A Critical Analysis of the Conceptualization and Implementation of Citizens' Charters: Case Studies from UK, India, South Africa and Ethiopia

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Abstract

Citizens' quest for efficient and effective public service delivery, the economic and fiscal pressures in the 1970s and early 80s and the revival of new right politics necessitated to change the way public sector was functioning in western countries. Management ideas were proliferated, packaged and marketed by international management consultants, donor advocacy and lending conditions of international financial institution. Citizens' Charter (CC) approach to service delivery is one of the systems introduced to ensure quality service to citizens and foster transparency and accountable among service providers. Recently, Ethiopia introduced the charter approach to public service delivery, but needs much to learn from countries like UK, India and South Africa who have a cumulative experience in the area. This study aims to critically analyse the conceptualization and implementation of Citizens' Charter. It also provides case study analyses of United Kingdom, India, South Africa and lesson drawn for Ethiopia. Accordingly, the challenges are conceptual, bad record track and pick-drop culture of reform tools, the top-down approach or lack of adequate consultation of stakeholders and lack of implementation capacity.

Keywords: Citizens' Charter, Transparency, Accountability, Service Delivery, Ethiopia

I.   Introduction

Traditional system of administration failed to ascertain efficient and effective goods and service delivery. Extensive body of public administration literatures argue that traditional administrative system is ineffective, insensitive, inefficient, and often hostile to the very people to they are supposed to serve (Hood, 1991; Pollitt, 1991; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Peters, 1996; Osborne and Plastrik, 1997; Rhodes,1997). This veracity together with the quest to promote productive and allocative efficiency and maintain public agencies responsiveness to the demand of citizens necessitated restructuring and reshaping of public sector in the last three or more decades.

As such a set of different management techniques and practices collectively called New Public Management (NPM) have been firstly adopted by English-speaking nations: New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States and then to reform administration and management in government in the 80s. This fact later became a point of critics that NPM is only practicable in Anglo-American context. However, many OECD countries carried out public administration transformation based on the Anglo-American approach (Larbi, 1999; Pollitt, 2000; Toress, 2003). It has been also accused of erasing the traditional "commitment to public service" aspect from careers in government or it has undermined the accountability of public services to their communities and it has failed to deliver the promised efficiency and effectiveness of public services. Some critics of the movement are saying that, like most management fads, NPM has run its course or will do so shortly (Lynn, 1998; Pollitt, 2000; McNabb, 2009).

The major impetus for the change in public sector during the last three or four decades attributes to various developments in the world: the citizens' quest for efficient and effective public service delivery, the economic and fiscal pressures on governments in the 70s and early 80s and the revival of new right politics (*'Reganomics' and 'Thatcherism'*). The proliferation of management ideas generated, packaged and marketed by international management consultants, donor advocacy and lending conditions of international financial institutions, notably the IMF and the World Bank, the spread of global markets related to financial integration and liberalization and the resultant competition and the growth and use of new information technology are the major drivers of restructuring the public sector, and rethinking and reshaping the role of government (Larbi, 2003; Jahangir, 2008).

NPM have also evolved along the lines of the New Public Service (NPS) being a mutually reinforcing and normative model of managing service delivery in the public sector. NPS is beyond the usual quality service delivery; it suggests citizens to be effective and responsible where as administrators should be responsive to the voices of Citizens. On the other hand, values such as efficiency and productivity should be placed in the larger context of democracy, community and the public interest (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2007).Client-oriented, mission-driven, quality-enhanced and participatory management to heighten efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery is fashion of the day. Satisfaction of the needs of the citizens is therefore core element of

the public sector reform, and it led to private sector practices initiated mechanisms which focus on the quality of the services to be delivered to the citizens (Jahangir, 2008). The aforementioned developments led to the inception of Citizen's Charter (CC) in UK by the conservative government of John Major in the late 1980s. It aimed at enhancing standards of service delivery and making governance more transparent and accountable and became operational in 1991.

