public service. Many countries face issues such as limited access to basic services, poor infrastructure, and unequal distribution of resources.
Enhancing service delivery requires investments in infrastructure development, strengthening public-private partnerships, and adopting innovative approaches such as e-governance and digital service delivery. Citizen engagement and feedback mechanisms are also vital for improving service quality and responsiveness. Youth Unemployment and Demographic Challenges: Africa has a significant youth population, and the challenge of unemployment among young people puts pressure on public service delivery. High levels of youth unemployment contribute to social instability, poverty, and reduced opportunities for economic growth. Public service must prioritize job creation, entrepreneurship, and skills development initiatives to address this challenge. Engaging youth in decision-making processes and fostering their participation in public service can contribute to sustainable development (Van Velden, Wilson, Lindsey, McCallum, Moyo and Biggs, 2020).

Figure 1: Public Service delivery in some African countries and the financial spending levels.

For example, the above figure shows the percentage of public service delivery in various African countries in 2022.

Public service in Africa faces numerous challenges that require concerted efforts from governments, civil society, and international partners. Addressing governance issues, combating corruption, building capacity, and improving service delivery are crucial steps towards ensuring effective and accountable public service systems. By
tackling these challenges, Africa can enhance its public service sector, foster development, and improve the lives of its citizens (Akanle and Adesina, 2015).

Public service delivery in Africa has been a topic of discussion for many years. African countries have faced numerous challenges when it comes to providing quality public services to their citizens. These challenges range from inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and corruption to political instability, inadequate human resources, and weak institutional frameworks. This article discusses public service delivery in Africa, highlighting the challenges, successes, and possible solutions. Public service delivery is an essential aspect of governance in Africa. It is the provision of essential services such as health, education, water, sanitation, and electricity to citizens by the government. The quality of public services in Africa varies from country to country, with some countries providing excellent services while others struggle to meet the basic needs of their citizens (Tshiyoyo and Koma, 2011). The challenges facing public service delivery in Africa are many, and they can be grouped into three categories: financial, institutional, and human resource challenges. One of the main challenges facing public service delivery in Africa is inadequate funding. Most African countries struggle to provide adequate resources to their public service sectors, which results in poor quality services. The limited funding is caused by several factors, including poor economic performance, heavy external debt burdens, and low levels of domestic revenue mobilization. This has led to a situation where public services in most African countries are severely underfunded, resulting in poor quality services (Besley and Ghatak, 2007).

Another challenge facing public service delivery in Africa is institutional weakness. The institutional frameworks for providing public services in most African countries are weak, which makes it difficult to provide quality services. Institutional weakness is manifested in several ways, including corruption, political interference, lack of transparency and accountability, and weak regulatory frameworks. This has led to a situation where public services in most African countries are inefficient, ineffective, and often characterized by a lack of accountability. The third challenge facing public service delivery in Africa is a lack of human resources. Most African countries suffer from a shortage of skilled and motivated personnel, which makes it difficult to provide quality public services. The lack of human resources is caused by several factors, including brain drain, inadequate training, and low wages and benefits. This has led to a situation where
public services in most African countries are understaffed, resulting in poor quality services (Manyaka and Sebola, 2012).

Despite these challenges, some African countries have made significant progress in public service delivery. These countries have adopted innovative strategies that have resulted in improved service delivery. For example, Rwanda has made significant progress in providing universal healthcare to its citizens. The country has adopted a community-based health insurance scheme that has improved access to healthcare services. Similarly, Kenya has made significant progress in providing universal primary education to its citizens. The country has adopted a program that provides free primary education to all children, resulting in increased enrollment rates. In addition to these successes, there are several possible solutions to the challenges facing public service delivery in Africa. The first solution is to increase funding for public services. African governments need to increase their domestic revenue mobilization efforts to provide adequate resources to their public service sectors. This can be achieved through tax reforms, reducing tax evasion, and improving tax administration. In addition, African countries can explore alternative sources of funding, such as public-private partnerships and development assistance. The second solution is to strengthen institutional frameworks for public service delivery. African governments need to strengthen their institutional frameworks to promote transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the provision of public services. This can be achieved through the adoption of appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks, the promotion of ethical conduct among public officials, and the establishment of independent oversight bodies (Odaro, 2012).

The third solution is to invest in human resources for public service delivery. African governments need to invest in the training and motivation of public service personnel to improve the quality of services provided. This can be achieved through the adoption of appropriate remuneration and benefit packages, the establishment of training and career development programs, and the promotion of a positive work environment.

The challenges of cadre deployment in African states can be explored in depth, but this article provide a concise overview of the key issues within a more manageable word limit. Cadre deployment refers to the practice of political parties or governments appointing their loyal members to key positions within the state machinery. While it can be seen as a means to ensure party control and implement desired policies, it often poses several challenges in African states. Some of the prominent challenges include: Lack of
meritocracy: Cadre deployment often prioritizes party loyalty over competence and merit. This can result in the appointment of individuals who are ill-suited for their positions, leading to inefficiency, corruption, and ineffective governance. The absence of qualified and experienced personnel can hinder effective service delivery and economic development (Kanyane, 2014).

