



Open Innovations in Human Resource Management Practices in the Tanzania Public Service: Assessment of the Public Service Guiding Frameworks

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ABSTRACT

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This article presents the open innovations status in human resource management practices within the Tanzania public service. The study focuses on open innovations in the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, particularly from 1999. This was the period when the new policy on public service management and employment was crafted and adopted by the Government. The document review was conducted to identify open innovations that were anticipated and implemented within the public service. The results show that open innovation is constrained by the presence of uniform, less coordinated policies (and legislation) and inadequate pecuniary and non-pecuniary incentives to innovate. It is concluded that public sector institutions in Tanzania have to work together (non-symbiotic) to allow open innovations to take place within the public service. It is also recommended that public servants must be ready and flexible to utilize ideas and knowledge from outside that are relevant to their institutions. Similarly, public institutions should transmit their unused ideas and knowledge to other public institutions for use to improve the performance of their respective institutions. We recommend other researchers venture into researching open innovation in the context of digital governance transformation in the public service in Tanzania and or how open innovation may enhance co-design and co-delivery in the context of decentralization in Tanzania, specifically, the use of improved Opportunities and Obstacles to Development (OOD) tool.

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1. Introduction

Across both sides of the Atlantic, “innovation is in.” In other words, when things go astray such as when faced with prolonged fiscal austerity, innovation is one of the few tools practitioners can resort to in their attempt to “keep the show on the road” (Borins, 2014). Innovation is among the ways to “do more with less” and ensure sustainable delivery of our most valued public services. In response to ever-increasing complex and wicked problems, coupled with burgeoning citizen expectations, the routine government solutions to the problems are no longer working (Vries, Tummers, & Bekkers, 2017). Therefore, to be relevant and effective public sector organizations have to be innovative (Hartley, Sorensen, & Torfing, 2013). It is within the above context that innovation in the public sector has continued to attract the interests of both practitioners and researchers (Hartley et al., 2013; Van Acker, 2017; Vries et al., 2017; Walker, Berry, & Avellaneda, 2015).

In Africa, studies have indicated that most administrative systems are still struggling with challenges bequeathed by their colonial masters and problems typical to their state politics (Onyango & Ondiek, 2022). Recently, studies have documented an expanding growth of technological proliferation in governing Africa, producing mixed political action outcomes and implications for public innovation (Onyango & Ondiek, 2022). These findings are multiple, while some question the government's capacity to identify and adopt appropriate technologies to promote public innovation (Arthur, Kobena, & Korbla, 2020; Onyango & Ondiek, 2022; Yeboah-Assiamah, Clement, & Nyigmah, 2022), others are concerned about the political will needed to effectively implement public innovation and whether these efforts are not wishful thinking like most previous African public sector reforms (Gagliardone, 2016; Onyango & Ondiek, 2021, 2022).

Like other developing countries, Tanzania is not an exception, it inherited the colonial civil service in form, structure and style from its predecessor, the Republic of Tanganyika. Despite the significant initiatives of national, sectoral and policy reforms and transformations made in the public service during the 1990s and 2000s, the public service is still anchored in the Weberian principles (closed innovation system) characterized by the presence of hierarchy, abstract and uniform rules, high formalization and the presence of security of tenure of public employees, inter alia (Mutahaba, Bana, & Mallya, 2017).

This reformed public administration, namely the New Public Management, is not fully distinguished from the traditional and classical Weberian type of administration (closed innovation system). The new system does still have bureaucratic dysfunctions similar to those experienced in the old system (Bourgon, 2010; Robinson, 2015).

There is a need to deepen and improve the new public management bureaucracy by injecting the features of the new management innovation models or waves (not paradigm) namely corporate entrepreneurship, design thinking and open innovation (Van de Ven & Enggleman, 2004). As it is correctly observed by Bourgon (2010),

'... the transformations that have taken place in the public sector since the 1980s are incomplete, but the pace of reform is not likely to abate because public organizations are not yet aligned with the global context or the complex problems they are expected to address (Bourgon, 2010, p. 198).

Thus, different expectations of what the government should do and how it should do these things have led to several innovative ideologies and systems in public administration to improve public service and policy delivery (Rosenbloom, 1983; Onyango & Ondiek, 2022).

