

Protocol Systematic Review

Main title	What is the evidence of impact of civil service reform on service delivery in fragile states and other low income countries?
Sub title	What is the evidence of impact of civil service reform on service delivery in fragile states and other low income countries? (Question 16 of the DFID call)
Review group	Assoc Prof Shaun Goldfinch, Nottingham University Business School, team leader Professor Karl DeRouen, University of Alabama, statistical and methods specialist Dr Paulina Pospieszna, University of Konstanz, reviewer

PROCOTOL

Section

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EPPI-Centre reference number	[To be completed by EPPI-Centre]
Month/year of publication	[To be completed by EPPI-Centre]
This report should be cited as...	Goldfinch, S, K. DeRouen K and P. Pospieszna. What is the evidence of impact of civil service reform on service delivery in fragile states and other low income countries? DFID Systemic Review (protocol).
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Conflicts of interest (if any)	No financial conflict of interest. However, as some of the team have published on related issues, we will need to watch for bias towards our own work.
Acknowledgements	Adam Golberg and Nila Patel, Research Office, Nottingham University Business School

1. Background

1.1. Aims and Rationale for Review and Conceptual Framework

Whether civil service reform leads to better service outcomes is something much understudied. The minimal definition for the civil service is ‘those personnel (outside public enterprises) whose salaries are supported by the central government’s wage bill’ (World Bank 1999, 1, cited by Blair 2007, 162). As such, civil service reform, in its most narrow sense, is the reform of human resource practices for the civil service. However, the more common usage for the term, and the one we will follow in this report, is a broader notion of reform of the practices and structures within which the civil service and its related organizations operate. Civil service reform then can be taken as synonymous with public management or public administration reform. It is not an end in itself, and, according to the World Bank

there is no single “best” model of public administration...Civil service reform must be justified to policy makers and the public by their impact on poverty and on the effectiveness of government – either directly in terms of service delivery, or indirectly through their impact on macroeconomic stability or improved economic and social policy formulation and implementation (World Bank 2002, 3).

There is a scattered and fragmented literature on civil service reform in low income countries and fragile states. Reflecting the cultures and practices of the public administration/management and development discipline where much of this literature originates, it is often highly contextually focussed, often with case studies of one country and/or one region, and often lacks a broadly comparative focus and/or the use of large datasets. This is both a strength in that it challenges the naive positivism of some ‘one size fits all’ models found in other branches of political

science, management and other social sciences; and a weakness in that studies can lack generalisability and ability to inform practice elsewhere.

In general, former colonial states continued versions of the public administration models of their former colonial masters, reflecting the current public management trend at the time (Michael 2005). Public management reform in developing states since has also generally followed the practice of reform in the richer countries of the North; or at least as promulgated by the richer countries and international organizations. The immediate post-war era saw the apparent application of broadly bureaucratic models. The late 1980s on saw the promotion of New Public Management (NPM) models from various aid agencies and international organization models, focussed towards more market based forms of delivery and the reduction of the state sector (Wallis and Dollery 2001; Goldfinch and Wallis 2010; Hood 1991). The late 1990s on has seen a greater focus on state and capacity building, anti-corruption measures and public servant training, amongst other things; broadly encompassed in such phrases as 'institution-building' and 'good governance' (Dorussen 2005; OECD 2006). State-building and the development of new state institutions and properly trained public servants has been a particular focus of various aid agencies and international organizations in post-conflict situations and in rebuilding 'failed states' (Brinkerhoff et al. 2005; Roberts 2008).

Drawing on the public management literature, the following ideal types of public sector reform are derived: bureaucratic reform, NPM reform and 'good governance reform' packages. The characteristics of each ideal types are as follows:

- 1) *Bureaucratic*

- Division of labor/specialization
- Defined hierarchies between and within agencies
- Administration based on rules, usually written; often characterized as input or process controls
- Recruitment and promotion of officials on merit/technical ability, often by written exam
- Separation of ownership and administration.
- Impartial and impersonal treatment

Derived from Weber and other writings on bureaucracy (see various chapters of Goldfinch and Wallis 2009).

2) *NPM*

- Smaller state, focus on efficiency and doing more with less;
- A move from a focus on process and input reporting to 'outputs', outcomes or results;
- Decentralized structures with smaller, multiple and often single purpose agencies
- Motivation of public servants based on financial incentives rather than professional ethos or duty, with contracts key; as opposed to a career service
- Adoption of a 'managerialism' where management is seen as a generic, 'rational' and 'scientific' – 'let managers manage'
- Internal and external market or quasi-market mechanisms to imitate market competition, contracting-out' and ultimately privatization; including a customer focus for citizens

Adapted from Hood (1991); Politt (2001), Boston et al (1996); Goldfinch (1998); Goldfinch and Wallis (2010).

3) *Good governance/post-NPM*

- Civil service pay and training (including professional and ethics training and a focus on 'leadership' rather than 'management')
- Anti-corruption mechanisms
- Policy and administrative participation
- Whole of government/intergovernmental development
- Budgetary transparency and accountability mechanisms
- State capacity and effectiveness as opposed to smaller state

Derived from Goldfinch and Wallis (2010), OECD (2006) and Dorussen (2005).

These ideal types allow for a conceptualisation of public sector reform and are used to develop the coding tools, developed in the Appendix. Individual countries will be scored against these ideal types at three census periods.

