

Assessment of Service Delivery Reform Implementation on Land and Tenure Services: The Case of Adama City Land Development and Management office, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to assess the extent to which service delivery reform objectives have been translated into reality in Adama city Land Development and Management Sector Office, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia. Descriptive survey research designs with quantitative and qualitative methods were employed for the study. Primary data were collected using self administered, structured questionnaire from randomly selected 81 service providers (workers) and 89 service users (Customers). Moreover, by using availability sampling technique, seven leaders were selected and interviewed. The data collected from respondents were tailed, tabulated and organized in a systematic form. Statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation and t-test were used to analyze quantitative data. Qualitative data analysis was transcribed and discussed thematically. The results of the study were in agreement with the literature that reform is necessary for improved service delivery. However, the negative outcomes of the implementation of service delivery reforms by Adama City Land Development and Management Office outweigh the positive results. Specifically, the manifestation of culture that permits corrupt behaviour; eroded commitment by political leaders to fight corruption; lack of transparency, and weak concern for customer seriously affect the successful implementation practices in the sector office. Likewise, leaders and employees were not accountable for their decisions and actions. Therefore, the study recommends, the sector office should enhance goal-oriented competencies of service providers, apply code of conduct for public sector ethics and pragmatic anti-corruption strategies. Further, the Government needs to review the existing labour proclamation with the view of attaining sector mission and service delivery objectives.

Key words: Implementation, Service delivery, Service Reform, Reform Objectives

1. INTRODUCTION

Reform is a systematic change in the administrative system. According to Corkey (1995) reform is a deliberate plan to change public bureaucracies; injection of new ideas and new people in a new combination of tasks and relationships into the policy and administrative process and coping with the uncertainties and rapid changes taking place in the organizational environment. Reforms are designed to lead to more efficient, effective and responsive administration (Ntukamanzina, 1998). The emphasis on systemic and sustainable is to underline that the desired reforms bring about enduring changes in the behavior of public sector actors in the interests of better outcomes for citizens (Pollitt, 2003). The desire for reforms came as a result of a combination of a number of factors. These included: public dissatisfaction with service delivery; growing demand for citizen participation in decision-making; and disappointment with the standard of public sector resource management (Njunwa, 2005). Further, prevalence of challenges, such as deep corruption, bureaucratic hurdles, lengthy procedures, the need to increase transparency, accessibility, efficiency, and accountability also contributed significantly to create pressure for change and reform (Rob & Richards, 2007).

Chronologically, public sector reform in Africa passed through a series of phases. The first-generation civil service reform program, which was taken place in the 1980s to the early 1990s, was more of quantitative instead and targeted on macroeconomic stability. Fundamentally, it was a structural modification orientation. In this phase, concepts of new public management are put at the center of the process with large-scale donor loan conditionality. The purpose of Structural Adjustment Program was assumed to make public institutions efficient using expenditure minimizing and control actions, mainly in rationalizing the government machinery, retrenching redundant staff, divesting non-core processes, removing non-functional work force from the payroll, solidifying employment and accepting measures to control wage bill and extra personnel based expenditures (Batley, 1999). However, the first generation of civil service reform program was commonly acknowledged by the problems of absenteeism, low morale, poor capacity and

politicization of the civil service; however, it has not succeeded in dealing with livelihood concerns of civil servants (Ayee, 2008). Consequently, African governments tried to look for the 2nd generation civil service reform program.

The second phase of the Civil Service Reform Program (Mid 1990s - 2000) was celebrated by dealing with the difficulties occurred throughout the first generation. This phase was characterized by capacity building program to ensure performance and effective civil service management. The third phase (2000 to date) began after the publication of World Development Report 1997, which targeted on the responsive and effective service delivery system. As a result, for public servants, it strives to take into consideration the opinions and demands of their clients and the public, to design their own performance development schemes that occupies service delivery standards monitored by both responsible public managers and public servants (Ayee, 2008). The third-generation civil service reform program permitted civil servants to fit into a set of self-appraisal exercises. It also appears with performance enhancement plans, which would then form the foundation of a performance agreement with the government.

According to Westcott (1999) the objectives of civil service reform (CSR) is to reorient the Civil Service into a dynamic, efficient and accountable apparatus for public service delivery, which is constructed on the ethos and values of integrity, impartiality and neutrality. Besides, the reform is designed to rearrange the administration of the civil service in order to make it more reliable and meet the demands of the society (World Bank, 2002).

