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Towards the Understanding of Development Policy Failures through the eyes of

Management and Organizational theories: Research Agenda

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Abstract

It is widely acknowledged by researchers and practitioners that development policies particularly in Africa have not delivered the desirable outcomes. This has been largely attributed to the inadequate attention paid to policy implementation. To address the issues of implementation, the paper argues that organizational and management theories can advance our understanding of why good policies do not deliver desirable outcomes. Therefore, the paper outlines the current gap in the literature on development in general and poverty reduction strategy in particular. It highlighted that, because much of the research on Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) have been undertaken at institutional rather than at organizational level, the issue of implementation of poverty reduction interventions has been neglected. The paper also demonstrated that researchers have not taken full advantage of the vast amount of literature in management and organization theory to unravel the complexity of implementing poverty reduction interventions. Therefore, to enable researchers address the issue of implementation, research proposal and research questions have been advanced in the paper to guide future research.

Introduction

Effective organisations are key to the eradication of poverty in Africa. Therefore, Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) should be associated closely and explicitly with organisational capacities to implement them (Blunt & Jones, 1992; Disch, 2004;

Goldsworthy & Bennell, 2001; Jaeger & Kanungo, 1990; Kiggundu, 1991, 1993; World Bank 2005). In fact, investigations of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in some African countries (Benin, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania) reveal that organisational and institutional capacity issues are among the constraints impacting on the implementation of poverty reduction interventions (see, Bierschenk, Thioleron & Bako Afrifari, 2003; Booth, 2003; Dante, Gautier, Marouani & Raffinot, 2003; Evans & Ngalewa, 2003; Falck, Landfald & Rebelo, 2003; Hanmer, Ikiara, Eberlei & Abong, 2003; Jenkins & Tsoka, 2003; Mutebi, Stone & Thin, 2003). Similarly, the Africa Commission Report (2005) recognised the need to build the capacity of African organisations. The conclusions of one recent study (Owusu, 2005: 157) specifically refer to organisational ineffectiveness in the public sector as one of the main reasons for the generally disappointing results of policy driven reform programmes in Africa:

> "The public sector in Africa is riddled with widespread ineffectiveness. Although some countries have implemented various reform programmes with the support of international development agencies, the results so far have been disappointing. One reason for the failure is that the policies have focused more on achieving macroeconomic stability than making the organisations effective".

Although more than three decades ago experts highlighted the existence of gap between policy formulation and policy implementation (see Grindle, 1980; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975), researchers and policy makers are yet to address this anomaly adequately. UNCTAD (2002) pointed out that:

"Progress in international efforts to alleviate poverty will depend as much on international development cooperation in resolving the problems associated with protectionism and debt as on the improvement of domestic policies institutions and governance in developing countries".

We will go as far as stating that progress in addressing poverty will depend as much on human, organisational and institutional capacity as on good governance. This is because successful implementation of good governance is dependent on the three dimensions of capacity (human, institutional, organisational).

The inadequate attention paid to systematic research on the capacity of poverty reduction organisations is a matter of concern. Intuitively, we know that effective organisations are critical to the success of poverty reduction programmes. However, there is little evidence on how this contribution is achieved or can be maximised. In contrast, in the private sector, such investigations have been conducted extensively. For example, despite methodological difficulties, extensive research has explored the impact of specific management practices on the achievement of organisational objectives (Connolly; Conlon & Deutsch, 1980; Ostroff & Schmitt, 1993; Tusi, 1990). Similarly, extensive research has been conducted into how specific characteristics of organisations contribute to specific organisational outcomes (Sibbet, 1997). This has resulted in the development of body of knowledge on how to achieve organisational purpose and objectives (Daft, 2004; 2006; Huselid; Jackson, & Schuler, 1997; Mamman, 2002a; Woodward, 1965). Beyond the

issue of capacity, there is the issue of the willingness to use capacity and this is where organisational and human values play a significant role (Alas & Rees, 2006).