Over time, research on innovation adoption in the public sector has focused on the organizational level (Vries et al., 2017; Walker et al., 2015). Vries et al., (2017) are of the view that to get a balanced view of innovation in the public sector it is instructive to go beyond the organisation and examine the different stakeholders involved and their influence on the innovation.

This article examines the Tanzania public service guiding frameworks on the use of the open innovation concept in managing human resources (public servants) within the executive arm of Tanzania. The study is an attempt to disclose the capacity of the public service to utilize the open innovations measures employed by different sectors within the public service to better and improve human resources. The Government is nowadays eager and willing to collaborate with different stakeholders within both the public and private sectors (Hassan, 2023). Different stakeholders namely policymakers including public servants know that the current challenges in the public service can easily be contained through the adoption of open innovations, among other measures.

The article is organized into six sections: After this introduction, section 2 under the literature review comprises the description of open innovations policy practices based on the examination of the various HRM policy documents. Section Three reports the open innovation barriers to effective human resource utilization in public service. Section fourth presents the existing challenges regarding the use of open innovations in human resource management practices in the Tanzania Public Service. Section five presents the discussion followed by the conclusion, recommendations and areas for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Open Innovations in Human Resource Management Practices

The phrase *open innovation* first appeared in the academic and social science literature in 2003 when its architect, Professor Henry Chesbrough introduced it (Chesbrough, 2003, 2013). Before 2003, the innovations that were experienced in organizations were merely termed as reforms, transformations and organization improvements in the original seminal works on open innovation. Many definitions of open innovation are provided by various scholars. For example, Tynnhammar (2017) provides a taxonomy of definitions in Table 1. According to Tynnhammar (Ibid), open innovation implies ‘... *A flow of something, no matter the direction, from the perspective of an organization to aid in developing and selling an innovation...*’

The definitions listed in Table 1 indicate that open innovation is a collaborative effort. Other scholars specify which collaborations are at stake here while others look at what issues (Tynnhammar, 2017). Thus, the definitions listed in Table 1 consider two different paths. The first path rests on the provision of general definitions of the phrase open innovation whereas the other path takes the specific forms of definitions.

Public sector innovation is about finding new means to attain public ends (The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2017). It is the process of collaboration and co-creation between different stakeholders to attain specific goals (Abulrub & Lee, 2012; Bekkers & Tummers, 2018). There are limited studies so far carried out to find out the contribution of human resources in open innovation on how open innovation improves human resources for organizations.

Table 1: Different Definitions of open innovation

Name(s) of the author(s)	Year of publication	Definition given
Chesbrough	2003	purposive inflows and outflows of knowledge to accelerate internal innovation, and expand the markets for external use of innovation
Lazarotti and Manzini	2009	A collaboration with a high variety of partners and a high count of partners
Dahlander and Gann	2010	Outbound innovation – non-pecuniary, how internal Outbound innovation – pecuniary, firms commercialize their inventions and technologies through selling or licensing out resources developed in other organizations Inbound innovation - non-pecuniary, firms use external sources of innovation Inbound innovation – pecuniary, firms license in and acquire expertise from outside
Banu, Dumitrescu, Purcărea and Isărescu	2016	Government, research organizations, clients and consumers, suppliers, and business actors, aiming at linking human, financial, material resources, information and knowledge to obtain shared-value innovation
Bengtsson et al.	2015	The definition focuses on the management of knowledge flows and organizational boundaries
Zobel, Lokshin and Hagedoorn	2017	... process that covers the creation and use of knowledge for the development and introduction of something new and useful.
Hossain and Anees-ur-Rehman	2016	...effective in acquiring external knowledge for internal innovation and taking internal innovation to external markets
Wallin and Von Krogh	2010	... process that covers the creation and use of knowledge for the development and introduction of something new and useful
Greco, Grimaldi and Cricelli	2016	...innovating capability of a firm deriving from the interaction with another firm
Tidd	2014	...firms should acquire valuable resources from external firms and share internal resources for new product/service development...

