

Conclusion – A Comparative Assessment of the Findings

Basic information from the field visits (see Table 4) indicates that the four countries – Botswana, Ghana, Uganda and Zambia – have been engaged in various public sector reform projects, and have instituted employment contracts (i.e. contract of service) and contract-like arrangements which are associated with the new management of senior public service officers including the permanent secretaries. The permanent secretary in each country is still effectively the chief executive of the ministry/department or administrative region. This senior public service officer is called a chief director (formerly principal secretary) in Ghana, whereas the other three countries have retained the name permanent secretary. The data show (Table 4) that Uganda had 17 (out of an expected 21), Zambia 42, Ghana 37 and Botswana 29 permanent secretaries/chief directors respectively. Of these, all 17 permanent secretaries are on employment contract in Uganda; all 42 in Zambia are also on employment contracts; and all 29 in Botswana have signed a performance agreement. Ghana has a mixed basket, with only 8 of the 37 chief directors on employment contract of three to four years and 22 on open tenure (or permanent and pensionable) while 3 are on an employment contract which is called ‘limited engagement’. A ‘limited engagement’ contract is normally a short-term contract of between one and three years’ duration. It tends to be given to chief directors who have just retired, but whose services are still needed by the state. All the chief directors in Ghana also sign a performance agreement. The age of retirement in Botswana, Ghana and Uganda is 60 years, and it is pegged at 55 for Zambia.

None of the permanent secretaries in the four countries has delegated authority for the human resource function, especially in terms of hire and fire. In each case the Public Service Commission (PSC) still retains these functions and is also the key agency which makes recommendations for promotions and reward or sanction of public employees. In Zambia, however, the Cabinet Handbook of 2002 notes that the permanent secretary can appoint one cabinet liaison officer, whose duty it is to coordinate all Cabinet business within the ministry and retain day-to-day contact with the Policy and Co-ordination Division at the Office of the President. An important novelty that was discovered was in Botswana, where the government has established, at the Office of the President, a Directorate of Public Service Management (DPSM) which handles most of the human resource functions of the state. In an interview with Pearl Matome, Deputy Director at the DPSM, the Botswana Public Service

Commission has only been used as an appellate body. This means that aggrieved public employees have the right to refer their problems to the PSC for redress.

A simple gender analysis of serving permanent secretaries/chief directors reveals that there are 12 male and 5 female permanent secretaries in Uganda; 37 male and 5 female permanent secretaries in Zambia, and 31 male and 6 female chief directors in Ghana. This picture is nothing out of the ordinary, it is only slightly better than the patriarchy at the level of head of state in the continent, where there is only one female head of state (who is located in Liberia).

An important characteristic of African public administration (in the case study countries) is the size of government, and this is one area that is dynamic and is subject to regular review, as governments reform their bureaucracies in response to the changing constitutional requirements and the international environment. At the time of the fieldwork in July 2008 Uganda had 21 government ministries, Zambia had 22, Botswana had 15 and Ghana had 27. In each of the four countries, there were three tiers of government – central, regional and local government. In Zambia and Ghana, the regional level of administration is headed by a permanent secretary or chief director, and this in a way explains the high number of permanent secretaries and chief directors recorded in those countries.

Table 4. Senior public service officers under contract in Africa (July–August 2008)

Country	No. of ministries	No. of administrative regions	Expected no. of permanent secretaries/ chief directors	Actual no. of permanent secretaries/ chief directors	No. on employment contract (EC)/ performance agreement (PA)	No. on open tenure	No. on limited engagement	No. with delegated authority for HR	Gender M/F	Retirement age service	Size of the public	
Uganda	21	4	21	17	17 EC	0	0	0	12	5	60	117,000
Zambia	22	9	42	42	42 EC	0	0	0	37	5	55	102,000*
Botswana	15	10	30	29	29 PA	30	0	0	21	8	60	105,000
Ghana	27	10	38	37	8 EC	22	3	0	31	6	60	42,000
Total	94	33	131	125	97	52	3	0	101	24		

Notes: This table was constructed using information obtained from fieldwork in the four Commonwealth African countries in July and August 2008. In Ghana and Zambia, permanent secretaries/ chief directors are also appointed at the regional level of administration; and in Zambia and Uganda some ministries have more than one permanent secretary, even though in such a situation only one of them will be appointed by the Treasury or Finance Ministry as controlling officer (or accounting officer). In Ghana, there is a category of chief director who is on 'limited engagement' service to the government. The position in this category is normally occupied by senior public service officers who are brought back from retirement on a limited contract between one and three years. As at 1 August 2008 there were 33 bona fide chief directors and four were senior directors who had been acting as chief directors, making the total number of chief directors 37. *Note: This figure was sourced from Stevens, M and Teggemann, S (2003) 'Comparative Experience with Administrative Reform in Ghana, Tanzania and Zambia'.

