

New Developments in Public Service Reform

Lessons from the Seminar and what might be done next!

Set out below are:

1. Some observations about the UK experiences.
2. A series of possible learning points arising from the Seminar. Are they learning points for you? What are other learning points that you feel will be important for you?
3. Action points for when you return home.

This seminar has focussed on Health Services, Primary and Secondary Education and Police. Even though the range of public services reviewed has been limited, there are some lessons that can be generalised to cover all public services.

One lesson is the devolution of responsibility and the need to move away from the traditional 'command and control' approach to the provision, management and delivery of public services. A second overriding lesson is the need to educate and raise the expectations of the population about what can be expected of the public services. Service quality expectations for the public services should be no less than those for the private sector in your country.

The common thread running through public service developments in the United Kingdom is the introduction of performance management. What though, does this mean and how can it be achieved?

Observations:

1. The high level of public/media interest in the quality (efficiency and effectiveness, with the emphasis on effectiveness) of the public services.
2. As a result, neither the Government nor the Opposition can afford to ignore them. Elections can depend upon quality in the delivery of public services.
3. Many reforms have been introduced, some of them inconsistent.
4. The reform process itself introduces additional costs and some of these costs have been shown to be unacceptable.
5. The current emphasis upon management performance does carry with it a very substantial overhead in:
 - Training;
 - Defining and managing the performance information collection process;
 - Monitoring the results;
 - Inspection and audit;
 - Penalty processes, including staff dismissal.If the wrong performance measure is chosen the results can be damaging and there is always a risk that the manager will manage to the performance measure rather than manage the service or activity.
6. Success in performance management depends very heavily upon trust in the manager because of the high degree of discretion that is needed.
7. Management as a skill can be more important in the chief executive than professional expertise in a particular discipline related to the service to be delivered.
8. Public officials have to be paid at an appropriate and competitive rate for the job.

9. Performance related pay can be a benefit but only in certain circumstances and not where the incentive for officials lies in the area of intellectual satisfaction. Indeed incentives linked to performance in some occupations could be positively damaging, such as for police where it would be wrong to link performance to arrests in most circumstances.
10. Not only is there a problem of managing to a performance target, there is also the problem of managing to a financial target and there can be an impossibility of reconciling the two.
11. Therefore improvements in financial management beyond the need for securing stewardship (stewardship means that the money is spent according to the budget, is legal and is properly authorised) become essential.
12. Improvements in institutional performance can be encouraged through incentives to the institution to meet or exceed targets.
13. There is a stronger role for audit and inspection and a difficult question is that of balance between audit and inspection and the demands upon management for service delivery.
14. Publicity about performance can be an essential driver.
15. The use of competition as a driver for reform, whilst it may on the face of it reduce costs through driving out inefficiencies, may perversely have the opposite effect where it prevents the emergence of workable partnerships to make the most effective use of scarce resource.
16. The public sector cannot of itself any longer finance on its own the scale and quality of public services demanded by taxpayers and consumers.
17. Too much emphasis on performance can lead to the interests of the customer or client being either ignored or otherwise damaged and therefore these interests do need protection.
18. Customer orientation of services is very important – a high regard for customer interests.
19. Overall professionalism of public services.
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Learning points

To achieve reform the following are some lessons:

1. Clear leadership is essential.
2. Consistent leadership is also required over time.
3. A clarity of vision is necessary and the communication of that vision to the staff and those required to carry it through.
4. A strong ‘middle management’ is required to put plans into practical effect and the top management has to recognise that:
 - Implementation takes time;
 - Training is required;
 - There is a significant difference between ordering a change and implementing change.
5. A ‘champion’ may be required willing to promote and support change.
6. A balance has to be struck between central direction and standards, and local initiative.

7. Devolution of decision making is essential. Can the management be trusted to take responsibility? If not what is to be done? Second guessing the management is a waste of resources. The solution lies in changing the management.
8. Public service should not be seen as a 'comfortable life'. If it is there is something wrong.
9. Communication of the message to the media, that is, time has to be taken to educate the media and this education process is a key function.
10. The development of partnerships, in a very wide sense, can have very significant benefits.
11. Individual services on their own cannot solve complex problems and to try to require individual services to do so can accentuate the problems. This carries with it messages about governmental organisation.
12. Mobilisation of resources from other than the public sector is often needed to secure the development of services.
13. Quality management is essential and it has to be motivated appropriately and paid for.
14. Quality management means tight management setting clear objectives and performance targets, guiding and supporting more junior management to achieve them coupled with a clear monitoring process and a willingness to take remedial actions.
15. Does the capacity exist, or can it be created to develop a rigorous performance setting and monitoring arrangement?
16. A clear set of policies and well-defined objectives is essential before setting performance measures and targets.
17. A robust audit and inspection regime is required and that regime should be as independent as possible from Government otherwise it will not be trusted.
18. The pressure to improve performance may cause the interests of the customer or client of the service to be overlooked and therefore arrangements for the protection of the customer or client become essential.
19. However, an essential feature of good service provision is 'customer orientation'.
20. Overall the development of professionalism in the public service is essential.
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Note: You may wish to delete some of these points if you feel that you disagree or they are not relevant to your country.

Action points:

Given what I have learnt in this seminar, the following are the main points I would like to see implemented/ or actions I would like to undertake, on my return home:

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Further help required:

Given what has been said above are there courses or other forms of help you would like to receive from The British Council, CIPFA or other UK organisations?

1.
2.
3.

Name:.....

Country:.....

Present position:.....

E mail address:.....

Please keep this form as an aide memoir for the course and when you return home please would you return a copy of the completed form by fax to Noel Hepworth at fax number: 00 44 20 8681 8058, or by email to noel.hepworth@ipf.co.uk

Thank you.

Noel Hepworth