Source: Improved, modified and adopted from Table 1 of (Abulrub & Lee, 2012; Tynnhammar, 2017; Wallin & Von Krogh, 2010)

The studies that were conducted on human resources dwell on general issues that are concerned with human resources and staffing. For instance, Piciocchi, Bassano and Pietronudo (2018) studied the management of human resources inside open innovation institutions based on the identification of some reflections concluded from practical experiences. Similarly, Lee, Hwang and Choi (2012) identified the open innovation practices in the public sector of advanced economies. The majority of the countries studied were the selected developed countries.

Open innovation was initially meant for public sector organizations (Bekkers & Tummers, 2018; Chesbrough, 2003). Innovation which was evangelized and implemented was mainly focusing on the processes and production. Other new areas for innovation expanded to services and conceptual innovation. Public institutions, especially the public service, are

largely in the domain of service delivery, governance and conceptual innovation. Open innovation in the human resource management sub-discipline presents a green field for improving the goals of Tanzanian public service as it appears uniform throughout public administration worldwide. The employment of open innovation in the Tanzanian public service is envisaged to enable public institutions to solve the dysfunctional aspects of the public administration machinery or bureaucracy. The aims of promoting citizenship/stakeholdership, public interest, service provision to citizens and creating effective public policies can be achieved if the open innovation concept is practised and implemented within the public service in Tanzania. Bourgon (2007, 2010) proposes a new model of governance, which she calls open governance/government.

In the human resource management sub-discipline, open innovations entail the development and practising of efficient, effective flexible and amoebic human resource policies, legislation, procedures and regulations that positively facilitate the development of human resource management functions in the public sector. This requires the governance of open innovation to be widely implemented in the service sector. Unfortunately, the existing public service legislation of the United Republic of Tanzania [URT] (2002, 2008,2019), the employment policy URT (1999, 2008), the human resource regulations and standing orders (URT, 2003) do not provide adequate flexibility for the truly open innovations to take place in the public service.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data sources

The article is based on the use of documentary reviews (secondary data sources) that were carried out from December 2022 to March 2023. Data were collected from the President's Office Public Service Management and Good Governance and Prime Minister's Office Labour, Youth, Employment and Persons with Disability. The document includes the Public Service Employment and Management Policy of 2008, and the constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania of 1977 as revised. The Public Service Act number 8 of 2019, the Employment and Labour Relation Act numbers 6 and 7 of 2004, the Public Service Reform Programme reports (1993-2000s), and new public management reports in both electronic and hard copies formats that indicate the Government's efforts of reforming the public service.

Both the available mediate (direct) and proximate (indirect) secondary data sources were accessed to enable the authors to obtain complete, reliable and relevant data (Scott, 1990).

Table 2: Sources of data.

S/n	Source of Data	Reasons for inclusion
1	Public Service Employment and Management Policy of 2008	Provide the vision of Tanzania Public Service, lay down a foundation on service delivery standards and how the hiring and management of public servants will be managed. The genesis of the policy among others was to reform the public service from the colonial doctrines which Tanzania inherited and adopted in 1961 after independence. The citizenry's taste and demands in the 1990s had changed due to pressure from political moves, economic liberalization, the emerging vibrant role of civil societies and informed society all necessitated and compelled the government to rethink and realign the public service in conformity with those changes. This policy also was the basis for the public service reforms program of 2000-2011.
2	Public Service Act No. 8 of 2019	To operationalize the Public Service Management and Employment Policy. This piece of legislation was enacted to ensure the objectives of the policy are implemented and effected through a laid down legal framework. A lighthouse of Public Service Management in Tanzania
3	Employment and Labour Relation Act no.6 of 2004	The genesis of this legislation was a reflection on the liberalized economy where the Government was no longer the sole employer. To have a well-defined legal framework on labour matters for both the public and private sector, it was considered imperative to enact this piece of legislation that was sought could make provisions for core labour rights, establish basic employment standards, provide a framework for collective bargaining, to provide for the prevention and settlement of disputes, and to provide for related matters. The principal objects of the act were to promote economic development through economic efficiency, productivity and social justice; provide the legal framework for effective and fair employment relations and minimum standards regarding conditions of work; provide a framework for voluntary collective bargaining; regulate the resort to industrial action as a means to resolve disputes; provide a framework for the resolution of disputes by mediation, arbitration and adjudication; give effect to the provisions of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania of 1977.
4	Public Service Reform Programme reports (1993 to 2000s)	To strengthen the institutional and management capacity of the Ministry of the Public Service, develop rationalization policies for the public service and improve human resource planning and utilization. The reforms also intended to institutionalize the public service and install systems, structures and processes that were envisioned to create a result-based performance culture in the public service.

