

Preface

The Commonwealth Key Principles of Public Sector Reform were recommended and endorsed by the Commonwealth Working Group on Public Administration (CWGPA), which met on 27–28 November, 2014 in London.

The CWGPA was a direct outcome of the Fifth Commonwealth Ministers for Public Service Biennial Forum, held in Putrajaya, Malaysia, during the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management Biennial Conference on 19–20 October 2014. The forum recommended the establishment of a working group to identify principles of public sector reform that would guide the Commonwealth's work in public sector governance.

The two-day CWGPA meeting comprised 11 delegates drawn from 8 Commonwealth member countries — namely, Cameroon, Ghana, Grenada, Lesotho, Nigeria, Seychelles, Swaziland and Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting was facilitated by Professor Mushtaq Khan, economist at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and a member of the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration.

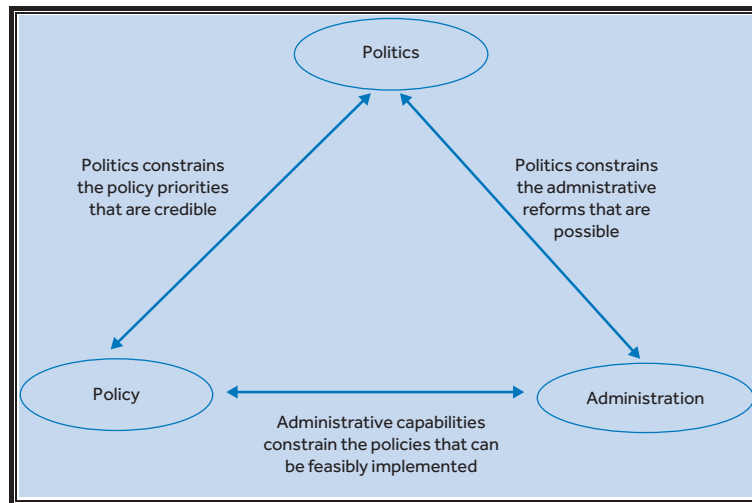
The main aim of the meeting was to conceptualise and develop a framework for the reform of public administration in developing Commonwealth member countries. This initiative was part of a broad set of measures aimed at securing member countries' commitment to and ownership of public sector reforms.

The CWGPA meeting underscored the importance of pragmatic, incremental reforms aimed at solving specific problems and achieving clear goals. Public service reforms that improve accountability and participation, reduce corruption and improve rule-following behaviour to reduce the discretion of bureaucrats, for instance in procurement and public financial management, were singled out as particularly crucial. The meeting emphasised the importance of home-grown reforms, since these take into account prevailing local political conditions and informal institutional arrangements.

The figure below summarises the interdependence of policy, politics and administration. It shows that administrative reform

priorities are to a large extent dependent on the policy priorities of a country, which are in turn affected by the country's stage of development, its natural resources and other endowments. Ultimately, politics determine which policies are actually feasible with regard to having sufficient support for implementation.

Interdependence between policy, politics and administration



The key principles of public sector reform

The CWGPA endorsed the following key guiding principles:

1. A new pragmatic and results-oriented framework
2. Clarification of objectives and administrative structures
3. Intelligent political strategies and engagement
4. Goal-oriented competencies and skills development
5. Experimentation and innovation
6. Professionalisation and improved morale
7. A code of conduct for public sector ethics
8. Effective and pragmatic anti-corruption strategies

This book reviews these principles and articulates their importance in public administration reform. It also contains case studies from select member countries on each principle, and frameworks that can be replicated, adapted or customised as appropriate. An overview of the principles is included below:

1. A new pragmatic and results-oriented framework:

As the pressure on public resources continues to rise, increased demand for better, high-quality and more responsive public services has prompted most governments to embrace results-oriented frameworks for programme planning and delivery. The aim is to facilitate better service delivery and ‘value for money’.

The focus on results helps determine national strategic priorities and objectives (outcomes/results) and translation of these into outputs. This focus also ensures a linkage between costs and outputs and outcomes, and measures how efficiently and effectively these outputs and outcomes are being achieved.

2. Clarification of objectives and administrative structures:

In many countries, there are significant skill gaps in the bureaucracy, given the development and administrative challenges involved in an increasingly globalised and competitive world. Capacity development remains a key priority in many countries, but this needs to be linked to a careful analysis of politically feasible development priorities and needs.

Administrative capabilities for service delivery; regulation of local and foreign businesses; and implementation of policies to develop the capabilities of domestic enterprises or regulate particular sectors, for example international trade, natural resources, infrastructure and service delivery to citizens and vulnerable groups — all of these are important.