As an effort to respond to growing demands for accountability, transparency and efficiency on the one hand, and to pressures from the community for more and better services, on the other, UK developed CC. And, Several countries have formulated their own: Australia (Service Charter, 1997), Belgium (La Charte des utilisateurs des Services publics,1992), Canada (Service Standards Initiative, 1995), France (Charte des services publics, 1992), India (Citizen's Charter, 1997), Jamaica (Citizen's Charter ,1994), Malaysia (Client Charter, 1993), Portugal (The Quality Charter in Public Services, 1993), Spain (The Quality Observatory, 1992), Bangladesh (Citizen's Charter, 2007), South Africa (People First, 1997), Sweden (Citizens' Service, 1998), Tanzania (Customer Service Charter, 2001), US (Customers First, 1994) and most recently Ethiopia (Citizens' Charter, 2012). Others including Argentina, Costarica, Hongkong, Namibia and Samao have followed similar trend (OECD, 1996; Toress, 2003; Drewry, 2005; CGG, 2008; MoCS, 2012). However, Drewry noticed that actual contents of charters and the motives for introducing them differ from one country to another. In some countries there has been substantial motivation to improve performance; in others the main goal seems to have been to justify government performance; while in some cases a major driving force has been pressure from aid donors.

The study aims to review three countries' (UK, India and South Africa) Citizens' Charter experiences and draw lesson for Ethiopia. Theoretical foundations of charter approach for improved public service delivery are briefly described followed by review of experiences. Finally, lessons drawn for Ethiopia and the way forward are presented.

II.   Theoretical basis of Citizens' Charter
Good Governance

The concept *good governance* appeared into development agenda by World Bank twenty years ago. In the 1989 World Bank Study "Sub-Saharan Africa – from Crisis to Sustainable Growth", good governance is indicated as a public service that is efficient, a judicial system that is reliable, and an administration that is accountable to the public (World Bank, 1989). In the 1992 report entitled "Governance and Development", the World Bank defined good governance as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development".

Different literatures of the donor world have tried hard to identify what elements constitute good governance and/or distinctly put the basic features of good governance. In the 1994 report entitled "Governance: The World Bank's Experience", the four elements of good governance are *Public-sector management, Accountability, Legal framework for development, and Transparency and information*. On the other hand, the Asian Development Bank (1995) has identified: *Accountability, Participation, Predictability* and *Transparency* as basic elements of good governance. The African Development Bank and African Development Fund (1999) on its part focused on *Accountability, Transparency, Combating corruption, Participation Legal and judicial reform* in support of good governance in the continent. In addition, the policy document entitled "Governance for Sustainable Human Development" of UNDP (1997) essential characteristics of good governance comprises *Participation, Rule of law, Transparency, Consensus orientation, Equity, Effectiveness and efficiency, Accountability* and *Strategic vision*. Furthermore, Graham, Amos and Plumptre (2003) identified five principles of good governance: legitimacy and voice, direction, performance, accountability and fairness, and linked them with the UNDP's features of good governance.

The above paragraph reveals that accountability, transparency, legal framework/rule of law/ predictability and participation are common elements that constitute good governance. According to Torres (2003), the major driving force for different countries to formulate citizens'/ service charters is citizens' pursuit for transparency, accountability and responsiveness. Besides, efficient public service delivery is what the 1992 World Bank's document on Africa put as features of good governance. CGG (2008) indicates that good governance is the technology, and Citizens' Charter is the tool. Thus, it is clear that CC is an initiative, if not the only, that lays its foundation in and promotes good governance.

The New Public Management

The term "New Public Management" (NPM) was coined in 1989 by Christopher Hood to retrospectively characterize the "quite similar administrative doctrines" of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and (with a different emphasis) the United States of the 1970s and 1980s (Hood, 1989). The classic formulation NPM comprised seven doctrines: a focus on *hands-on* and *entrepreneurial management*, as opposed to the traditional bureaucratic focus of the public administrator; explicit *standards* and *measures of*

performance; an emphasis on *output controls*; the importance of the *disaggregation* and *decentralization* of public services a shift to the promotion of *competition* in the provision of public services; a stress on *private sector styles of management* and their superiority; and the promotion of *discipline* and *parsimony in resource allocation* (Osborne and McLaughlin, 2002).

