

Advertorial

Improving Productivity in the Public Sector

The main goal of the public sector is to render services to the public hence, it is essential that those services are of good quality and delivered equitably.

The public sector represents roughly more workforce in the economy compare to the private sector, therefore improving productivity in the public sector has a tremendous impact on a country's economic growth and development. Consequently, improved public sector productivity leads to a higher standard of living for the citizens.

However, there is a myth that productivity is mostly poor in the public sector as opposed to the private sector. The concept of "customer satisfaction" is not well anchored across the public sector, despite the fact productivity in the public services is about being more responsive to clients. Viewing citizens as "customers", in many cases, is more theory than reality due to the indirect relationship between tax payment and public services.

Improved quality service delivery, and continuous innovation is often perceived as lacking in the public sector. The public sector usually promotes a rule-based culture that promotes compliance of procedures rather than entrepreneurship, innovation, and even improvement.

To improve productivity in the public sector, the compliance culture should be changed to encourage continuous improvement, increase innovation, as well as enhance quality and equity in service delivery. Improving and reforming of traditional processes often requires process redesign, new technology as well training of employees. This will greatly contributes to efficient and effective service delivery and improved quality services. Nevertheless, improving productivity in the public sector requires a change in mind-set from process-oriented to customer-oriented which leads to customer satisfaction.

Productivity improves when services are provided more efficiently and effectively, through either producing the same outputs at lower cost or producing more outputs with fewer resources. The common misconceptions thinking on productivity often prevail, the belief that productivity should be improved largely by cutting costs (e.g. reducing personnel and other inputs) to deliver the same level of services. Not much consideration

is given to expanding services and improving the quality of services, using the available resources.

While the main drivers of economy-wide productivity are outside the control of individual organisations, such as investment in education and infrastructure, improvements in labour productivity can also be driven by issues that are within the control of individual organisations. These include human capital, organisational infrastructure and use of technology.

In the absence of a competitive market, reporting on and understanding productivity within an individual, government organisation is key to improving performance. It assists in identifying strategies to improve how work is being carried out to improve service delivery.

Therefore, knowledge transfer, research development, and skills training contribute significantly to labour productivity. Meanwhile, other traditional sources of productivity gains include the concentration of capital, improved allocation of labour, and economies of scale. To improve productivity in the public sector all agencies need to be aware of some ability to track their productivity and efficiency.

Issued by Productivity Unit within the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation that was established in 2010 with an effort of attaining economic and social progress through productivity movement and active participations of all citizens.

Namibia, starting this year 12-16 November will start celebrating this week as a Productivity Week.