

Editorial

Public Governance and leadership in times of Uncertainty. Intimacy of Politics and Science in Pandemic Management?

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Introduction

Societies of all times have withered the storms caused by social, political and economic disruptions. Throughout the journey of mankind, problems have often presented themselves and solutions have always been found. Men and women who have always been in charge of the public arena have always attempted to get answers. Politicians and scientists have always intimately worked together. The current situation the world finds itself in orchestrated by the monstrous Covid-19 is not different. The question in the minds of the public is what has so far influenced the containment measures of covid-19-politics or science?

As the world quickly came to terms with the social, economic, political and technological effects of covid-19, the politicians looked to scientists as the only hope. Of course, scientists equally looked to politicians for political guidance and facilitation. In many countries of the global, at the height of the second wave, political institutions failed and others crumbled but withstood the pressure. Public administrations demonstrated that they lagged 30 years behind the technological frontier.

Since the early onset, decision making in the pandemic has relied on the reported data on cases and deaths (Karlinsky, and Kobak, 2021). Politicians are given the statistics by now their intimate friend scientists to make the communication to the public. At the earliest stages of the pandemic, many governments shied away from evidence-based policies and instead preferred to listen to experts whom they carefully selected (Barberia, Plümper, Whitten, 2021). The initial response of politicians was that this was a simple matter that would wither. The case of President Trump and President Magufuli at the time demonstrated how far politicians were willing to ignore science and move it alone.

As the ramifications of Covid intensified and it created a paralysis of most public administration systems and tested the capacity of leaders in offering solutions to problems; the role of scientists against increased. The pandemic has thus now created more working connections between politicians and scientists. Benner (2021) in his commentary 'Pitfalls Between Science, Politics and Public Debate: Lessons From the COVID-19 Pandemic', and as related by the global public policy institute, gives more insights about the relationships. The author suggests that Scientists, policymakers and the media can and should learn lessons on how policymakers and the public can best draw on scientific expertise. They observe that when politicians suggest the uniformity of scientific opinion to legitimize uncomfortable decisions, the credibility of both science and politics suffer.

In times of crisis, scientific evidence ought to provide an important impetus for political debates about the ‘right’ course forward.

Politics and science have worked together on the various containment measures. While Covid-19 has been the toughest stress test for political institutions, public policies, and public administrations across countries, it has created a synergy between the two fields that are core to the running of government. Beyond its social and economic impacts, the pandemic has redefining the relationships between science, public policy, and society (Callaway, Ledford, Mallapaty, 2020). Although the worldwide plea to “follow the scientists’ advice” immediately resonated in media spaces and public debate less than one week after the first Covid-19 case was diagnosed, it is difficult to overlook the uncertainties that have accompanied scientific advising to governmental decision-making.

A variety of policies have been implemented around the world in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Riley, Xie & Khurshid, 2021). It is understandable there has been variation in the content, implementation and enforcement of policies but across countries, the measures have either been pharmaceutical or non-pharmaceutical based. The non-pharmaceutical strategies have relied on social distancing and surveillance efforts with testing to identify active cases. The first available non-pharmaceutical response has been the isolation of the infected individuals (Hellewell et al.2020). The second strategy has been isolating the geographic regions the virus has reached from regions to which the virus has not yet spread (Chinazzi et al.2020). The strategy has been isolating the people that have a high probability of dying from an infection-the old and vulnerable (Marais and Sorrell, 2020). The fourth strategy relies on policies that aim at drastically reducing social interactions into what is popularly referred to as a “lockdown” approach (Plümper, Neumayer, and Pfaff 2021). Obviously, these strategies are not mutually exclusive but rather tend to reinforce each other. The strategies have been guided by the close working relationship between science and politics.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not only a public health crisis but also a major policy crisis (Riley, Bo Xie & Khurshid, 2021). While the world has since moved on, the capacity of the state in responding to crises of a big magnitude has been sharply questioned. The health care systems of most countries have been left depleted. The world of public administration has suffered serious setbacks. Education systems have been majorly fractured and to recover will take some time in a number of countries. Elections have been held under new lockdown measures (Capano, 2020). Online platforms have sharply taken over the systems of service delivery. The role of the military and security forces which had always been invincible in public service delivery has become more visible. The private sector systems have been brought to their knees.

The issue

This is the second issue of the African journal of governance and public leadership which comes at a time the aforementioned pandemic has caused unimaginable sufferings with its social, economic and political ramifications. This second issue presents six papers. From Tanzania and using *Lipsey’s street level bureaucracy (SLB) analogy*, Denis Kamugisha explains how public service delivery in Tanzania has been affected and what strategies need to be deployed to make improvements. He bases his argument on the glaring gaps in public service delivery at the different levels of government. The author informs us that through a street-level bureaucracy perspective there is a notion that SLBs always develop strategies to

address some challenges they face in doing their businesses. Nevertheless, there is also a view that such strategies may contradict public policy intentions or limit the effectiveness of the 'legal rule' or 'order'. Coping strategies at the local level dance to the tune of operating forces in the social fields. The study findings confirm that in certain scenarios SLBs' coping strategies and interventions either comply with public policy intent or not. Such strategies became social rules, norms and values. Compliance with legal order was reflected in the interface between SLBs and citizens through school committees where it was acceptable to ask parents to contribute money to purchase more desks, chalk, chairs, tables and textbooks.