Source: URT (2019, 2008, 2022,2014); POPSM (2000).

3.2 Data analysis

We used qualitative content analysis guided by inductive, deductive and abductive (check) data analysis approaches as advised by Graneheim, Lindgren and Lundman (2017); Graneheim and Lundman (2004) to analyse data. The details of the data analysis are explained below.

3.2.1 Inductive approach

The inductive approach is a text or data-driven approach (Krippendorf, 2004; Schreier, 2012). Based on the findings from key documentary reviews, we searched for patterns, located similarities and differences and generated categories and themes (open innovation barriers and challenges) as detailed in Table 3.

3.2.2 Deductive approach

The deductive approach is concept-driven (Schreier, 2012). We invoked the open innovation concept in examining the development of human resources (public servants) within the executive arm of Tanzania. The aims were to disclose the capacity of the Public Service to utilize the open innovations measures employed in different sectors within the public service to better and improve human resources.

3.2.3 Abductive approach

The abductive approach is a reproductive, complimentary, or combined approach (Blackstone, 2018; Elo et al., 2014). Eventually, we gathered data, organized and interpreted them to develop key findings and drew some insightful implications.

3.3 Identifying themes

We employed qualitative coding as used by Altheide and Christopher (2013); Tummers (2023). Accordingly, we critically read selected public service guiding framework documents and coded the key open innovation issues by hand. Specifically, we invoked a directed approach to content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In this approach, we began with relevant categories and themes to guide the initial coding and stay flexible to new insights as

they unfolded (Tummers, 2023). To match themes and specific quotes, we developed descriptions of each category and the theme as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Directed coding of qualitative data.

Theme	The use of the Open Innovation concept in examining the development of the human resource (public servants) within the executive arm of Tanzania's public service	
Category	Open innovation barriers	Open innovation challenges
Descriptions	Strategic aspects such as rigid laws and policies. Other barriers are the implementation problems	Political-Administrative interface gaps and incomplete public service reform programmes.

Source: Developed by the authors (2023)

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Open Innovation Barriers in the Tanzania Public Service

Two major barriers inhibit public servants from practising open innovation in Tanzania. The first set of barriers are those related to strategic aspects of the Service. The issues in this set constitute the rigidity of the legislation including the Constitution, human resource management policies and laws related to labour matters. The contents and the contexts of these policies or legislation are essentially the same throughout the years. For instance, the President of the United Republics is the head of the public service whereas the Chief Secretary is the implementing head of the human resource management functions assisted by the Permanent Secretary responsible for establishments (URT,2019:8). This implies that all decisions of the appointing and disciplinary authorities in the public service can easily be modified, changed or quashed by the President and/or by the Chief Secretary. This measure can be taken with or without any explanation. The President is not compelled to accept any piece of advice or recommendation from any person (URT, 2002). For this reason, other responsible staff in the public service become afraid or reluctant to take appropriate actions on human resource management matters. This is what Bouckaert and Brans (2019) term a “Nationalistic administrative state: national and public dystopian design” where administrators are ruling the state, and where public servants are drafted towards adherence to national administrative ideologies. Although public servants have the required expertise, they are not consulted and operate in a procedural control system which defines the main principle of the regime.

The second set of barriers entails implementation problems. Public service institutions such as the Public Service Commission, the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat, the Public Service Wage Board including other institutions in the public service fail to take appropriate measures to improve the human resource management functions. One reason for this indecision is that the decision-makers in the public service are waiting for instructions from the topmost Head of the Service (URT,2002). Different public service institutions do not work together as commensals in human resource management matters. These two sets of barriers have been impeding the effective improvement and development of the Tanzanian public service over the years despite the implementation of the national wide public service reforms.