Table 5. Summary assessment of conditions of service and measures for assessing the performance of the permanent secretary/ chief director

Country	Duration of contract	Conditions of service	Eligibility for permanent secretary	Management models used for performance evaluation in ministry	Performance assessment measures for the PS/ chief director
Uganda	Fixed-term three-year employment contract in the first instance. Contract is renewable based on performance and mutual consent.	Basic salary, telephone, vehicle, car loan. Not pensionable, but a gratuity is paid at 40% of gross salary.	Open to career public servants and private sector managers are not excluded.	Results-oriented management (ROM) has been introduced and a performance appraisal system has been introduced to assess all officers except the PS.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Objective formula for performance assessment of the PS has yet to be designed. 2. Assessment of the PS based on ministerial performance Parliamentary vetting of ministerial achievement of statement and of policy in the annual budget. Intuition and subjective criteria are also part of judgement formation. 3. A results-oriented management and appraisal system has been introduced and appraisal of rank and file is conducted by directors. The latter in turn are reviewed by the PS. Directors and all ranks below are on permanent and pensionable tenure. 4. PS's contract is not a performance contract.
Zambia	Since 2003 all the PS have been on contract. The term is three years in the first instance.	Basic salary, entitled to a motor vehicle, fuel allowance, electricity allowance, domestic help allowance, car loan and gratuity of 100% of the gross salary at the end of three years, taxable at 35%. Contract can be terminated by a presidential announcement at a press conference.	Open to career public servants, academicians and private sector managers	A performance management and appraisal system (PMAS) for both PS and the rank and file officers recommended since 2004, but had not been implemented at time of this study. Constitutional reform process was planned which will look at performance contracts for the PS	<p>There is no objective formula for assessing the PS. Assessment is based on an unwritten subjective criterion. But there is uncertainty about 'who will do the evaluation.'</p>

Botswana	Open Tenure, but the PS signs a performance agreement, by which he/she is held for results.	The PS is hired on permanent and pensionable terms. Contributory health plan. The PS, who is on performance agreement, is appointed at the pleasure of the president, and could be sacked for non-performance.	Open to both career public servants and managers from private background.	A balanced scorecard framework has been installed across government, and it is mandatory that all ministries use it.	1. Performance reviews are under the purview of the cabinet secretary and the vice president; the cabinet secretary reviews the PS and the VP reviews the work of the ministers. The process is adhered to and is conducted regularly. 2. Specific assessment instruments have been developed and are in use. 3. The PS submits his/her quarterly reports to the government Implementing Co-ordination Office located at the Office of the President. 4. The Public Services Commission does not perform HR functions and is a mere appellate body for surcharge and dismissals. 5. All national level HR policies, relations with unions and HR functions of audit, pension, promotion and monitoring of performance are planned by the Directorate of Public Services Management located at the Office of the President. DPSM also assists the PS working with them in the preparation of job description.
Ghana	A mix of approaches: (a) A performance agreement is signed by PS (since 1997); (b) full employment contracts issued to those recruited from the private sector; and (c) 'Limited engagement' contracts of one to three years for re-hired retired permanent secretaries.	1. Entitled to a pension. 2. Thirty-three (33) working days' leave. 3. Allowances: travel and entertainment. 4. No general health insurance. 5. Allocated official motor vehicle 6. Housing and security at residence.	Open to career public servants and private sector managers	A Performance Monitoring and Appraisal System (PMAS) is in place. Appraisals are meant for lower level staff and not for the senior public service officer.	6. Auditor General, Public Accounts Committee and Ministry of Finance audits expenditure and procedures. 7. Performance development plans are developed by rank and file members and are the basis on which staff members are reviewed every three months. There is no formally instituted process for evaluating the performance of the PS. There is uncertainty about which agency will evaluate the work of the PS.

Management approaches adopted in the reform

Table 6. Characteristics of the contract systems reform in four African countries

Country	National economic management framework	System of governance	Appointing authority of PS	Signatories to the contract
Ghana	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) II, which is donor supported	Fused Executive Presidency & Head of State	President of the Republic acting on advice of Public Service Commission and Civil Service Council	Head of the Civil Service, and the chief director
Botswana	Vision 2016 and National Development Plan, which are locally supported	Fused Executive Presidency & Head of State	President of the Republic	Cabinet secretary/public service president, and the permanent secretary
Uganda	Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), which is donor supported	Fused Executive Presidency & Head of State	President of the Republic acting on advice of the Public Service Commission, and cabinet secretary	Cabinet secretary/Head of Public Service, and the permanent secretary
Zambia	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers	Fused Executive Presidency & Head of State	President of the Republic acting through the cabinet secretary	Cabinet secretary/Head of Public Service, and the permanent secretary

Source: Compiled from field notes from Ghana, Botswana, Uganda and Zambia, July–August 2008.