NPM has variously been defined as a vision, an ideology or a bundle of particular management approaches and techniques, based on ideas generated in the private sector and imported into the public sector (Hood, 1991). NPM also derives from the economics approach which has its theoretical foundation in public choice, transaction cost and principal-agent theories. These public sector reform themes are based on ideas of market, competition, contracting, transparency and promoting efficiency in public service delivery.

NPM theory is an influential model for public sector for effective service delivery; encouraging government to be more efficient and responsive. It basically emphasizes on efficiency, centrality of the citizen or customer, as well as accountability for results. As CC is keen to the efficiency, accountability and transparency in public service delivery, NPM has therefore its own finger print in the development of the concept of Citizens' Charter and related initiatives.

The New Public Service (NPS)

Having its root in theories of democratic relationship, models of community and civil society and organizational humanism and discourse theory, NPS model was proposed by Janet and Robert Denhardt of Arizona State University in the late 1990s. This model is in response to the dominance of NPM. According to the proponents, NPS refers to "a set of ideas about public administration in the governance system that places citizens' in the center." Elements in NPS model is somehow mutually reinforcing with NPM .But, there are differences to who are public servants responsive? (Citizen vs. Customer), the role of government (serving vs. steering), approaches to accountability (market driven vs. law, community values, and professional codes) and others. Principles of NPS (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000) include: the role of government is not to steer but to serve citizens; the public interest is the aim, not by- product; think strategically, act democratically; serve Citizens, not customers; accountability is not simple; value people, just not productivity; value Citizenship and public service above entrepreneurship.

CC initiatives began almost a decade before the introduction of NPS. This fact, however, may not deny the role of NPS model in promoting the elements of CC. Specifically, the attention given to value citizens, the accountability to community values, shared public interest i.e. citizen-centric administration.

III.   Experiences of UK, India and South Africa
- **United Kingdom**

When you google the phrase Citizens' Charter, you get more than 2.1 million results. Following UK's first initiative, many countries embarked on designing and implementing charter approach to efficient and effective service delivery. Literatures reveals that the first initiative for CC happened in the early 1990s in UK under the then Prime Minister John Major. However, at local level (Harlow and York) and in Inland Revenue, the origin of CC dates back to the late 1980s**.** John Major's speech made to *The Economist Conference on the Streamlining of the Public Sector on 27th January 1992* divulges the reasons to launch CC initiative:

> *"The Citizen's Charter came about because I was consistently receiving the same strong message. That it was high time to raise standards of performance in our public services. That was the demand of the consumer. And it was also the wish of those who work in the public sector themselves. They had the skills, the dedication, and the enthusiasm to do it. All they needed was the freedom and the encouragement to try out new ideas. The Citizen's Charter gives them the chance."**John Major (1992)***

The first six major principles of UK's CC were (i) The setting, monitoring and publication of explicit standards, (ii) Information for the user, and openness in the availability of that information, (iii) Choice wherever practicable, plus regular and systematic consultation with users, (iv) Courtesy and helpfulness, (v) Well-publicized and easy-to-use complaints procedures and (vi) Value for money.

According to Parrado (2006), the Charter standards were often too vague to be meaningful and largely devised without consulting with the full range of stakeholders. Besides, in-spite of the commitment to 'non-discrimination' there was little regard to the needs of those who do not use the services, such as ethnic minorities. The 'customer' rhetoric of citizen's charters sometimes created a 'money-back' mentality and even misuse of financial redress. Citizen's Charter programme was rather confused—promises contained in the charters were often vague and ambitious, confounding the aim of defining a tangible set of entitlements to public services that people could readily understand and use (House of Commons, 2008). Drewery (2005) also noted that UK's CC early challenges include lack of Bill of Rights (though CC talked a lot about rights), nor a Freedom of Information Act. It comprised a mélange of aims and exhortations, rendered more amorphous by the diversity of the services and institutions to which it applied.

Tony Blair's Labor government relaunched CC under the new label 'Service First' program in 1998 and elaborated the six principles in to nine: (i) Set standards of service, (ii) Be open and provide full information, (iii) Consult and involve, (iv) Encourage access and the promotion of choice, (v) Treat all fairly, (vi) Put things right when they go wrong, (vii) Use resources effectively, (viii) Innovate and improve and (ix) Work with other providers (Beale and Pollitt, 1994; Toress, 2003; Center for Good Governance, 2008). The programme was eventually dismissed and integrated the 'customer service' idea into the Charter Mark Programme. Charters still play an important role for public transport, education, hospitals and housing but they are now on voluntary basis (Parrado, 2006).

UK Parliament (2008) stated that the Charter Mark was an integral part of the Citizen's Charter programme. It was launched in 1992 as an award for organizations that had achieved excellent customer service in the public sector. To win a Charter Mark the organization has to demonstrate excellence against the following nine Charter Mark criteria which correspond to the principles of public service delivery, namely, (1) Performance Standards; (2) Information and openness; (3) Choice and Consultation; (4) Courtesy and helpfulness; (5) Putting things right; (6) Value for money; (7) Use satisfaction; (8) Improvements in service quality; and (9) Planned improvements and innovations (DARPG, 2013). In the first year of its operation there were 35 Charter Mark award holders; ten years later, in 2002, this figure had grown to 949. At present there are around 1,600 organizations with a Charter Mark, with some 400,000 people working within those organizations. This represents about seven per cent of the public sector.

A review made by Bernard Herdan in 2006 revealed that Charter Mark holders were generally very positive about the scheme and its effectiveness in raising service standards. Nevertheless, the review concluded that its impact in raising standards across the board had been blunted by low take-up and low public recognition of the scheme. The review also noted a perception, among those that were aware of it, that the Charter Mark was out of date and old-fashioned's report. An official final validity date of Charter Mark was 30 June 2011 and application was officially closed in 2008 when the new Customer Service Excellence Standard became sole award for customer service in the public sector. Customer Service Excellence Standard is made up of 5 criteria with 57 elements in total. Assessment is carried out via a desktop review by an authorized assessor followed by an onsite visit lasting one to three days (sometimes more) depending on the size of the department or organization being assessed.

- **India**

India is one of the countries who followed the foot step of UK in designing and implementing CC. In 1994 consumer rights activists for the first time drafted a charter for health service providers at a meeting of the Central Consumer Protection Council in Delhi.

Two years later in 1996, the Prime Minister initiated the CC program on a national level. The Citizen's Charter initiative in India saw fruition on the state level at a conference of Chief Ministers held in May 1997 where the "Action Plan for Effective and Responsive Government at the Centre and the State Levels" was adopted, paving the way for the formulation of charters among ministries, departments and agencies that have significant public interaction. As of June 2007, the DARPG updated their website to list 829 Citizen's Charters, with Central ministries having 118 charters and State & Union Territories having 711. Indian government's Right of Citizens for time bound delivery of goods and services and rederessal of their grievance bill of 2011, chapter III article 4(1) stipulates that every public authority shall publish CC within six months of the commencement of the act.

However, an initial evaluation in 2003 of citizen's charter development show lack of stakeholder consultation, which could have resulted to lack of improvement in client satisfaction and quality of services provided. In 2007 after ten years of implementation, the Public Affairs Centre carried out a comprehensive national review of charters in India mainly to evaluate the quality of the charters and its impact in increasing transparency in the public service. The review showed that no charter in India contain the essential components of an internationally accepted charter. Generally, end-users and civil society organizations were not consulted in the development of the charters (Public Affairs Centre, 2007).