While some public management literature has studied the application of public reform models, often 'success' is simply measured in terms of what degree states have introduced, or claimed to introduce, the current package of 'correct' public management reforms (cf Sarker 2006). However, as noted, civil service reform is only ever a means to an end and there is a considerable gap in the literature regarding whether these reforms have led to success in a broader sense. The fundamental questions remain: has civil service reform led to better service and

better outcomes for the citizens of developing and fragile states; broadly, *what works, for whom*, and the very difficult question of *why*?

There are considerable difficulties in answering such questions. First, the difficulty of defining common trends and genuine reform across multiple countries (Goldfinch and Wallis 2009). As such, comparative studies such as this need to balance the demands of contextual awareness, with the ability to draw broad trends and lessons. Second, how can we decide what constitutes successful reform even in the limited sense of policy implementation success? Third, what does improved service mean? How is it to be measured? Focussing simply on limited measures such as 'output' as defined by government agencies, or using agencies' own measures of success has severe limitations in terms of moral hazard and reliability of data from developing states with mixed capacity. Instead, service outcomes will be based on measures derived from World Bank and UN publications.

2. Methods

2.1 User involvement.

Our key audience is DFID and this report will be presented to a meeting of DFID officials and interested parties. We will also aim to publish the results in leading peer reviewed journals in public administration and development. We will look to publish in one of the top ten journal journals in development, and one of the top ten journals in public administration, as measured by impact; in particular *Public Administration Review*, *Public Administration*, *Governance*, *Public Administration and Development* and *World Development*. We will also present results at academic conferences. We will circulate the research to NGOs and international organizations. The research

will inform intervention decisions for aid and other agencies. The study is designed in conversation with DFID officials, who are likely to be the ultimate users of the results.

2.2. Identifying and describing studies

2.2.1 Defining relevant studies: inclusion and exclusion criteria

We expect to find a substantial diversity in approaches on assessments of reform success and service delivery. We did not expect to find many, or any, studies that are based on a randomized design approach. Many studies of reforms are case studies or project reports from government agencies. As such, our analysis is inclusive in terms of acceptable studies and acceptable methods, with rigour and relevance being the most important attribute.

Given the nature of the public management/development discipline it is not practicable or desirable to exclude purely qualitative studies, which will form a key part the analysis.

2.2.2 Inclusion/Exclusion on Scope

This study focuses on the impact of civil service reform on service delivery in developing countries. We situate the search within broad notions of civil service and public management/public administration reform, as it pertains to least developed and low income countries. This is the standard definition.

2.2.3 Inclusion/Exclusion on Study Type

This study included various type of publications, such as scholarly articles, proceedings, policy documents, magazine and newspapers articles, dissertations, as well as reports produced by the international organizations. Due to the nature of the study we are inclusive in terms of publication/report outlet searched.

2.2.4 Inclusion/Exclusion on Country Where Study Was Carried Out

We selected publications that focus on developing countries, specifically 49 low income countries, as defined by the United Nations. We searched by developing country and by individual country names.

2.2.5 Inclusion/Exclusion on Data

Various electronic databases offer different time spans. When searching for articles from journals using Social Sciences Citation Index database through the Web of Science we were able to receive articles going back to 1985. For other databases, we received most scholarly articles after 1990. We have decided 1990 will be our cut off point for article publication date for inclusion in the study. However, other older publications may be examined for context and background.

2.2.6 Identification of potential studies: Search Strategy

Using seven keyword searches, including '*Public Administration*', '*Public Management*', '*Civil Service*', '*Government Management*', '*Public Sector*', '*State Sector*', and '*Good Governance*' in developing countries, and the names of the 49 countries included in the standard UN list of low income countries (UN 2010), we will search the following databases/database providers: Web of Science (Social Science Citation Index); Proquest; Ebsco; Academic OneFile, Academic Search Premier,

JSTOR, Expanded Academic ASAP (AVL), Project Muse, WorldCat and Google Scholar.

We will also carry out an 'expert' search where we will ask leading experts in the field to direct us towards, and hopefully provide, published and unpublished work of relevance to the study..

We will also search in the top ten public administration journals and the top ten development journals as measured by impact factor, from the Web of Sciences Social Science Citation Index. Databases will be searched in English. Articles, dissertations, theses, proceedings, reports, newspapers and magazine article are included in the search. Our search provides for a wide range of social science focussed articles/reports, including studies not published in the mainstream refereed journals. The final selection will also be searched for citations, and those articles with those citations, will also be examined for inclusion in the study.

From these initial searches we will select articles based on title and abstract that fit broadly within our search criteria. Depending on databases' searching options, which can vary greatly across databases, those seven key terms were searched in titles, topics, abstracts, or in-text, and these results combined.

To avoid publication bias, we will also examine government documents from international agencies, as well as proceedings and dissertations as noted, and as are generated in the various search engines. In particular, the World Bank has a large database of reports on aspect of civil service reform, of varying usefulness and

quality, including implementation reports and project appraisal documents. We will search their website for reports. These will be scanned and include into the database if meeting the appropriate criteria.

Taking advantages of our team member's language skills and access to other sources, German language public administration and development journals will be also hand-searched.

We will download all articles into reference software (excel and endnote) and the PDFs into the EPPI software. The full articles will be further reviewed for relevance and quality and the final selection was made.

Research produced 1990 and after will be included.

2.3 Methods for Synthesis

2.3.1 Assessing quality of studies

A database of titles and abstracts will be developed by the reviewer, entered into both endnote and an Excel file and ultimately the full downloads of articles/reports will be entered into the EPPI database. The original list will be progressively reviewed by the team leader to assess relevance and minimum quality. The full downloaded list will again be reviewed for quality.

Quality will be assessed based on the following. