The Quasi –Autonomous Agencies in Limbo: A Case of Tanzania Employment Services Agency and Public Service Recruitment Secretariat

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Abstract:
One of the erstwhile debates in the political science milieu is over the separation of policy making from the administration. This paper attempts to resurrect the debate by contending that the establishment Tanzania Employment Service Agency (TAESA) and Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS) was politically motivated and therefore hampering the smooth performance of the two institutions. Since the relationship between policy and structure is akin to the proverbial politics - administration dichotomy. Where purists try to separate the two; realists recognize the relationship between and within them; and theorists explain that no dichotomy exists where policy is concerned .This paper contend that the establishment of department, units or agencies in the Public Service should be left to the Professional policy managers with technical savvy in the area.
Key words: Quasi-autonomous Agencies, New Public Management, Recruitment, Reforms, Decentralization

1.0 Introduction

Employee resourcing, which includes examination and selection of the best employee are the most central human resource management activities. It is through these process   merit is measured and employees are brought onto the public service (Llorens and Edward, 2007:207).The quality of the public workforce and effectiveness of the public programs will by and large depend on the manner in which these core resourcing functions are performed (ibid).

Under weberian civil service arrangements, resourcing was the responsibility of the centralized personnel organ such as the Civil Service Department (SCD). However, over time the centralized system was blamed for the amount of delay and inefficiency they impose, as the result the line agencies were favored as they are better positioned than the centralized one (Llorens and Edward,2007).

By the end of the 1970s and early 1980s in this context, the personnel reforms ushered the need to improve the efficiency and timelines of hiring process to increase, attract and hire high quality jobs candidates (ibid).As the result, there has been the move to decentralize the authority to recruit. In Tanzania for example this was done by the promulgation of the Decentralization by Devolution (D by D) policy of 1998 which among others bestowed the full mandate to the Local Government Authorities (LGAs) on all matters related to human resource management. However, since 2001, that positive move towards decentralizing human resource functions was reversed through the enactment of the new Public Service Act number 8 of 2002, in tandem with the promulgation of the Public Service regulations of 2003. The enforcement of these   legal instruments challenged the principle of devolved responsibility for personnel management and introduced deconcentrated personnel management within unified public service (REPOA, 2008).

This paper argues that such an oscillation towards centralization –decentralization of recruitment process in the public service, hampered the performance of TAESA and Recruitment Secretariat in Tanzania.

2.0 Contextual background

In the current Public administration literature, the quest for the creation of executive agencies bequeathed by the New Public Management (NPM) philosophy has become pervasive (Kim and Wonhyuk, 2014:214). The idea of agencification which was initially conceived and applied in the Anglo-Saxon Countries has of late spread to many other countries including Tanzania(Ibid), mesmerized with the promise of improved organizational performance, to "make the government perform better but cost less" or to have it "steering not rowing", the " agencification mantra" was exhilaratingly conceived by the governments with the belief that the "new public management" will replace the "old public administration and ascend to the glory of efficiency and improved public service delivery (Yesilkagit,2004:119).At the heart of this movement is the structural overhaul to disaggregate the tradition bureaucracies and increase managerial autonomy, so as to "let managers manage" and enhance accountability for desired results (Kim and Wonhyuk, 2014, Askim, 2015).

Before we start a few words on the structure and methods used are in order here: After this section, the next section, present the conceptual framework guiding the paper and overviews the Public Service Reform Programme (PSRP) to locate the place of executive agencies in the Tanzania public service delivery strand. Followed by the section, that summarizes the establishments and the legal mandate of TAESA and Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS). The subsequent sections, is dedicated to the discussions. Eventually, we conclude by offering some policy recommendations. This paper relies on desk research where by extensive documentary reviews were employed.

3.0 Conceptual framework

The Quasi-Autonomous Agencies

The quasi-autonomous agencies are conceived as a tool for "unbundling the bureaucracy" and creating more flexible, performance oriented public organizations (Pollit et al., 2001, cited in Caulfield, 2002:211). Agencies as a form of public organizations have been instrumental in the modernization of government objectives in both developed and developing world. Their modus operandi fallows a shift to business-like forms of managing public sectors in the pursuit of improvement in efficiency and effectiveness in regulations and service delivery (ibid).

