

Challenges Of Policy Implementation In Government Of Malawi

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ABSTRACT

Decisions are what shape actions, if decisions remain unimplemented it means that there can be no change. A decision is a best choice chosen among the alternatives. To be able to come up with a good decision, scholars have come up with a well-defined process which guides the steps that need to be taken for individuals and organisations to make the optimum decision possible. Decision making reduces uncertainty. Many decisions made by the organisations, most of the times become policies but not all decisions are policies. In Malawi, a landlocked country in south eastern region of Africa, many decisions in form of policies that are made by the department of human resource management and development never yield the results they intended and most of the policies remain unimplemented or partially implemented as shown by the persistence of the problems which were supposed to be addressed by these policies. This paper is an attempt to answer these relevant questions about the decisions made by the Malawian government over the period of time and their real grassroots level of execution in which many elements have been shown to impact the decision-making process from the will of the people to the availability of resources.

Key Words: *Decisions, Policies, Execution, Impact, Malawi*

1. INTRODUCTION

Every time we need to make several decisions due to the environment which we are in and it is so dynamic and decision making is inevitable to this world of ours. Some decisions are big that they can affect the whole country. People always say that the decision you make today affect the future. Decisions show how organisation solve its problems, utilize resources and establish its goals. Decision is the chosen choice among available alternatives, and decision making is the process of identifying challenges and opportunities in the organisation in order to resolve them (Lunenbug, 2010).

A decision without implementation is like a car without an engine. Several decisions from organisations made by management act as policies but not all decisions are policies because they are just made due to situations at that time. This happens in all dimensions of life. In this modern world, human resource management is an important aspect in all new forms of business because any business nowadays needs to find new ways of involving people to gain a competitive advantage. Human resource is a key to organisation achieving its mission and objectives of the organisation. In addition, it helps organisations to define their strategies and build programs to develop their human capital. Therefore, the decisions made should be

carefully taken, implemented and enforced for operations to run smoothly (Silva & Lima, 2018).

Malawi is a developing country located in the sub-Saharan African continent. The government established the Department of Human Resource Management and Development under the Office of the President (OPC) which looks after all human resource working in the government (civil servants). It makes decisions on terms and conditions of service for all public servants. These decisions when made, they are disseminated in all Departments and Ministries as per policies in form of a circular.

Policy is a set of ideas, plan or guide in which everyone directed to, whether a group, an organisation, departments and government, should follow. It is important for it to be clear and to communicate to all stakeholders affected by it. To better compete the global market, government needs to create and implement corporate strategies to promote itself as 'preferred employer' and investing in progressive Human Resource policies and programs in order to reach the performing organisation of engaged people. All these can be achieved when there is a proper and systematic implementation of these policies and decisions in the government.

The Reality of Decision Making and Implementation in Malawi

Implementation of a decision, is putting thoughts in reality. Decision Implementation involves managing of the consequences of the organisation network, of related decisions to achieve our goal. It is required to make a framework of actions (implementation plan). This needs thoughtful problem-solving planning and creativity may be important to reach the end of the decision. When implementing the decisions, all stakeholders need to be communicated and to be part of it before implementation. Apart from this, implementation also needs monitoring and the progress or the outcome is very important if the decision made is yielding its purpose.

Administrative decision is said to be rational. It means that decisions are made under certainty. This means that, the alternatives, outcomes criteria are known and there is ability to make the optimum choice and then to implement. The management decisions are in two categories, that is, programed and non-programed decisions. Program decisions are made in response to things that often happen while non programed decisions are the visa versa, they are only there on things which are non-recurring. There is a process which the organisations or management needs to follow in order to make an effective decision. This process has six steps according to Lunenburg, 2010.

The first stage is identifying the problem, where one has to understand the problem situation and to realise that he/she needs to make a decision. Therefore, there is a need to gather relevant information (internal or external information) and decisions should be clear. Second is generating alternatives. In this stage, the information is collected and there is a need to identify several alternatives and then finding out which are the best in solving the situation. Third is evaluating alternatives. There is need to evaluate the alternatives to find the best, through the following three questions, 'is the alternative feasible?', 'is it a satisfactory alternative?' and 'what impact will it have on people?'. Then, it can be arranged in a priority order and there is a need to evaluate more. Fourth is choosing an alternative. At this stage, there is need to choose the best one for the situation. The basis of the judgement should be on how close are the outcomes of the alternatives to the desired goal. The fifth stage is implementing the decision and finally, evaluating decision effectiveness. On the evaluation stage, when implementing a decision and does not give a desired outcome, there are probably a number of causes such as that, maybe the problem was not well defined, or there is poor evaluation of alternatives, and/or the implementation plan was not well done. Among these possible causes, the most often and very serious mistake is that if it's not defined properly. Due to this, the alternative that is chosen and is implemented cannot produce the desired goal.

This process of a decision making is a continuous process and never-ending process (Lunenburg, 2010).

This Paper is going to focus more on-stage number five of the decision making, which is the implementation of a decision. A decision can be very good and so creative but when implementation is poor, it can fail. Therefore, there are some factors to consider when implementing a decision.

First, decision has to be clearly understood. This can be done by communicating effectively to all members of staff. Second, there is a need to encourage acceptance of the decision. In order to promote commitment by making the staff to be part of the decision. Third, enough resources are important to help the alternative to succeed. There is need to set a budget and schedules for the action. Fourth, a workable timeline should be established whether the action will be done step by step or entire action at once. Lastly, the clear assignment of responsibilities. In other words, who will do what. (Lunenburg, 2010).

According to Chadwala, 2013, who looked at non-implementation of the performance of management policy of Malawian Civil Servants by various Ministries and Departments. He discovered that this policy was not implemented for several reasons, such as lack of interest and commitment from the leadership, resistance to change and fear of the unknown, lack of full knowledge on the importance of the system, absence of political and management support, monitoring and evaluation, lack of financial resources, unplanned activities and absence of rewards and sanctions. In addition, he also discovered that, it is not only this policy which had difficulties in enforcing it but there are several policies which have experienced the same challenges in the government of Malawi, such as the Decentralisation Policy introduced in 1998 (has been implemented partially at present), Contributory Pension Policy from the Pension Act 2011. The main problem he found was due to lack of a clear monitoring and evaluation (Chadwala, 2013).

In organisation systems, there should be an emphasis on the need for good information and channels of communication in order to assist effective decision-making in the organisation. An understanding on how decisions are made helps in undertaking behaviour in the organisation (Mullin, 2010). Various other studies (Limbani et al. 2020, Nyirenda et al. 2020; Otoo F.N.K et al. 2019; Patra G. 2019; Otoo F.N.K. and Mishra M. 2018) have been done in this direction and many findings have been achieved.

2. CONCLUSION

The government has been undertaking several reforms to improve the performance of the public services in Malawi. Some of the reforms have been on how the human resource is managed. Policies in form of decentralisation, performance management and pensions have failed to deliver their promises due to lack of implementation or lack of it entirely. In theory, many of the solutions that are needed are there but, on the ground, there is not much leading to a question how does it happen that the intended solutions are never applied? Decisions are important in the organisation's day to day operations. Every decision in the organisation before using it, is evaluated if it will fit the situation or not. The key ways to make implementation of decisions effective is through making a very good plan of how to do it as explain above and without implementation, it is as good as having a problem without a solution.

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