An assessment commissioned by the government reveals similar results. Charter contains outdated and poor quality service standards (Indian Institute of Public Administration, 2008). Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievance (DARPG) identified the major obstacles of CC implementation: lack of focus attributes to top down approach of the initiative, inadequate training and sensitization of employees and citizens, concerned officers transfers and reshuffle during early formulation and implementation of the charters that hampered the progress, unrealistic standards and conceptual challenges related with CC. On the other hand, DARPG has identified a professional agency to develop an appropriate Charter Mark scheme, and a prototype has been developed by the professional agency and is in the process of validation in identified organizations.

- **South Africa**

Prior to 1994, the apartheid-led government in Republic of South Africa suppressed access to

information in an effort to stifle opposition to its racial supremacy. With the advent of democracy, government emphasized the importance of transparency and sharing of public information. This was reflected in the South African Constitution which stipulates that "transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information" (Public Service Commission, 2008).

Supporting this Constitutional value, in October 1997 the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (the Batho Pele, "*People first",* White Paper) was introduced to put into effect the commitment of the Government to extend services to all citizens, not merely a privileged few. The overall purpose of *Batho Pele* was to transform the Public Service into a people centred institution. The intention was that with the implementation of the principles of the *Batho Pele*, service delivery and accountability by government departments would improve (Job Mokrongo, 2003; Public Service Commission, 2008). The *Batho Pele* principles are *consultation, setting service standards, increasing access, and ensuring courtesy, providing information, openness and transparency, redress and value for money (Republic of South Africa, 1997).*

The "*Batho Pele*" campaign has been renewed and intensified by government during the post 2004 election period. Part of the strategy would be to adhere to election promises made to citizens. However, the then government audit of the initiative indicated that the execution of the correct monitoring and evaluation standards had been a problem; most provinces were reliant on conventional approaches than being innovative to service access; there was lack of integrated access strategy that recognized all new initiatives; lack of "service user relationship training" in response to the persistent public perception that government officials were uncaring. In addition, redress was a problem especially in the social service sectors. The implementation of *Batho Pele* is further hampered by the fact that the public had not understood the principles initially and were not holding Departments accountable.

World Bank (2011) revealed that PSC reports are contrasting each other in a premises that the [2008] report found only five percent of the departments consult on their service standards, however, the earlier report of the commission divulged only 12 percent of interviewed departments perceived that they were performing poorly on consultation.

The PSC also assessed the implementation of the redress principle of *Batho Pele* (PSC, 2006). It was found that 90 percent of national departments and 84 percent of provincial departments had some form of complaints handling system. But many of these systems are not formalized: they do not have written guidelines, record complaints, or monitor and evaluate service delivery. Standards and complaint procedures are not reviewed to determine if the departments' redress and client-care objectives are being met. Only 29 percent of national departments and 41 percent of provincial departments had set standards for redress. Besides, only 29 percent of national departments and 18 percent of provincial departments indicated that they have a specific system to monitor and evaluate performance on redress. Only 27 percent of all departments indicated having a system that allows external stakeholders to assess their performance on redress.

The 2008 PSC report on Openness and Transparency implementation of *Bato pele* principle indicated that the self rated status of the principle is good. But, the study has also shown that the assessed departments lack clear standards, targets and procedure manuals in their implementation of Openness and Transparency (PSC, 2008).

IV.   Lesson drawn for Ethiopia

During the reign of Haile SilassieI the need for modern civil service to promote social and economic development became more evident in Ethiopia. And, manifested via establishment of the Imperial Institute of Public Administration in 1953 and the Ethiopian Personnel Agency by order No. 23/1961 and later amended by Order No.28/1962 (Mihiret and Paulos, 2000). Despite its contribution to socio-economic progress, the then civil service institutions were by and large serving the interest of the monarchy. Citizen's rights and responsibilities to get access to the existing limited services provided by public sectors were not well articulated and made public.