Employment Agencies

Employment agencies are also known as recruiter, headhunters and career counselors (Taerattanachai and Brian, 2005).There are differences amongst these types of organizations but this article focuses on public service employment agencies. The rate of adoption of executive agencies as a model of service delivery is deemed necessary for a wide range of political, policy and administrative reasons (Caulfield, 2012:211).

Reform

Reform is an intentional need to institute changes that bring better conditions relative to the existing situation (Lukumai, 2006:29).

Decentralization

Decentralization of public service was one among procedures of the programme adopted by many developing countries aims in achieving the objective of the programme including that of improving service delivery to people (Lukumai, 2006) .Decentralization can be defined as a transfer of authority, responsibility and accountability from central to local government (Barnett et al. 1997).

4.0 The Public Sector Reforms in Tanzania: A quest for new regulation and control

Civil service Reforms which have taken place in the last two decades are part of the global phenomena that has touched all parts of the world-developed, developing and countries in transition were considered as a part of the wider public sector reform agenda, with the focus of ensuring efficient and effective public service delivery regardless of ideological orientation of the country (Peters, 1999; Olowu, 2002; Rugumyamheto, 2004: 437).

As the result of the reform efforts, the government invoked numerous reforms measures including the creation of executive agencies (Sulle,2014:125).With the aim of creating task-specific units within the government that are more flexible and output /outcome oriented.

The NPM philosophy posit that these semi-autonomous public organizations are more efficient than the traditional departmental units (James,2003 cited in Sulle,2014).The position which premised on the belief that the devolution of managerial power to "public managers" in tandem with clear performance incentives and accountability will improve the performance of the public sector (Joshi and Ayee,2009). Thus "let the managers manage and make the managers manage" become the household phrase in the agencification literature (Kettl, 1977; Christensen and laegreid, 2001).

Agencification programme in Tanzania is the brainchild of the organization and efficiency review team, which among her terms of references (ToRs) was to review and recommend areas were some functions of the government could be hived-off (Sulle,2008).The team came up with the policy design framework in 1996 and for the first time executive agencies were created in Tanzania through the Executive Agency Act No.30 of 1977.The Act provides a structural separation between the parent ministries and the agencies (Mbesi,2015).

Section 4(b) of the Act, categorically posit that: an agency has to manage its affairs in a businesslike and cost-effective manner and in accordance with modern management practices and techniques and in particular to apply to its operations the best standards of financial management and accounting". The gist here is that the ministries should retain core policy functions and leave the public service provision function to the quasi-autonomous agencies (Sulle, 2014).

5.0 Establishments of Tanzania Employment Service Agency (TAESA) and Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS)

5.1 Tanzania Employment Service Agency (TAESA)

Tanzania Employment Services Agency (TAESA) is a government agency established under the Executive Agency Act. No. 30 of 1997. It was established in the spirit of the government in converting some of its departments and units into executive agencies for the purpose of improving the delivery of public services, creating an environment conducive to efficient and effective management, improving the quality of employment services which was provided by the department of employment in the Ministry Labor and Employment (URT, 2012).It started operation on 1st july2008.

The overall objectives of TAESA are to provide employment services in the area of placement services to jobseekers and employers. Coordinate, provide and monitor cross-border placement services. Prepare programmes for providing employment services to the general public. Collect, analyze and disseminate Labor Market Information (LMI) to stakeholders and the general public. Promote the provision of job search skills training, career guidance and employment counseling. Regulate, register and monitor Public and Private Employment Service Agencies.TAESA envision "to be a dynamic and effective organization in the provision of employment services in areas of placement services to the public and private sectors". The vision will be achieved through "provision of high quality and efficient employment services in areas of placement services to the public and private sectors in Tanzania, Africa and beyond" (URT, 2012).

5.2 Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS)

The establishment of Public Service Recruitment Secretariat went in tandem with the Local Government Reform Program (LGRP). The LGRP through its policy paper of 1998 gave the Local Government Authorities (LGAs) power to plan, recruit, reward, promote, discipline, develop and fire their personnel (URT,1998).This was done to give councils accountability power by de-linking the local government staff from their parent ministries.