A broader look at the management of the political economy in each country underscores the nature of the national governance environment in which the contract systems for permanent secretaries were established. Every country was pursuing an economic reform programme which required new management capacities and new ways of bureaucratic management. From Table 6 we see that Ghana was implementing a Poverty Reduction Strategy II, a successor programme to the Heavily Indebted Poor Country initiative (HIPC) of the Bretton Woods Institutions which was signed in 2001. Similar HIPC continuation programmes were also being implemented in Uganda and Zambia in the form of Poverty Eradication Action Plan and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper respectively.

How is performance measured and rewarded under the contract system?

Different management models for achieving efficiencies were at different stages of implementation in each country (as shown on Table 5). Uganda had begun to institutionalise a results-oriented management (ROM) across government, a model by which public management for results will be organised and conducted. In Zambia the thought of introducing a Performance Management and Appraisal System was still

at the embryonic stage, whereas Ghana had instituted a similar system since 1998. Ghana, Uganda and Zambia had not devised measurement systems for assessing the performance of the permanent secretary and chief director, and this constituted a serious flaw in the performance systems that they were seeking to install. However, the Head of the Public Service in each country was aware of this shortfall and they were at various stages of finding solutions to the performance contract question. Indeed, all the permanent secretaries who were interviewed alluded to the need to turn their employment contracts into performance contracts, with effective measures to evaluate their performance.

Botswana had made the greatest advancement in this area of performance management and measurement. The country had installed a PMAS in the latter part of the 2001 and introduced a balanced scorecard management model by 2004. The balanced scorecard was implemented across government and it had separate templates which allowed each permanent secretary to report on public management measures and project updates in a more business-like way than had been tried before in that economy. Reviews of the work of the permanent secretary and rank-and-file civil servants were reported to be carried out on a quarterly basis, with fail. Botswana was therefore seen as proffering a model that was worthy of emulation by the other countries.

The scope of and potential for expression of leadership by the permanent secretary/chief director

From the interviews with permanent secretaries and chief directors in the four countries, two main issues emerged as important factors which impinge on the expression of leadership by these senior public service officers. These are the availability of revenues and the remuneration of the permanent secretary in relation to heads of department of statutory bodies to whom, administratively, they are senior. The inadequacy of budgetary resources was important to the permanent secretaries in Ghana, Uganda, and Zambia. This issue was not particularly acute in Botswana, where a mixture of good fortune in terms of a small population of the country (approximately 2 million) and diamond reserves have ensured that the public sector has remained financially stable. On the other hand, the issue of subordinates earning more than the permanent secretary, who is the administrative head of the ministry and to whom the heads of statutory corporations report, was noted as a concern in Zambia. To the relevant Zambian senior public service officers, this inequity gets in the way of the exercise of leadership over statutory corporations which are under their purview.

How the contract system impinges on the independence of the permanent secretary/chief director

The independence of permanent secretaries and chief directors in the four countries seemed to be helped tremendously by the creation of written rules and constitution

concerning the roles of the permanent secretary, deputy minister and minister. The Cabinet Handbook 2002 of Zambia, the Civil Service Act, Law 327 of 1993 and the constitutions of all the four countries have determined the precise roles of public officials. The instructions issued to permanent secretaries and chief directors by the ministry responsible for finance on their appointment as controlling officers in terms of financial management of their ministries are also another source of good practice for the prevention of confusion in financial management. Permanent secretaries and chief directors are occasionally called upon to answer queries raised by the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament in each country and that has acted as a source of encouragement for the senior public service officers to manage their ministries with integrity.

How is conflict mediated in the contract system?

Two likely sources of conflict were isolated in the governance structures of the public services in the four African countries. These are the personal/political interests of ministers which are likely to play out in spending of public resources and meeting of ministers with heads of departments without the permanent secretary being present. In the first case, the financial instructions from the ministry responsible for finance to permanent secretaries make it expressly clear that where a minister gives instruction for the permanent secretary to spend public funds which is likely to compromise the integrity of the latter, the permanent secretary should require those instructions to be in written form. Similarly, if the minister is adamant and insists on the expenditure of these funds against the rules, the permanent secretary may submit the written instructions to the minister of finance and the Auditor-General. This practice is common to all the four countries. However, in Zambia this institution is further emphasised in the Cabinet Handbook of 2002.