The civil service reform program in Ethiopia, as one of the National Capacity Building Program, was initiated in 1997 in response to weak administrative system, challenges encountered in the public service delivery system, unequivocally important for the overall development of the country. Further, in 2001, the civil service reform programs were redesigned under the capacity building programs with five sub programs. The sub-

programs were: Top Management Systems (TMS); the Human Resource Management (HRM); Service Delivery (SD); Expenditure Management and Control (EMC); and Ethics sub-program. In 2010 the Ministry of Capacity Building was replaced by Ministry of Civil Service to run the civil service reform programs. Then, Ministry of Civil Service revised civil service reform programs in April 2013 (Ministry of Civil service, 2013).

In addition, the Government has moved quickly to prepare the civil service reform program for its “full implementation” across all regions and levels of government. In this phase the government launched of a “special program” of Performance and Service Delivery Improvement Policy (PSIP) in priority Ministries, Agencies, and Bureaus designed to deepen the implementation of performance management (Getachew and Common, 2006: 7).

Following the implementation for the improvement in the efficiency and performance of service delivery, the government adopts various performance management tools like: decentralization, Human Resource Management and Public Finance Management (PFM); Business Process Re-engineering (BPR), Balanced Scorecard (BSC), Citizens Charter, and the Development Change Army in public institutions. However, study conducted by Abdu (2013) revealed that, service deliveries as a governance practice of public institutions are found to be poor for the customers and the employees. Further, numerous researches (such as: Yosef, 2011; Zemelak, 2014; Gebre and Melesse, 2014; Henok, 2017; and Feleke, 2017) were conducted on the status of service delivery improvement in different Regional and Federal public institutions. The study results revealed that service deliveries were not executed in the speed that it was desired. Similarly, informally gathered information and 2018/19 and 2019/20 evaluative reports of the Adama City Administration also verify the ineffectiveness of Urban Land Development and Management sector office. Besides, researcher personally observed that there is long queue of customers for service requests and get responses. Above and beyond, a lot oral and written compliant and appeal were submitted to the sector office, however, no one

make a real difference and try to dry out the source of the problems. In order to improve land and tenure related services with new blood, the top management of Adama city Administration have tried to appoint new experts and leaders to the positions, however, the magnitude of the difficulties still escalating. Further, to the knowledge of the researcher, minimal attention has been given to assessing the performance of service delivery improvement objectives and its challenges in the selected sector office. Moreover, the researcher believes that the process requires continuous research

In order to make the study more manageable, out of the five civil service reform sub-programs, the study was delimited to service delivery sub program. As stated in the reform document, the main objective of service delivery sub-program is to achieve results for clients in terms of quality, quantity, timeliness and cost of service (FDRE Ministry of Civil Service, 2013). Moreover, the reform initiatives aimed to basically transform the public service into modern, effective and efficient system that allows government to attain the vision and policy strategies of the country (ibid). The study considered only a two-year (2018/19 to 2019/20) evidences on readiness, implementation practices, improvement observed and challenge faced during the implementation process.

The significance of a study indicates the importance and implications of the study for professional literature, practitioners, researchers and concerned stakeholders in addressing the concerns and aspirations (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). Hence, the study results may provide valuable information for public servants in the city administration in general Land Development and Management office in particular to know the gaps between the actual service provisions and users' satisfaction. This research might also be useful not only in enhancing further research in the area but also of practical importance in terms of increasing the effectiveness of the service delivery in the work place and help those engaged in policy development and implementation.

2. METHODOLOGY

To investigate how well the objectives of service delivery improvement have been attained by Adama city Land Development and Management Office, the study used descriptive survey research design. To get quality and appropriate information, both qualitative and quantitative data from primary and secondary sources were used. By using the formula set by Yamane (1996) ($n=N/1+N(e)^2$) out of 103 (69 male and 34 female) 81 employees and out of 118 average daily service users 89 customers were selected and included in the study. Moreover, central office head and six process owners from six sub-cities were purposively selected for interviews. Finally, to facilitate the interpretation of the results, both primary and secondary data were organized and presented through different statistical tools like tables mean, standard deviation and t-test.