The objectives of this paper are to:

- briefly review current research on PRS and outline issues pertaining to the failure of good policies on poverty eradication to produce desired outcomes

- underscore the need for research on the capacity of poverty reduction organizations

- discuss the potential contribution of management and organization theory can make in the study of the implementation of PRS

- Provide direction for research.

Current Research on the management of PRS

Much of the research on the management of PRS has been conducted at institutional level rather than at organizational level (see Nayak; Saxena & Farrington, 2002). For example, attempts have been made to examine public expenditure management and poverty reduction interventions (Foster; Fozzard; Naschold & Conway, 2002). In a nutshell, the bulk of literature on the management of PRS concentrate on the following: participation and ownership of PRS (e.g. UNCTAD,2002; Booth et al. 1998; ODI, 2002); Public Expenditure on PRS (e.g. Foster et al. 2002; Foster & Zormelo, 2002; Foster & Mijumbi, 2002; Fozzard, 2001; 2002); Monitoring and evaluation of PRS implementation (e.g. Hague 2000; McGee, 2000). Other investigations focus on the politics and government involvement in the preparation and implementation of PRS (e.g. Casson, 2001; Craig & Porter 2003; Gould & Ojanen, 2003; World Bank/IMF 2002; Piron & Norton 2004) and

on the capacity to deliver PRS (Azeem & Ayamboo 2005). Another field of research on PRS focuses on the impact of PRS (e.g. Lentz, 2002; Booth, 2003; ODI, 2001). While these investigations have made a significant contribution to the implementation dimension of PRS, they have not directly investigated organizational capacities or their impact on the outcome of specific poverty reduction intervention. Therefore, there is the need for systematic independent academic investigation on the role and impact of the capacities of poverty reduction organisations on the achievement of specific poverty reduction objective.

So far, body of knowledge on specific poverty reduction agencies and organizations is almost non existent. Yet in the last two decades or so, many African countries have established such organizations to help implement PRS. For example, Nigeria has established the National Directorate of Employment in order to address the problem of unemployment (Evawoma-Enuku & Mgbor, 2005). Under the poverty eradication strategy, the government has also established the Economic Empowerment Commission and the Poverty Eradication Commission. There are similar organizations across Africa. Understanding their capacity and internal processes will undoubtedly shed light on their effectiveness vis-à-vis PRS and poverty eradication effort in general.

Issues associated with failure of development policies
It is now widely acknowledged that previous attempts to address poverty and underdevelopment in Africa through structural adjustment have not produced the outcomes expected (Aryeetey, Harrigan & Nissanke, 2000; Easterly, 2001). Similarly, the

current use of aid to address development and poverty has been questioned and criticised (Azeem and Ayamboo; 2005; Booth, 2005; OECD DAC, 2003; Oxfam, 1999; 2000; Rogerson, 2005; Toye, 2003). Apart from the limitations of the policies themselves, the lack of effective organisations to implement the policies have contributed to their failure. At the best of times, the capacity of most African organisations is inadequate in terms of realising the objectives of current and previous policies on poverty. For example, market institutions are too underdeveloped to absorb the opportunities and slack produced by structural adjustment policies (UN 2002; Graham, 2002). The current PRS are not immune from the organisational problems that affected the implementation of previous development policies (Azeem & Ayamboo, 2005). Yet research effort to identify effective PRS and policies is not replicated in the management of poverty reduction organisations.

Evidence from Uganda indicates that the success of poverty reduction initiatives is much to do with commitment of officials located within the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. Evidence also indicates that the staff of the ministries are well paid, and have developed a culture of high achievement openness and innovation (Foster et al. 2002). Similarly Azeem & Ayamboo, (2005) reported that the successful implementation of poverty reduction programmes in Ghana was influenced by the effectiveness of the National Development Planning Commission. We believe that unless the *gap* between *macro* policy-oriented research and *micro* organisations-oriented research is filled, the issue of lack of impact of poverty reduction policies will persist. In other words, the problem of good policies without effective organisations to implement

them will remain.