In the times of the pandemic, the role of the health workers gender has received global recognition. The medical doctors in particular have proved vital partners with government. That is why, a paper on '*A Micro-Analysis of Motivation of Doctors at Parirenyatwa Referral Hospital in Zimbabwe*' by Sharon Hofisi and Obey Chingoiro. The authors analyse the importance of motivating doctors using a case study of Parirenyatwa Group of Hospital (PGOH) but with implications to a wider health system. The paper concludes that the ways that could motivate doctors at PGOH include non-monetary benefits, improvement in medical supplies and equipment, and prioritising economic hardship salary adjustments or cushioning their salaries through hardship allowances. The study found that non-monetary benefits which include vehicle, support for the relocation of workers' spouses and suitable accommodation, and low-interest student loans offered to workers interested in furthering their professional development are critical aspects which need consideration by the stakeholders.

The third article by Sharon Hofisi and Tafdzun C. Chisambiro dives into the debates of *a nexus between ministerial intervention and the performance of metropolitan Councils in Zimbabwe*. The study reports findings obtained from explorative and evaluative research methods to analyze and examine the implications of ministerial interventions in the performance of the council. The authors relied on the use of desk-top research the study was reliant on secondary sources that are books, council reports, journals, e-journals and available literature on the matter were being explored as well as information from key informant interviews. The authors report how the minister's intervention represents the dangers of allowing executive excesses in the administration of Metropolitan Councils and how most of the dismissals has created the impression that good governance is sacrificed at the altar of political expedience.

Governance and leadership tend to be complex and no single discipline makes it perfectly well to explain these subjects. A multidisciplinary lens is required. In this regard, the article by Leonardo da Silva Guimarães Martins da Costa on '*Transdisciplinary of physics, philosophy, economics, law, psychology and politics applied to public administration*' is helpful. The author writes from a heavily practical experience of the Brazilian public administration system. He explains transdisciplinarity as concerned with the dialogue of opposite poles, as the interaction and the integration of opposites (dualities), considering dialectics between specialists and generalists, between the analytical and synthetic method. The main objective of his study was to evidence transdisciplinary as a tool for problem solving, as applied knowledge and understanding of reality, more than the mere intellectual view. He suggests this this approach to public management needs to be based on the principles of 1) duality – interaction and integration of opposites, specially the analytical and synthetic methods and 2) four elements - rationality, feasibility, reasonableness and meaning.

Elections are a key feature of a functioning democracy. Elections determine the leaders selected by citizens to manage the affairs of government on their behalf for a constitutionally prescribed duration. In article 5, Gift in an article entitled '*The Timing and legitimacy in the announcement of presidential results in the 2018 general elections in Zimbabwe*', qualitatively describes the experience of Zimbabwe in Presidential election decisions of 2018. The authors suggest that the timing in the announcement of presidential results by the Zimbabwean Electoral Commission (ZEC) must have more innovative ways of managing the process in light of a variety of outcomes. This is in recognition of the long-drawn struggle for democracy, economic recovery, and the well-being of citizens in Zimbabwe which has been on the agenda of many people. The paper observes that the important role of ZEC has been neglected on its treatment of results due to past experiences of rigging and delayed announcements of presidential results. The study suggests important lessons for other democracies in the timing of the announcement of presidential results.

Finally, we turn back to Tanzania with an article by Wilfred U Lameck on the *determinants of employee retention in Tanzania's local government context*. The author was motivated by the growing trend of employee turnover which has forced many organizations to devise strategies of ensuring that the best and the most talented people are retained within the organization. The findings reported were obtained from a sample of 150 respondents obtained from Ikungi District Council. The author concluded that to understand the factors influencing employees' retention particularly in local government authorities, both managerial or leadership factors together with personal factors should be taken into consideration. The paper reports for example how leadership style of district local government authorities affected leaders and subordinate relationship.

Conclusion

Public management and leadership remain critical for society functioning. Within the current health global pandemic, many countries have tested the importance of sound systems of public management. Those countries with strong systems of public management including health systems have been able to withstand the damages by the pandemic. While there are vigorous debates about what governments should do and not do including the effectiveness of lockdowns and to what extent privacy should be protected, and how to balance the trade-off between health and the economy; what has been uncontested is the importance of a connected system of response. Beyond the questions of effectiveness any approaches, the societies which function better endeavor to build strong systems of managing public affairs. The relationship between politics and science needs to be balanced against the broader public good.

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