In the discussion of the results, the variable value was defined by utilizing the width of class interval as follows: Interval width of each level = the highest score – the lowest score interval number divided by highest score = $5-1/5 = 0.80$. Therefore, the result of the data analysis regarding each variable was defined using the following classification: (5) = 4.21-5.00; (4) = 3.41-4.20; (3) = 2.61-3.40; (2) = 1.81-2.60; (1) = 1.00 – 1.80 (Adopted from Lind, Marchal, &Wathon, 2003).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Readiness for Implementation

As an organization-level construct, institutional readiness for successful reform implementation refers to the commitment of organizational members' and shared belief in their collective capability to do. Moreover, it varies as a function of how many organizational members value the reform and how favorably they appraise three key determinants of implementation capability: task demands, resource availability, and situational factors. When organizational readiness for reform is high, organizational members are more likely to initiate reform, exert greater effort, exhibit greater persistence, and display more cooperative behavior. The result is more effective implementation

(Weiner, 2009). From this, it is possible to say that the success of any reform implementation depends on the adequate preparation made by the organizations. To this end, the first objective of the research aimed to identify the existence of enabling environment for the improvement of service delivery in Adama City Land Development and Management sector office.

Table 1: Enabling Environment for Reform Implementation

No	Readiness for implementation	Mean	SD
1	Presence of supportive technology	2.21	1.03
2	Availability of required resources	2.59	1.12
3	Establishment of pragmatic and results-oriented framework	2.56	1.17
4	Clarification of reform objectives to the service users	1.94	0.83
5	Existence of clear administrative structures	2.56	1.31
6	Establishment of a code of conduct for sector ethics	1.17	1.35
7	Existence of pragmatic anti-corruption strategies	1.34	0.63
8	Identification of customer's need and expectations	1.23	0.63
9	Setting quality standards	1.31	0.72
10	Establishing non-threatening images by the leaders	1.67	0.87
	Aggregate Mean	1.86	0.96

N=81 (Service Providers) ; Source : Field Data , 2021

As can be seen from Table 1 above, responses given by service providers on the extent of preparation made by Adama City Land Development and Management sector office on service deliver improvement were nearly closer to the aggregate mean (Mean = 1.86) which is low. Related with this, the 1st and 2nd issues raised for respondents were the presence of supportive technology and availability of required resources. In this regard, the data show that it has not been adequately available (Mean = 2.21, 2.59). Result of items 3, in Table 1, also, shows that the selected office did not properly develop efficient pragmatic and results-oriented framework (Mean = 2.56). As a result, the sector office has been categorized as inefficient in enduring changes in the behavior of sector actors in the interests of better outcomes for citizens. Moreover, the respondents replied that the sector office did not establish clear administrative structures (Mean = 2.56) and code of conduct for public sector ethics (Mean = 1.17), extend pragmatic anti-corruption strategies (Mean = 1.34) and setting quality standards (Mean = 1.31) and weak in clarifying objectives of civil service delivery improvement objectives to service users (Mean = 1.94).

Success of an organizational reform rests in the hands of the reform leader. People in a given organization look up to the reform leader and expects him/her to plan, communicate, implement and guide in order for the reform initiative to be successful.

Besides, leaders are expected to craft a mental picture of a state that does not exist yet. Lastly, as visionaries, leaders should align the reform with organizational vision, mission, strategy, and individual goals (Adair, 2004). Concomitant to this, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which non-threatening images has been created. The data analysis shows low result (Mean= 1.67). This implies leaders are weak in building confidence among service users and service providers

3.2 Implementation Practices

In Table 2 below, an attempt has been made to assess the extent of the implementation of civil service reform, particularly, service delivery improvement held in Land Development and Management office. Questionnaires regarding the above issue were distributed to a total of 81 sample employees. Accordingly, respondents rate their response on each item as follows.

Table 2: Service Delivery Practices

No	Responsibilities executed by sector office	Mean	SD
1	Digitalize operations	1.92	.791
2	Enhance transparency in service delivery	2.18	.721
3	Enhance engagement of stakeholders in service delivery improvement	2.05	.773
4	Link promotion system with service delivery improvements	2.17	.736
5	Exercise procedures for complaint handling	1.86	.782
6	Combat corruption	1.62	.651
7	Consolidate system that solve problems	1.89	.767
8	Improve functionality needed to produce public value	1.71	.760
9	Strengthen customer focus culture	1.48	.707
	Aggregate Mean	1.69	0.67