One of the disturbing revelations relevant to PRS has been the lack of adequate evidence between the increase in human capital and growth in per capita output (Easterly 2001; Roberts 2003). Synthesis of research by Easterly (2001) indicates that there is no apparent relationship between the growth in human capital and economic growth in Africa. These issues call for the need to look at other factors associated with the implementation of development policies. For example, given that development policies are implemented by organizations and people, it is logical to spend a significant amount of effort on investigating their role in the delivery of development interventions such as poverty reduction interventions.

Need for Research on the Capacity of Poverty Reduction Organisations

Why do we need a study on the capacity of poverty reduction organisations? First, as highlighted earlier, research on PRS in some African countries has revealed that organizational and institutional capacities are among the stumbling blocks in the implementation of PRS (see Booth 2003). For example, in a study of the implementation of PRSP in the Benin, Bierschenk et al. (2003:69) observed that:

> "*There were also concerns that capacity to implement the poverty strategy would be inadequate. The capacity problem was seen as the result of a number of factors, including unproductive use of staff time, poorly managed flows of funds and resources; and weak motivation linked to low staff salaries and high level of*

administrative corruption".

Similarly, Dante et al. (2003) points to the Malian Government's lack of capacity to adequately plan for the implementation of PRSP. Also Falck et al. (2003) underscored the lack of capacity to coordinate the implementation of PRSP in Mozambique. Organizational and institutional capacity to implement PRSP was also highlighted in Rwanda (Mutebi et al. 2003) and Tanzania (Evans & Ngalewa, 2003). In spite of the evidence highlighted above, there is no systematic academic investigation of the capacities of poverty reduction organizations in Africa or anywhere else. Particularly, there is no systematic academic research on the impact of capacities on organizational ability to implement poverty reduction interventions and their outcomes. Therefore, research on these issues is long overdue.

Second, much of the research on the management of PRS has been conducted at institutional level (see Nayak, Saxena, Farrington, 2002). In a nutshell, the bulk of literature on the management of PRS concentrates on the following: public expenditure management and poverty reduction interventions (Foster; Fozzard; Naschold & Conway, 2002); participation and ownership of PRS (e.g. UNCTAD,2002; Booth et al. 1998; ODI, 2002); public expenditure on PRS (e.g. Foster et al. 2002; Foster & Zormelo, 2002; Foster & Mijumbi, 2002; Fozzard, 2001; 2002); monitoring and evaluation of PRS implementation (e.g. Hague 2000; McGee, 2000). Other investigations focus on the politics and government involvement in the preparation and implementation of PRS (e.g. Casson, 2001; Craig & Porter 2003; Gould & Ojanen, 2003; World Bank/IMF 2002;

Piron & Norton 2004) and on the capacity to deliver PRS (Azeem & Ayamboo 2005). Another field of research on PRS focuses on the impact of PRS (e.g. Lentz, 2002; Booth, 2003; ODI, 2001). While these investigations have made a significant contribution to the implementation dimension of PRS, they have not directly investigated organisational capacities or their impact on the outcome of specific poverty reduction interventions. Therefore, there is an existent need for systematic independent academic investigation into the role and impact of the capacities of poverty reduction organisations on the achievement of specific poverty reduction objective.

Third, poverty reduction organisations have the mandate to implement, monitor, evaluate and report on the outcome of poverty reduction interventions. Therefore, their capacity to do so should be of acute interest to policy makers, donors, international development agencies and researchers.

Fourth, to appreciate the need for research on the capacity of poverty reduction organisations consider this: the production of PRSPs requires data to develop the strategy. However, many organisations dealing with the acquisition and management of data in African countries are under-resourced and poorly managed. Similarly, PRSP formulation requires the participation of NGOs and Civil Societies. But unless such organisations are properly managed and led, their contribution to the participatory process will be limited. In fact there is already criticism of the contribution and ownership of PRSPs (Azeem, & Ayamdoo, 2005; Dante et al. 2003).