4.2 Open Innovation Challenges

There are two main challenges facing the practice of open innovation in the Tanzanian public service. The first challenge is the widening gap between politicians and the public service. The tension between public servants and politicians is ever-increasing. Most human resource management functions such as appointments, firing and staff promotion are determined and decided by politicians. Public servants play ceremonial roles even in making operational decisions related to human resource management functions. For instance, the National Recruitment Agency has very limited roles in practice to recruit, select and place new staff in the public service.

The second challenge is the failure of the public sector reforms to bring about complete reforms and changes in the Service. Public administration in Tanzania still operates as a traditional Weberian system of administration. As a result, complete open innovation or a new public service has not yet been created. This is in contrast to what scholars (i.e., Bouckaert, 2023; Bouckaert & Brans, 2019; Robinson, 2015) propose as the new values of the changed public service as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: The new public service values: comparing perspectives

Item	Traditional Public Administration	New Public Management	New Public Service	New Public Governance	New Weberian State
Theoretical foundations	Naïve social science	Positivist social science	Democratic theory	Neo-Institutional theory	State law
Rationality	Administrative	Technical	Strategic	Strategic	Trust in institution
Public interest basis	Law	The sum of individuals interests	Dialogues	Dialogues	Laws
Public servants responsive to	Constituents	Customers	Citizens	Citizens	Citizens
Role of government	Rowing	Steering	Brokering	Facilitating	
Mechanism for administration	Administration	Creating mechanisms	Creating coalitions	Networks	Legal capacity
Accountability	Hierarchical	Market-driven	Multifaceted	Multifaceted	Hierarchical
Organizational structure	Centralized	Decentralized	Collaborative	Collaborative	Centralized
Motivational basis	Pay	Entrepreneurial spirit	Desire to contribute	Improved services	Citizen's satisfaction

Source: (Bouckaert, 2023, pp. 12–59; Bouckaert & Brans, 2019, p. 535; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000, p. 554; Robinson, 2015, p. 11).

From the findings reported in the previous section, one can state that despite the great efforts of the Government of Tanzania to change the way public services are delivered, more needs to be done in the area of human resource management and staffing. Open innovation should be made inside staffing activities in both primary and secondary human resource management functions. The traditional Weberian models that exist in the central government ministries, regional secretariats, independent government departments, Local Government Authorities, executive agencies and public authorities are to be further reformed. There are signs of change and transformation shown by the previous local government reform programme christened 'Decentralization by Devolution' (D by D). However, this was a mere first-order devolution that focused on the new public management principles and features (Table 2).

The adoption of open innovation in human resource management would enable Tanzania to move towards the new public service that calls for collaboration, co-creation and incentivization. This finding mirrors the insights by scholars such as Bouckaert (2023); Pollit and Bouckaert (2004, 2011, 2017) that to be effective, public sector reforms should contextually follow the 4Ms; Maintain, Modernize, Marketize and Minimize the public sector. In this context, the modernized version of the ideal type which is in line with the New Public Governance and Neo-Weberian State paradigm Van Acker (2017) will be useful for

improving human resource management and service delivery. This is because, first this version stresses the need for professionalism, and result-oriented management assuming that public servants are very innovative, Second, the emphasis that the best trek to modernization is citizen and service users' engagement in a variety of ways.

5. Conclusion

Open innovation has a double-edged impact on staffing and human resource management. On one side it can improve the staffing function. On the other side, open innovations can result in a negative impact if allowed unconsciously to flourish in public service. One reason for this is the practice of the old and traditional public administration dominated by bureaucracy. In Tanzania, not much was done to improve the public service human resource management functions despite the substantial commitment and investment by the Government and the development partners. Open innovation cannot change the staffing function altogether. Open innovation is a concept that can be used to improve the Tanzanian public service. More needs to be done by the Government in collaboration with other partners to improve the performance levels of human resources throughout the public service. This can easily be attained if open innovation practices are embedded in the public service.

6. Limitations and Areas for Further Studies

This study was limited to the use of documentary sources supplementing them with current theoretical literature in open innovation. In this respect, we have built on the concept of open innovation and envision the future of Human Resource Management in the public service of Tanzania. Other researchers may wish to venture into researching open innovation in the context of digital governance transformation in the public service in Tanzania and or how open innovation may enhance co-design and co-delivery in the context of decentralization in Tanzania, specifically, the use of improved Opportunity and Obstacles to Development (OOD) tool.

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