N=81 (Service Providers) Source: Field Data, 2021

As can be seen from, Table 2, Adama city land development and management office did not sufficiently digitalize operation, improve transparency and accountability in service delivery and enhance engagement of stakeholders in service delivery improvement with

mean 1.92, 2.18 and 2.05 respectively. As to the sample employees' response on linking promotion with service delivery improvement, most of them rated as low (Mean= 2.17). Also, the sector office inadequately handles complaints, combat corruption and solve problems, mean 1.86, 1.62, and 1.89 respectively. Moreover, sector office was unresponsive to public values (Mean = 1.71) and weak in strengthening customer focus culture (Mean= 1.48). The standard deviation ranges from 0.651 to 0.791 which is almost nearly closer to the aggregate mean (1.69) standard deviation score (0.67). This is implying that the consistency and uniformity of the data gathered were maintained. In this regard, interview responses of sub-cities leaders revealed that “the poor provision of quality service in the sector office was related to incapability of the service providers (interviewee 5) “inefficient organization, communication and controlling system” (Interviewee 4); inefficient and ineffective decision-making processes (Interviewee 1); mismanagement of staff and weak accountability of sector leaders and employees (Interviewee 2).

3.3 Service Delivery Improvements

According to Peters and Pierre (2004), the successful execution of government policies and strategies is becoming the anxiety of any modern governance. Thus, it needs a capable civil service with the characteristics of merit-based and depoliticized, sound structure, right-sized and well-paid, accountable and relatively corruption free, relatively autonomous, and representative and well-trained, action oriented and relatively open matters. Concomitant with this, 6 questions were posed to two groups of respondents (81 Service Providers and 89 Service users) with the intention of identifying the degree of service delivery objectives were attained.

Table 3 : Extent of attainments of Service Deliver Objectives

Source: Field Data, 2021

The reforms aimed at improving time management in service delivery. As depicted in Table 4, item 1 above, improvement on the provision of timely service by service

No	Extent of improvement on the:	Service Users (N=89)	Service Providers (N=81)	Grand Mean	t- value	Sig.
		Mean	Mean			
1	Provision of timely service	1.55	1.81	1.68	27.38	0.000
2	Speed of service Delivery	1.65	1.83	1.74	19.396	0.000
3	Operations that are relatively free of corruption	1.41	1.65	1.53	24.721	0.000
4	Accountability by service providers	1.22	1.72	1.47	23.742	0.000
5	Institutionalization of a culture of transparency	1.31	1.65	1.48	22.621	0.000
6	Respect of dignity when serving the public	1.33	1.85	1.59	26.087	0.000

provider was reported as very low (Mean= 1.68). This implies that the reforms have failed to attain one key objective, which is effective time management in service delivery. This can be explained together with the question of speed of service delivery as one of the reasons for delayed service delivery. Item 2, speed of service delivery, was similarly rated as very as Low (Mean = 1.74).

The assumption that public servants provide service without soliciting corruption, nepotism and favoritism remains elusive. Item 3, in Table 3, intend to examine degree of operations that are relatively free of corruption. The computed mean value (1.53) clearly shows that it is very low. This implies that the civil service reform was not helping to address the problem of corruption, nepotism and favoritism in service delivery. This also indicates that corruption difficulties remain a problem in sector office and is a stumbling block to improve service delivery in the city.

The reforms also aimed at improving the level of accountability by public servants to their customers in service delivery. As can be seen from item 4 of Table 3, the vast

majority of respondents (service users and service providers) confirmed that the level of accountability in the public-sector in-service delivery is in the range of low (mean =1.47). More efforts are still needed in order to realize it.

The other objectives of reform are aiming at improving service delivery by ensuring that there is an institutionalization of a culture of transparency and giving feedback to service seekers stakeholders in all public sector offices in the city. The assumption that public servants are transparent and often give feedback to customers remains less valid. The general responses from respondents were low (Mean:1.48). This implies that the civil service reform has not helped to institutionalize a culture of transparency and giving feedback to stakeholders in service delivery. This also indicates that there is still a culture of top down or supply side driven and not demand side service culture in public institutions. Moreover, the reform aimed at improving service delivery by ensuring that the respect of law, human rights and dignity when serving the public. In this regard, responses summarized from respondents in item 6 of Table 4 are very low (Mean: 1.59). This implies the service delivery was not shows significant improvement and weak in institutionalizing a culture of respect of law, observing dignity and human rights in service delivery.

The t-test in all the six cases P value is less than 0.05 implying statistically significant difference on continuous improvement of service delivery in Adama city land development and management sector office. These perception differences may occur due to judgment dissimilarities among service users and service providers on what, how and why to provision services (Interviewee1). Moreover, there were no clearly established formalities and procedures for service delivery.