The military junta who came to state power right after the downfall of Emperor Haile Sillassie in 1974 took different reforms. It abolished government organizations which would maintain the Emperor's regime and established new ones. However, the dergue maintained the functioning and management of the already inherited Civil Service, i.e. regulations enacted during Haile Sillassie's reign was kept as governing body of civil service. Inspired by the Soviet's centralized economic planning, the dergue regime denied citizens' quest of efficient and effective public service delivery. The system was full of corrupt practices, highly politicized, routinely by-passed basic laws, lacked conducive environment for service delivery, and inefficient (Mihiret and Paulos, 2000; OPM, 2001).

Since 1991, Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) led government embarked on a series of reform programs hinged on the ideological shift happened in the country from centralized command economy to free market economy. In the early 1990s, the government launched Structural Adjustment program consisting Civil Service Reform Program (CSRP) as one of the components. The phased reform measures have

been taken by the government, and the first phase of the reform (1991-1996) focused on the restructure of government institutions and retrenchment program. The second phase of CSRP was launched in 1996

The Ethio-Eritrean War and the split of EPRDF party in the late 1990s and 2000 were instrumental to impede the implementation of the reform. However, there were major developments since 2001 including articulation of major government policies and strategies: Agriculture Development led Industrialization (ADLI); the Industrial Development Strategy; policy and strategy on good governance and democracy; and the capacity building strategy and programs (14 programs later on in 2002 incorporated in the country's Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP)).

Indeed, Ministry of Capacity Building was established (by Proclamation No. 256/200: 1630-1632) to take care of capacity building activities that had been taken place in fragmented way; and to give centralized leadership and directives to government organizations at various levels. The ministry was later merged with Federal Civil Service Agency in 2010, and named Ministry of Civil Service (Mesfin, 2009; MoFED, 2012).

In 2004 comprising the first six programs (Civil Service Reform, Tax System Reform, Justice System Reform, and District level Decentralization, Urban management capacity building and Information and communication Technology development) under Capacity Building Strategy the PSCAP was emerged. It aimed at improving the scale, efficiency and responsiveness of public service delivery at the federal regional and local level, empower citizens to be participative the course of their own development and promote good governance and accountability (Mesfin, 2009). Later in 2010, establishment of Ministry of Civil Service necessitated revision of Public Sector Capacity Building Program (PSCAP) as per the duties and responsibilities of the ministry (MoFED, 2012).

New implementation arrangement of CSRP became evident with series of awareness creation workshop on change management, performance management, management by objectives, strategic planning management, Business process Re-engineering and Balanced score card among others (Mesfin, 2009). The development of quick wins to improve service delivery across all the government institutions became a fashion. Nonetheless, the major challenge EPRDF faced from the opposition party during the 2005 parliamentary election divulge partly the lack of good governance and the unsolved public grievance in relation to service provision. In fact, the people punished EPRDF using ballot box. This is the reality that happened in Addis Ababa City where the opposition party (Coalition for Unity and Democracy) won the election. Loop et, al. (2002) indicated that there was a clear lack of interagency coordination among government agencies involved in public service production and provision in urban Ethiopia. They also noted that in public-private partnership arrangement provision and production of services are not clearly delineated between government and private sector.

Ministry of Capacity Building launched the re-engineering of processes (after being pilot tested in six Ministries in 2005) in all government organizations at all level. As BPR did not bring rapid improvement in institutional performance, later reformulation Performance Based Management accompanying the introduction of Balanced Score Card as a management, evaluation and communication tool in 2008 (CIDA, DFID, GoE, World Bank, 2008). The experience over the past years with the introduction of performance related systems, BPR and BSC points to the need for a coherent and consistent plan to avoid confusion and conflicting priorities during implementation.