Fifth, poverty reduction organisations are among the key building blocks of poverty reduction policy implementation. To ignore their internal management processes, capacity and interface within the wider policy framework is to negate the well established fact that the effectiveness of organisations is central to the social and economic development of any society (Bowie, 1991; Deyo, 1987; Gao, 1997). Thus, good policies without effective organisations to implement them represent little less than formalised dreams.

Sixth, the absence of effective organisations plays a role in limiting the impact of human capital development (Metcalfe & Rees, 2005). Unless more attention is paid to the effectiveness of organisations in all sectors of the economy, PRS are unlikely to succeed (Mamman & Sani, 2003; Mamman & Makonen 2003). Decades of research in management has revealed that specific organizational attributes such as strategy, structure and systems impact on employees' behaviour and organizational performance (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Chandler, 1962; Miles & Snow, 1978; Mamman, 1990; 1995; 1997; Mamman et al. 1996; Mintzberg, 1983; Woodward, 1965). This body of knowledge has not been adequately utilised or indeed tested in development studies research (lewis, 2002).

Finally, there is no obvious body of knowledge on specific poverty reduction agencies and organisations. Yet in the last two decades or so, many African countries have established such organisations to help implement PRS. For example, Nigeria has established the National Directorate of Employment in order to address the problem of

unemployment (Evawoma-Enuku & Mgbor, 2005). Under the poverty eradication strategy, the government has also established the Economic Empowerment Commission and the Poverty Eradication Commission. There are similar organisations across Africa. Understanding their capacity and internal processes will undoubtedly shed light on their effectiveness vis-à-vis PRS and poverty eradication efforts in general.

Can management and organization theory contribute?

While there are many factors that may account for the lack of direct relationship between human capital expenditure and economic development in Africa, we believe the absence of effective organisations contributes to it. This is because empirical evidence has demonstrated that effective organisations are more able to create employment and also to pay relatively high wages (Abowd, 1990; Abrahamson, 1991; 1996; DiMaggio, & Powell, 1983). Also, evidence has shown that job creation and high wages are associated with the effective management of organisations (Daft, 2004; Huselid; 1995; Huselid; Jackson, & Schuler, 1997; Mamman, 1990; 1995; 1997; Mamman et al. 1996). In fact more than three decades ago, management research has demonstrated that specific organizational attributes such as strategy, structure and systems impacts on employees' behaviour and organizational performance (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Chandler, 1962; Miles & Snow, 1978; Mintzberg, 1983; Woodward, 1965). Such body of knowledge is not adequately utilised in development studies research. The absence of effective organisations plays a role in limiting the impact of human capital development. Unless more attention is paid to the effectiveness of organisations in all sectors of the economy, PRS might not live up to their promise (Mamman & Sani, 2003; Mamman & Makonen

2003).

Direction for Research

Based on the discussion so far, much of the problem associated with failure of poverty

reduction initiatives is rooted in the absence of organizational capacity. Therefore, to

address the existing gap in academic research on the capacity of poverty reduction

organisations to implement specific poverty reduction interventions, researchers need to

identify specific agency or agencies with a mandate to implement specific poverty

reduction intervention. This is an approach widely used by management and organization

theory researchers.

Researchers can contribute by utilising organisation and management theories and

research to provide better understanding of the interface between PRS and the vehicles

through which they are delivered. This can be achieved by undertaking an extensive

review of *management* and *organisation* literature (in the private and public sectors) on

the impact of capacities, structure, systems and processes on the achievement of

organisational objectives. This will be followed by a comparison of findings from

fieldwork with the literature generated.

Research Questions

The main question that should guide researchers on the role of organizations in

eradicating poverty is: To what role do organisational and human capacities play in the

implementation of PRS. Triangulation approach to the collection of data and information

would seem necessary. This will enable the use of balance-scorecard approach to determine factors impacting on the process and outcome of the implementation of PRS.