Value for money of the contract systems

With regard to the question of whether the contract systems pertaining to the employment of permanent secretaries were delivering value for money, the public officials interviewed in Ghana, Uganda and Zambia felt that even though the present management systems are an improvement on the previous practice, value for money was not being fully derived for the country. This is because the performance management models have only been partially implemented and performance agreements and contracts of employment have not been buttressed by the necessary measurement instruments to enable full accountability. The officers in Botswana were confident that their balanced scorecard system was proving successful because the system is practised across government and permanent secretaries and ministers of government were adhering to the reporting practices, while the cabinet secretary and Vice President of the country were also ensuring that the performance reports were reviewed on a quarterly basis without fail.

Conclusions and lessons learned

This study set out to examine the contract systems pertaining to the employment of permanent secretaries and chief directors in Botswana, Ghana, Uganda and Zambia. This was necessary because these countries had embarked on the reform of their public services since the latter part of the 1990s with a view to infusing public administration systems with private sector practices, which have been deemed to be proficient in turning around malfunctioning public services. This new way of reforming the public service had come about a result of the sea change in the ideology of administration called the 'new public management'.

Qualitative research methods were used including literature review and primary research which involved elite interviews and assessment of policy documents and evaluation reports commissioned by the governments of those countries. Field visits afforded a unique opportunity for direct observation of the work of permanent secretaries and chief directors. These methods were appropriate to the kind of audience encountered who were mostly from the highest level at the centre of government. This claim is significant because an online survey which had been designed to assist in a simultaneous rapid assessment of permanent secretaries in the Caribbean had to be abandoned in the African study for reasons of non-patronage by the target group.

The research revealed that a broad range of new management practices for managing public services and senior public service officers had been adopted in Botswana, Ghana, Uganda and Zambia. All four countries had instituted contracts of employment and contract-like arrangements in the form of performance agreements, contracts of employment and the retention of a good mix of the old permanent and pensionable modes of employment, which were signed by the permanent secretaries and chief directors with their governments. In Botswana, Uganda and Zambia the superior or employing authority (government) were normally represented by the cabinet secretary. The experiences of these countries do not necessarily represent a wholesale borrowing of the New Zealand model, but certainly the ideas about improving public service delivery systems using contractual re-engineering processes were borrowed and translated. However, even though each country's experience is unique, reflecting the alignment of power and forces of interest, there were also important commonalities to be drawn.

Contract entitlements generally included gratuities and access to official vehicles in all countries. In the contract-like arrangements under which permanent secretaries and chief directors operated, state pension schemes had been retained in Ghana and Botswana, while gratuities of 40 per cent and 100 per cent of gross salary were paid to permanent secretaries in Uganda and Zambia respectively. The basic pay of the Zambian permanent secretary was considered to be very low by the Independent Management Consulting Company in 2004. The same agency also noted that the gratuity of 100 per cent that is taxed at 35 per cent on collection at the end of the

three-year contract does not necessarily show that the system is generous. It argued that bringing the pay of the permanent secretary to market levels might actually be a better option. In Ghana, Uganda and Zambia where contracts of employment have been issued to permanent secretaries and chief directors, the norm for length of a term tended to be three years.

The most important finding of the study is that to benefit from performance improvements associated with these contractual arrangements, countries must fully implement performance contracts or back up their performance agreements with performance management and performance measurement instruments which can be evaluated at regular intervals, and the performance information fed back to improve management. In this regard, 'Performance and Co-ordination Units' will be needed at the Office of Cabinet or Office of the Head of the Civil Service (as appropriate), with local units at each ministry to ensure compliance and policy co-ordination.

These arrangements will be congruent with the institutions in Botswana where a balanced scorecard system has been installed and is seemingly producing value for money for the government and people of the country. One issue that is still not established, with available information, is whether Botswana's success has anything to do with the small size of its population of 2 million and a public service of about 15,000, while the other countries have large populations of over 20 million each and larger public services. The issue of bringing ministers and permanent secretaries to a certain level of knowledge and understanding of public policy and public service delivery, and to press home a common view that the two succeed or fail together might also be a key lesson to learn from Botswana by the other countries.

This study, however, cannot make over-reaching conclusions about the detailed workings of the public service systems in those countries as it concentrated on institutional aspects of implementation of the chosen models by each country, and the length of time spent in each country did not permit an ethnographic type study.