Despite the contribution of the reform efforts in reshaping and restructuring the public sector for the better socio-economic development of post dergue Ethiopia, there have been a syndrome of on and off to sustain the reform. The massive bodies of literatures indicate that implementation of the civil service reforms in Ethiopia faced lack of properly integrated and sequential approach (Mesfin, 2009), inconsistency in performance evaluation system (Teka, Fiseha and Solomon, 2007), civil servants resistance to change (Eshete, 2007; Tesfaye, 2007; Tilaye, 2007; Emnet and Habtamu, 2011), lack of accountability in performance management system (Solomon, 2007), less communicated, poor sense of ownership, inefficient technological readiness, weak team work culture (Emnet and Habtamu, 2011), absence of well designed and implemented remuneration system (Tilaye, 2007), lack of awareness on service seekers side on their duties and responsibilities (Mesfin & Taye, 2011).

The five year (2010/11-2014/15) Growth and Transformation Plan of Ethiopia (GTP) put all the reform agendas under nutshell of capacity building and good governance chapter. The service delivery reform as part of CSR is an ongoing process practiced to date in the country. Evident to this are implementation of BPR at all levels of government organizations, BSC in majority of the federal executive agencies and regions, the introduction of CC by the Ministry of Civil Service and change communication strategy in some regions (MoFED, 2012) among others. However, Mesfin (2009) agreed that systems like BPR initiative was not in the CSR sub-programs, and often its introduction created confusion on the part of implementers. It was under these experiences that CC was launched in 2012 with an intention to enable civil servants to serve the community in an improved and better manner. The Charter would be expected to ensure government's accountability to the public

and openness and transparency as well. As to the ministry, every government organization is expected to have its own charter.

It is indisputable that as a part of the public sector reform program initiated in the late 1980s and early 1990s, CC initiative has contributed to the improvement in public service delivery of many countries. However, there have been challenges in the design and implementation of the charter.

The aforementioned experiences of UK, India and Republic of South Africa in CC implementation challenges range from conceptual to implementation aspects. In UK CC is currently confined to few sectors and often on voluntary basis; whereas in countries like India every public authority shall publish it. The *Right of Citizens for time bound delivery of goods and services and rederessal of their grievance bill of India* succinctly stipulated. The Republic of South Africa's *Batho pele* is a mandatory in a sense that it meant for the support of constitutional value: fostering transparency.

Lack of stakeholder consultation due to the top-down approach of the initiatives together with inadequate designing and implementation capacity of owned departments count more. The design and implementation challenges in the Case of India and South Africa attributes to lack of customization. Both countries seem to copycat the experience of UK with little attention paid to local context: organizational culture, existing expertise, service seekers culture of transparency and appeal among others.

Is citizens' charter a necessity in Ethiopia public service delivery?

The concept of Citizens' Charter is a new phenomenon in Ethiopia. It appears on the civil service agenda of the country after three decades of its birth in UK (1991). In February 2012, FDRE Ministry of Civil Service officially announced the launch of Citizens' Charter and urged government organizations to develop their own. Since then trainings were given to different organizations on the very essence of the charter, necessities and constituents. Some organizations including Ministry of Civil Service, Ethiopian Rail Way Corporation, Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, Ethiopian Civil Service University, Textile Industry Development Institute and other federal and regional organizations have drafted their own.

Definitely, the charter approach to service delivery enhances the transparency and accountability of the public service delivery system. However, the Ethiopian Civil Service has developed the twelve Ethical principles in service provision. A decade has passed echoing and posting these principles. But, they have not standards to measure- the degree of transparency or honesty etc. The charter approach to public service delivery may not come with different principles rather repeating on the already existing-transparency, accountability, impartiality etc. Besides, almost in every government organizations there are complain hearing committee or office or in any other form. The charter may strengthen and more comprehensively state the grievance handling and redress mechanism. In addition the charter shall be published in different languages, punchy and communicated well; and includes addresses of top officials, and concerned service providers.

Regarding the lists of services and standards, BPR document constitutes these kinds of issues. In the country, the public service delivery system though revealed an improvement compared with the past still it is not up to the expected standard. This may attributes to absence of servant mentality from the service providers' side, loose accountability, lack of information and openness about the services, standards and requirements, poor and disparate grievance handling and redress mechanisms. Thus, if the charter approach is well designed, communicated and implemented, it will address the aforecited tribulations.