3.4 Implementation Challenges

In order to survive and thrive and to adapt to the changing conditions, all organizations need to be reformed. Unfortunately, due to the existence of different barriers, every reform

process cannot lead to the expected results (Yukl, 2006). Concomitant with this, questions related to factors hindering the effective implementation of service deliver improvement reform were posed to sample 81 service providers.

Table 4: Rating on factors affecting civil service delivery implementation

No	Implementation challenges	Mean	SD
1	Service providers lack required service delivery competence	4.09	0.84
2	Service providers lack political neutrality	3.87	0.81
3	too much bureaucracy and red tape of the system	4.68	1.21
4	Service providers are weak in making service delivery more customer-centric	3.99	0.96
5	Poor time management	4.24	0.61
6	Service providers inadequately play implementation role	3.80	1.05
7	Corruption behavior of many sector employees	4.02	0.99
8	Sector office did not properly clarify reform objectives for their customers	4.25	1.27
9	loss of sprit of Unity	4.19	0.86
10	Weak linkage between costs and reform outputs and outcomes	4.32	1.29

N=81 (Service Providers) Source: Field Data, 2021

A practice of service deliver improvement requires some special skills, knowledge and attitudes because the reform process basically emphasizes on the provision of efficient and effective service delivery. Therefore, sector office administrators and employees must have required competence and commitment that enable them to satisfy their client.

As depicted in Table 4 above, most of the respondents replied that service providers in the sector office lack required service deliver competence (Mean: 4:09) and political neutrality (Mean= 3.87). Furthermore, service providers are weak in making service delivery more customer-centric (Mean = 3.99). Moreover, too much bureaucracy and red tape (Mean = 4.68), poor time management of public employees in service delivery (Mean= 4.24), poor working environment to public servants (Mean = 3.80) , corruption behavior to some public employees (Mean = 4.02) , inadequate clarification of reform objectives to their customers (Mean = 4.25) , loss of the esprit de corps (Mean= 4.19) ,

and weak linkage between costs and reform outputs and outcomes (Mean = 4.32) affect proper implementation of service delivery improvement reforms.

The information drawn through open-ended responses also confirmed the above finding. They asserted a lack of surveys on time, quality, quantity, cost evaluation standards of service delivery; weak internal and external control mechanisms such as internal audits, code of ethics, affect the proper implementation of the reform program and the attainment of reform objectives.

As it has been reflected in the interview part conducted with central and sub city process owners, the inefficiency or ineffectiveness service delivery in selected sector were due to “incompetence of bureaucrats to align reform objectives with sector mission and organizational resources (Interviewee 3); lack of sense of belongingness and accountability (Interviewee 1); weak communication (Interviewee 1). Moreover, service delivery reform program was not adequately adapted in the sector office by considering context organizational readiness and target groups (Interviewee 7). Further, implementation of the reform relies upon the work and collaboration of numerous stakeholders, however, the sector office leaders failed to facilitate coalitions across multiple relevant sector offices in the city (Interviewee 6).

4.CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study were in agreement with the literature that reforms are relevant and necessary for improved service delivery. However, from the findings of the research derived from the data presented and analyzed, it may be concluded that the sector office not properly create conducive environment for smooth implementation of reforms. Functionally, the sector office rarely produces public value and better service delivery. Moreover, there was still a delay in decision-making. The reform also suffered from the slow pace of improvement in quality service delivery. Doing so is denying the customer’s right to get timely and quality service. The reform process also lacked enforcement

mechanisms to become acquainted with reform objective and ensure achievement of the goals. Furthermore, civil service managers (Sector head and process owners) were not held accountable for performance. To overcome, existing challenge and achieve reform objectives and to enhance the availability, accessibility and quality of services, the sector office should effectively participate the service users in setting their priorities and in the planning process. Moreover, there is a need for more commitment and political will from both bureaucratic and political leadership for successful reforms. Moreover, the sector office should enhance goal-oriented competencies of service providers, improve morale and apply code of conduct for public sector ethics and pragmatic anti- corruption strategies. The quality of service delivered is critically dependent on the accountability mechanism in terms of how the relationship works. Hence, the sector office should establish practical accountability mechanism in Delivery of Services. Adama city administration should give utmost emphasis on adapting technological advancements, train and empower employees and administrators to modernize the process. Urban Land Development and Management Sector Office should identify the source of grievance rather than routine handling and solving cases. Further, the Government should revise the existing labour law with the view of attaining sector mission and service delivery improvement objectives.

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