The specific questions that could guide the research would be:

How does the capacity of a poverty reduction organisation influence its ability to implement specific poverty reduction intervention (e.g. to help the poor and the unemployed find a means of livelihood)?

What are the specific levels of human and organisational capacities of the organization and its constituent's parts?

Are there specific capacities unique to the implementation of poverty reduction? If so, what are the critical capacities for the effective implementation of poverty reduction interventions?

How do the similarities and differences in capacities across organizations to explain the nature and outcome of the implementation of PRS?

What are the influences on the <u>willingness</u> of organisations and individuals to <u>deploy</u> their capacities to pursue poverty reduction objectives?

What are the challenges and key organisational success factors for poverty reduction organisations in sub-Saharan Africa?

What are the research and policy implications of the study?

Methodology

In order to achieve the objectives outlined above, there will be the need for researchers to define what they mean by key variables in the study and how to measure them. This will provide the theoretical and practical framework within which to study the role of organizations in the implementation of poverty reduction. The following sections define the key variables.

Organizations and Institutions: Richard Daft (2004) defined organization as "(1) social entities that (2) are goal-directed, (3) are designed as deliberately structured and coordinated activity systems, and (4) are linked to the external environment. In March 2003 DFID produced a guideline for "promoting institutional and organizational development. In the guideline, DFID describe organizations as groups of players who come together for a common purpose or to achieve specific objectives. They adapt their tactics and organization according to externally defined rules and regulations – the rules of the game. They play to, but are not the same as, those rules. For example, it is a rule of the game that football teams comprise a goal-keeper and ten outfield players; but the configuration, position and tactics of the outfield players are decided by the team as an organization. According to DFID are international, national or societal structures that guides and regulates individual and organizations' behaviour:

They may be formal – legal systems, property rights, enforcement mechanism; or informal – customs, traditions. They may operate at different levels – international (egg. WTO rules), national (e.g. Laws, constitutions), social (e.g. Norms of conduct, status of women), family (e.g. Inheritance rules). They may nest within larger institutions – e.g. Village-based collective institutions nested within the policy institutions of government. They often also referred to as "the rules of the game". The most widely used definition of Institutions is that used by North. They "consist of formal rules, informal constraints - - norms of behaviour, conventions, and self imposed codes of conduct – and their enforcement characteristics".

Capacity: Using the World Bank's methodology, capacity can be viewed from three dimensions: 1. *Human capacity*. This refers to leadership and management skills and qualities possessed and used by people in poverty reduction organisations. It may also include skills and abilities of key staff to analyse poverty, design and implement strategies, policies, programs/projects, deliver services and monitor results pertaining to poverty. 2. *Organisational capacity*. This refers to groups of people with a clear purpose, objectives, and internal structures, processes, systems, staffing and resources to implement specific poverty reduction initiatives. 3. *Institutional capacity*: This refers to the formal rules and informal norms of using public resources and regulating public and private activities to provide the framework for implementing poverty reduction programmes and policies. Institutional capacity as defined above should not be within the

scope of this research. However, the study should investigate the organization's/agency's understanding and capacity to apply norms and rules when using public resources.

Effectiveness: The study should adopt the standard management and organisation theorists' definitions of effectiveness to explain the effectiveness of a specific poverty reduction organisation. Thus, effectiveness of the organisation should be viewed as the degree to which it is able to implement successfully economic empowerment interventions (Daft, 2004: 2006). It should also be viewed in terms of the organisation's ability to provide the services and support at the standard expected by its stakeholders (Daft, 2006). Stakeholders of poverty reduction organizations can include the following: Federal and State governments, job-seekers, current and passed beneficiaries of support, relevant NGOs, parents/relatives of the poor and job-seekers.