In 2009 the government of Tanzania took back the responsibility of recruiting staff by centralizing that role to the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (Njovu, 2013). The PSRS was established in January 2009 in accordance with the Public Service (Amendment) Act, 2007 section no.29 with the purpose of facilitating recruitment of employees in the Ministries, Independent Departments, Executive Agencies (MDAs) and other Public Institutions. The PSRS is mandated with the recruitment of all civil servants of all institutions including LGAs in Tanzania. To achieve that PSRS envision "being a Centre of Excellence in Public Service Recruitment in the region and Sub Sahara Africa". The vision will be achieved through "undertaking recruitment of Public servants using modern approaches by adhering to principles of equity, transparency and merits as well as providing advice to employers on employment related matters".

6.0 Discussions

6.1 Arguments in favor of decentralized and centralized recruitment Systems

Table 1, below proposes that decentralized recruitment system is preferred due to among others, the following reasons; timely filling of the vacancies due to more flexibility in the recruitment, staff retention as it gives employee more leeway to choose where to work, in so doing it motivate staff, the system does not allow the post to stay vacant for so long as the applicants are readily available. Whereas the protagonists of the centralized system of recruitment posit that, the system fosters equal distributions of the human resources in the public service as the recruitment exercise is centrally done taking into consideration the holistic picture of the public service needs. Moreover, the system bring the most qualified staff onto the public service due to little chances of political interference, nepotism, favoritism characteristics more common in the decentralized system. Equally, the system has the potential of maintaining national unit as everything is done centrally. However, both systems are not without disadvantages as depicted in the table below;

Table 1

	Decentralized Recruitment System Advantages	Centralized Recruitment System Advantages
1	**Timely filling of vacancies**; This happened due to flexibility and less bureaucratic nature of the system.	**Equal distribution of staff**; Because every-thing is done at the centre by a single body that knows the needs of each LGAs
2	**High staff retention;** Because employees were able to choose and be located in the areas they prefer to work.	**Qualified staff;** Due to fewer chances of corruption, political interferences, nepotism and favoritism.
4	**Highly motivated staff;** Since employees were able to work in the area of their preferences and community they prefer to serve	**Presence of national HR database**; Because everything is done at the centre therefore it is easy to have the information about those employed
5	**Less vacant posts;** Due to availability of applicants and ability to fill vacancies in time.	**Maintenance of national unity;** Since staff allocation is done at the centre anyone one has a chance to be employed and located any-where regardless his/her origin.

Source: Njovu (2013)

6.2 Arguments against decentralized and centralized systems of recruitment

Table 2

	Disadvantages of decentralized System	Disadvantages of centralized system
1	**Unqualified staff;** Due to high rate of corruption, nepotism, political interferences and favoritism.	**Failure to timely fill vacancies;** Due to in-flexibility and bureaucratic nature of the sys-tem.
2	**Unequal distribution of staff;** Due to lack of applicants in some LGAs particularly the disadvantaged one.	**Increase in labor turnover;** Since employees are allocated in the areas they didn't apply and prefer to work.

Source: Njovu (2013)

Table 2, above shows that the critics of the decentralized system blame it for recruiting unqualified staff and unevenly distributions of human resources in the public service. Whereas the centralized system is blamed for procrastination in the filling the available vacant posts and increased labor turnover for posting the applicants where they did not apply.

Basing on the foregoing discussion it can be concluded that there is no system of recruitment which is completely perfect, therefore every systems needs some mechanisms in place for it to function properly. However, of the two institutions, TAESA is strategically and well positioned to undertake public service recruitment taking into account both decentralized and centralized systems of recruitment than the PSRS.Tanzania Employment Service Agency (TAESA) have got the zonal offices in the East and Coastal, North, Central and Lake zone which could be instrumental in undertaking Decentralized recruitment for the Local Government Authorities (LGAS), and dedicate the head office for the centralized recruitment in the MDAs.