 What are the potential challenges to implement the charter?

Conceptual challenge is the first issue to be addressed in the design and implementation of the charter approach. For an ordinary citizen, the phrase Citizens' Charter can be a vague. There should be local and easily grasped phrases. Besides, there were charters (Team Charter) introduced under the   Business Process Reengineering and Balanced Score Card implementation-they resembles memorandum of understanding among parties regarding service delivery in a set standard level. However, the charter has shelved, and not linked with performance appraisal.

It may also be unease to design and implement citizens' charter from one's own organizational context point of view. Experiences of other countries tell us the need to take care and well customize our charters. In our public service, different reform tools have been introduced and their successes are different from sector to sector. However, there has been a tradition of copycat as well as on and off in sustaining implementation of the reform tools; capacity problem; lack of commitment and integration; in adequate consultation etc. Citizens' Charter may also suffer from these common setbacks. For instance, during BPR implementation, some standards are found irrelevant, some activities were missed, and the quality dimension of a given activity can hardly be measured. For sure, the list of services and standards may not be newly designed, should be similar with what are already in other documents like BPR and BSC. Nevertheless, in the case where standards and services in already existed documents faced problems of relevance, inclusiveness, specificity etc, it would be challenging to expect new thing from the charter.

On the other hand, the organizational culture of sustaining newly introduced procedures, systems, reform tools will affect the effectiveness the charter approach to public service delivery. In Ethiopian context, this might be the major bottleneck that the charter implementation faces. Moreover, the principles – transparency, accountability, impartiality, and others have lived long with our public service delivery system. But, the public sector is not as transparent and accountable as expected. The grievance handling and redress mechanism is also business as usual type, though it has a legal support.

The experience public sectors have in designing communication strategy might be another challenging aspect that may encounter the implementation of the charter approach. After a year and half the herald of Citizens' Charter, only two organizations' (Textile Industry Development Institute and Ethiopian Rail Way Corporation) charters documents are found online. Unless you communicated well and the service seekers get access to the document, the charter has no value by itself.

V.   The Way forward

What should be done to materialize the charter approach in public service delivery?

Internalizing the essence and the necessities of the charter approach before rushing to announcing the citizens' charter should come first in the public sector. The massive bodies of literatures indicate that implementation of the civil service reforms in Ethiopia faced lack of properly integrated and sequential approach (Mesfin, 2009) and inconsistency in performance evaluation system (Teka, Fiseha and Solomon, 2007). Thus, scrutinizing the success and failure of newly introduced procedures and systems in the public sector like Business Process Reengineering, Balanced Score Card, Performance Based Management and others, and of course the underlying factors is crucial.

Besides, integrating CC with the systems in place than considering as competent effort. Revising BPR and BSC documents to have a well defined list of activities, attainable standards in the charter document; developing communication strategy to get the public participated in the design process, and to disseminate the document after completion, and strengthening the legal support for accountability and transparency of public service delivery are helpful for the success of CC.

Organizational culture or the common belief and values individuals in the organization shared is a key to introduce new systems and effectively implement it. In Ethiopian case public servants resistance to change are among the problems often cited (Eshete, 2007; Tesfaye, 2007; Tilaye, 2007; Emnet and Habtamu, 2011). Addressing the causes of dissatisfaction and lack of common values like creativity should be area of concern.

Not to take the charter as a separate entity, it is a document that provides information about the service delivered, standards, grievance handling and redress mechanisms etc. Citizen charter is not an end –it is a means to enhance service quality via transparent and accountable public services delivery. Should it be utilized by the concerned bodies, it would enhance transparency and accountability and complement an effort of corruption fighting.

Finally, for effective CC design and implementation public sector reform experience, organizational culture, demand from and knowhow of the public, implementation capacity of public sectors and committed leadership play a paramount role. Thus, should all these issues be taken into consideration, there would be a leap- forge in efficient and effective public service delivery.

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