Research Design*:* A good research design should have a structure that links the empirical data to be collected to the research questions (Blalock & Blalock, 1982; Robson, 1993). The study can adapt and use the well established and widely acknowledged *balance score-card* approach for evaluating organisational effectiveness and achievements (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). The methodology will enable the evaluation of an organisation's key performance indicators and the factors (e.g. capacities) responsible for achieving them. The *balance community score-card* advocated by Holbeche (2006) can be adapted and used to assess the relationships between an organisation's specific stakeholders such as NGOs, federal and state governments, and beneficiaries of support. This approach can enable the collection of data that are directly relevant to answering the

research questions outlined above. For example, how does an organization's capacity impact on its ability to successfully implement economic empowerment programme? What are the critical capacities necessary for the implementation of economic empowerment programme?.

Data collection: Both quantitative and qualitative multiple case study approach as the primary data collection method can be used. The choice of case study methodology is derived from the need to understand complex social phenomenon such as organisational culture imbedded in poverty reduction organisations. This method will enable investigation of the phenomenon in context and provides the opportunity for deeper understanding of individuals, organisations and events (Krause, 1992). Also the use of multiple cases of implementation of poverty reduction initiatives offers the advantages of exploration, revelation of hidden features and, in-depth examination of multiple issues (Stoecker, 1991; Whipp, 1998). The use of multiple cases of implementation of poverty reduction will overcome the inherent risk of misjudgement because of the use of a single source of evidence (Hakim, 2000). The use of multi-site methodology will also enable the establishment of trends which transcend the specifics of a single case (Yin, 1994).

The complexity of development environment, the context of policy implementation and the backgrounds of the informants demand the use of multiple techniques for data collection (Jankowicz, 2000; Buchnan; Boddy & McCalman, 1988). Therefore multiple tools and techniques to collect data and information should be used.

The study should collect, examine and analyse policy statements, plans, and speeches to gain insights into implementation issues regarding poverty reduction intervention. It should collect documents (e.g. reports) relating to the organisation structure, systems achievement/performance. Key staff and officers should be observed and interviewed in order to understand further the organisation's systems and processes. As part of the triangulation approach to the study, key stakeholders (e.g. beneficiaries of support, relevant NGOs, relevant federal and state departments) should be among the sources of data and information for this study.

CONCLUSION AND POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH.

This paper sets out to outline the current gap in the literature on development in general and poverty reduction strategy in particular. We have highlighted that much of the research on PRS have been undertaken at institutional rather than organizational level. We argue that the neglect of organizational issues is partly responsible for the failure of development policies to achieve desirable outcomes. The paper has also demonstrated that researchers have not taken full advantage of the vast amount of literature in management and organization theory to unravel the complexity of implementing poverty reduction interventions. It also noted the everlasting issue of failure of good development policies to deliver desirable outcomes due to the lack of effective mechanism and capacity to implement them.

In the following sections the paper outlines how the study of organizational capacity using management and organization theory can make significant contribution in the study

of development in general and poverty reduction in particular.

We believe this study will make an intellectual contribution to the field of development study in general and poverty reduction in particular by underscoring the relevance of capacities of organisations in relation to the implementation of development interventions.

Another important potential contribution of the research is its focus on bridging the current gap between *macro* policy-oriented research and *micro* organisation-oriented research. This will provide a more sophisticated understanding of why 'good' policy does not always produce the desired outcomes.

The study can provide empirical evidence on how organisational capacity impacts on the delivery and achievement of specific development intervention.

The study will re-focus the attention of development researchers on the importance of organisational process and effectiveness within the wider scope of development research.

Another contribution of the study arises out of the emphasis that it places upon the application of management and organisation theories to the field of development studies (see Lewis, 2002). The field of management and organisational theory is well suited, as a discipline, to contribute to issues of organisational capacity and effectiveness (Metcalfe & Rees, 2005). Decades of research in the field have produced a significant body of

knowledge on how to deal with issues pertaining to organisational capacity vis-à-vis implementation of policies and strategies. In fact, the current adoption of private-sector oriented management practices by public sector organisations and NGOs is a testament to the significant body of knowledge developed in the field of management.

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