6.3 Why Tanzania Government maintains both TAESA and PSRS?

The answer lies in the nature of institutional design for proper mechanisms of control over bureaucracy and autonomous agencies, representing the "fourth branch of the government" (Epstein and O'halloran, 199, Moe, 1990). Organizational structure is a key determinant of the extent politicians can control the bureaucracy (Yesilkagit, 2004:19). It is through structure the sequences of interactions within organizations and information

flows among members are regularized. Therefore, the nature of organizational structure is critical for organizational control. In the formulation of administrative structures, there are three actors involved namely; politicians, bureaucrats and interests group (Moe, 1989, 1995). Among the three groups, the interest groups are the prime actors in the formulation of the administrative structures. In the case of Tanzania keeping both recruitment agencies (TAESA and PSRS) may be motivated by the fear of lack of control, what the structural theorists calls two fundamental types of control problems; the agency problem and commitment problem (Yesilkagit,2004)

The agency problem

In its pristine economical-theoretical perspectives, the agency problem entails the difficulties that emanates from contractual relationships between a principal and its agent. Principal-agent contractual agreement entails delegation of decision-making authority to the agent to carry the tasks on behalf of the principal, because the agent is more informed on task implementation than the principal. As the asymmetry in the distribution of information works to the advantage of the agent, the agent may capitalize the advantage to pursue the private goals to the expense of the interest of the principal (Yesilkagit, 2004). To avoid the agency problem the principal is confronted with the control problem after delegation of the tasks, which can be addressed either through employing ex-ante or ex-post ante control devices.Ex-ante control entails "hardwiring" agencies in a way after delegation their set of alternatives is constrained and streamlined with the preference of the "principal", where as ex-post ante controls include the use of sanctions and monitoring, such as through cutting the agency's budget, dismissal of the agency's chief executive officer,re-appointment or revoking the entire agency mandate (McCubbins et al.,1989;Epstein and O'Hallaron,1999, Bawn,1995, cited in Yesilkagit,2014).

Under the agencification reform in Tanzania, the parent ministry controls the objectives of the agency through an employment contract with the chief executive officer (CEO) of the agency, review of the agency's operation framework, which includes strategic plan and business plan, all these must be approved by the parent ministry before implementation by the agency. In this setting the parent ministry mitigates information asymmetries by controlling the operational framework and limits the executive agency's discretion based on the interest of the parent ministry. This is the main reason why the PO-PSM (Principal) which is the custodian of the human resources in the public service can easily control the function delegated to the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS) than TAESA which directly report to the Prime Minister's office Labor, Employment, Youth and People with Disability (PMO-LEYD).

The commitment problem

This is common when the politicians enact a legislation, it is undisputed fact that enactment of any legislation by the politicians is not binding to last forever (Yesilkagit,2004).This is due to the test of time or sometimes the inconsistency of the enacted legislation or policies (Shepsle,1992). Regime changes, shift in public opinions may as well exacerbate the preferences of the political actors to change the conditions under which the legislation was enacted (Yesilkagit, 2004). In this setting maintenance of the two institutions (TAESA and PSRS) as delegated public service recruitment agencies may have been motivated with the interest of politicians and the same regime which have been in power for some times now in Tanzania.

7.0 Conclusion and Policy recommendations

New Public Management (NPM) reforms have ushered the process of agencification throughout the world. Tanzania is not an exceptional, however the principal-agent perspectives shows that most designers of the agencies especially the policy makers (politicians) are confronted with two major problems on their endeavor to create the agencies, namely the agency and commitment problems. To mitigate the two problems this paper proposes the following policy recommendations. First, there should be separation of responsibilities between policy makers and policy managers.As Witte (2007) rightly argued the goal should be maintence of separation function and responsibility, where as the trick should be maintence of separation but yet allowing various checks and balance to avoid overwhelming influence in the policy or administrative process. Second, the Executive Agencies should be "hived-off" instead of the current practice of "hiving –in" to give them more autonomy. Third, the Executive Agencies should be controlled and monitored by the Ministry of Finance (MOF) as opposed to the Ministry of Public Service (PO-PSM)

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