Weakening of institutions: Cadre deployment undermines the independence and professionalism of institutions such as the civil service, judiciary, and security forces. Political interference compromises the impartiality and integrity of these institutions, eroding public trust and potentially leading to abuse of power. Weakened institutions also struggle to provide essential public services and maintain the rule of law. Political patronage and corruption: Cadre deployment often perpetuates a culture of political patronage, where loyalists are rewarded with influential positions regardless of their qualifications. This fosters a system of corruption, as individuals exploit their positions for personal gain, engage in nepotism, and misuse public resources. Corruption undermines governance, exacerbates inequality, and undermines development efforts (Reddy, 2016).

Lack of continuity and expertise: Frequent changes in personnel due to cadre deployment disrupt institutional memory and continuity. This can impede policy implementation and long-term development planning. Additionally, the appointment of individuals lacking expertise in specific areas may result in poor decision-making and policy formulation, hindering progress in sectors such as education, health, and infrastructure. Divisiveness and polarization: Cadre deployment can contribute to heightened political polarization and social divisions within African states. When key positions are primarily filled by party loyalists, it can alienate and marginalize other political actors and their supporters. This can further deepen social cleavages, hamper political dialogue, and undermine social cohesion.

Diminished accountability and transparency: The lack of transparent and merit-based appointment processes associated with cadre deployment undermines accountability mechanisms. Without clear criteria for selection and promotion, it becomes challenging to hold officials accountable for their actions. This fosters a culture of impunity and weakens the checks and balances necessary for good governance. Inefficient resource allocation: Cadre deployment can lead to misallocation of resources, as appointments may prioritize political considerations over the needs of the population.
Funds and resources meant for development projects may be diverted to support political agendas, leading to ineffective and inefficient utilization of public resources. Undermined public trust and legitimacy: Cadre deployment erodes public trust in government institutions and diminishes the perceived legitimacy of the political system. When citizens perceive appointments as based on political affiliation rather than merit, they may become disillusioned and disengaged from the political process, further weakening democratic governance (Franks, 2015).

Addressing the challenges associated with cadre deployment requires comprehensive reforms aimed at strengthening institutions, promoting meritocracy, and enhancing transparency and accountability. Implementing and enforcing merit-based recruitment processes, enhancing civil service training and professionalism, and promoting a culture of good governance can contribute to more effective and efficient governance in African states. The culture of cadre deployment in Africa has been a source of deep-rooted economic damage for many countries on the continent. Cadre deployment refers to the practice of appointing individuals into key positions within government and state-owned enterprises based on political affiliation and loyalty, rather than merit or qualifications. One of the primary issues with cadre deployment is that it often results in the appointment of individuals who lack the necessary skills, expertise, and experience to effectively manage and lead economic institutions. This leads to inefficiency, mismanagement, and a lack of accountability in key sectors such as finance, infrastructure, and public administration. As a result, crucial economic functions suffer, leading to poor service delivery, corruption, and a waste of public resources (Magam and Wilson, 2021).

Furthermore, cadre deployment undermines the principle of meritocracy, which is essential for fostering a competitive and productive economy. When individuals are appointed based on political connections rather than competence, it discourages capable professionals from entering public service or pursuing careers in areas vital to economic development. This limits the talent pool available for driving economic growth and innovation, hindering the overall competitiveness and performance of the state. Moreover, cadre deployment often leads to the politicization of state institutions, where loyalty to political parties takes precedence over national interests. This undermines institutional independence, impartiality, and the rule of law. It creates an environment where decision-making is driven by political considerations rather than sound economic
policies, hindering long-term planning and sustainable development. The consequences of cadre deployment extend beyond the public sector. State-owned enterprises, which play a critical role in economic development, are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of cadre deployment. Inefficient management, lack of accountability, and political interference often result in financial losses, decreased productivity, and reduced competitiveness of these enterprises. This not only hampers economic growth but also puts a burden on public finances, as governments are forced to provide financial bailouts or subsidies to keep these enterprises afloat (Croucamp, 2019).

To mitigate the economic damage inflicted by cadre deployment, it is crucial for African states to prioritize merit-based appointments, establish transparent and accountable recruitment processes, and invest in the professional development of public servants. Strengthening institutions, promoting good governance, and fostering a culture of meritocracy will be key in unlocking Africa's economic potential and ensuring sustainable development for the continent.

5 CONCLUSION

When mapping state capacity in Africa, two important dimensions to consider are professionalism and reach. Professionalism refers to the competence, efficiency, and integrity of government institutions and public servants. It involves factors such as the quality of governance, adherence to rule of law, transparency, accountability, and the absence of corruption. Professionalism determines how well the state functions and delivers services to its citizens. Reach refers to the extent to which the state is able to extend its presence, authority, and services throughout its territory. It encompasses the ability to enforce laws, maintain security, provide basic services like education and healthcare, and promote economic development. Reach is crucial for ensuring effective governance and meeting the needs of citizens in all regions of a country. By assessing these two dimensions, the study provided insights into the overall state capacity in Africa. However, it's important to note that state capacity can vary widely across countries and regions within Africa due to diverse historical, political, and socioeconomic factors.
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