

Which Way Forward? The New Public Sector Reform Agenda in Ghana: Path Destruction, Path Creation or Path Dependence

Paper Presented by

Augustina Adusah-Karikari & Frank Ohemeng

Public Finance and Public Management in Africa Workshop

GIMPA, Accra

October 22-24 2018

Outline

- Aims of the Paper
- Path Destruction, Path Creation, Path Dependency
- Lessons from Past Reforms
- Review of the National Public Sector Reform Strategy
- Way Forward

Some Issues - Ghana's Public Sector

- Poor institutional capacity of the various MDAs to formulate and implement policies for enhanced service delivery to citizens;
- Inadequate support from central agencies;
- Limited coordination between sector MDAs
- Weak organizational drive for performance
- Weak human capacity
- The absence of a results culture and capacity for monitoring at the upstream (center of government) level. (World Bank, 2018; GOG 2015; Ayee 2002)

Introduction & Research Questions

- Why has it become difficult for government to effectively develop and implement a PSR agenda to revamp a public service that was deemed the best in Africa at the time of independence?
- Will this new agenda lead to a new path creation for the public sector in Ghana?
- In short, is it 'eureka' or just new wine in old bottle skin?

Aims of the Paper

- To establish if the NPSRS seeks to:
 - ◆ destroy the path that the previous government attempted to establish; or
 - ◆ Simply a new way of creating a new path that subsequent administrations can follow; or
 - ◆ path dependency with incremental tweaking for which the government is following.

Path Destruction

- In Path destruction, attempts are made to erase traces of the previous path, which will then lead to the creation of a new path (Herring, 2003).
- Policy actors do not attempt to build on anything from the past but introduce new sets of ideas and new instruments to undertake a new venture or create a new institution.
- ‘Creative destruction’ – new combinations of existing resources’. Destruction is not about the eradication of the bureaucratic institution but about altering the structure to make it work better (Pfarrer & Smith, 2015; Schumpeter, 1942)

Path Creation

- New institutions must be created due to societal dynamisms, which makes it difficult for one to follow an established path (Garud, 2001).
- Challenges the assumption of path dependency and provides an alternative for the development and creation of new institutions that then sets its own path subsequently.
- In PC, actors mobilize the past not necessarily to repeat or avoid what happened, but, instead, to generate new options

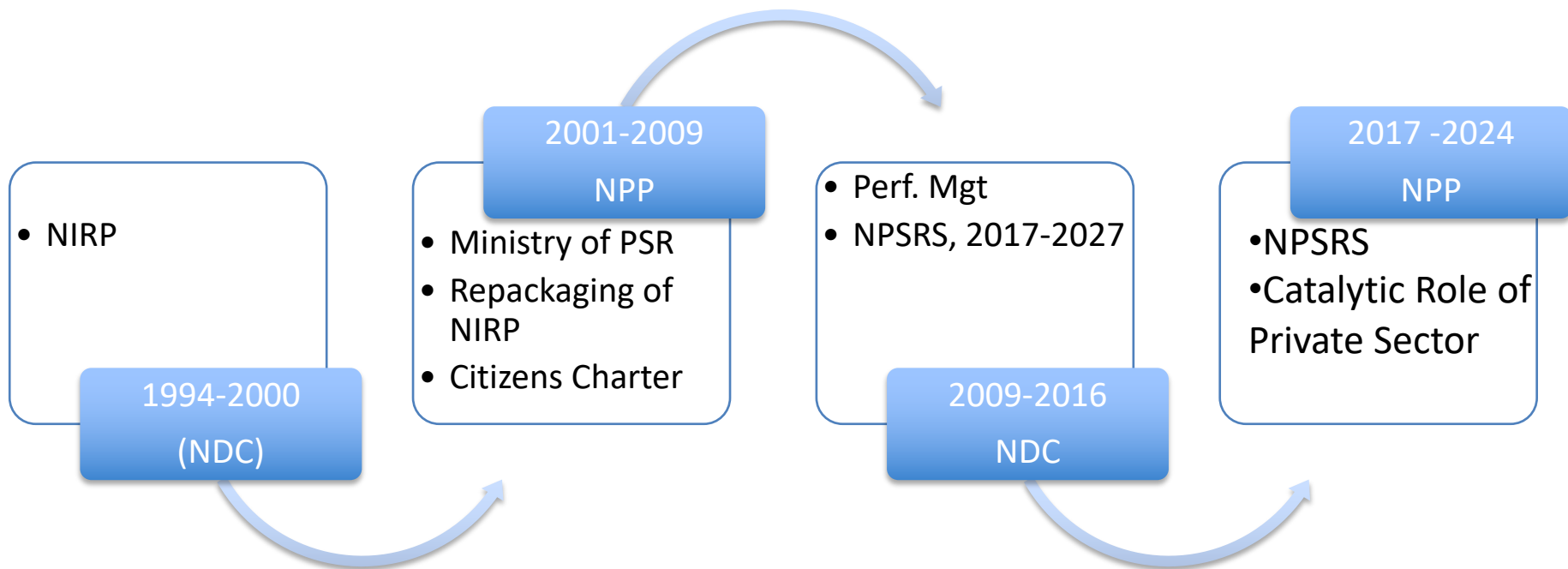
Path Dependency

- History matters if one is to understand change and if one is to embark upon any successful change in the future (David 1985).
- PD characterizes historical sequences in which contingent events set institutional patterns with deterministic properties into motion (Djelic and Quack, 2007)
- New paths are not created in a vacuum isolated from existing paths (Hanseth, 2000) .

Lessons from Past Reforms

- Lack of continuity in the implementation of public sector reforms
- Past reform initiatives had minimal linkage and integration with the planning and budgeting frameworks.
- Widespread apathy, resistance to change, indifferent attitude of public servants and the citizenry

PSR in the 4th Republic



The New Public Sector Reform Strategy in Perspective – 6 PILLARS

Citizens and private sector-focused public sector

A strengthened public sector regulatory framework

A capable and disciplined work force;

Modernized and improved work conditions;

Strengthened local governance structures;

Digitized public sector services and systems

Analyzing the NPSRS

- The agenda is neither a path destruction nor path creation but path dependence.
- A rehash of the old ways of doing things.
- The agenda should move beyond the traditional identification of previous problems and look at the core problems affecting the public sector.

Fundamental Issues

The reform does not tackle the fundamental problems, such as:

- bureaucratic insulation from political interference
- Create an embedded autonomy
- Address the principles of merit and the merit system,.

What Needs to be Done in Public Sector Reforms

- The various previous reforms, similar to this one, failed to identify the need to 'bureaucratize enough' the public service.
- The bureaucracy is over-politicized and its affecting professionalism
- The need to insulate the bureaucracy, which will lead to the creation of an embedded autonomous bureaucracy, which will enable bureaucrats work independently and effectively.
- The merit system- A careful look at rebuilding the bureaucracy through the merit system

Conclusion

- PSR is path dependency, as it is ongoing
- However, if a path is not working, there is the need to create a new path, which then sets its own path dependence trajectories.
- This reform pads up the old reform path, which has not been working
- Thus, there is the need to disturb the existing path and create new one for subsequent reforms

The End of Presentation

- *Augustina Adusah-Karikari, PhD*
(tinaadusah@gimpa.edu.gh)

&

- *Frank Ohemeng, PhD*
ohemenfl@gmail.com
fohemeng@uottawa.ca
FrankOhemeng@cunet.carleton.ca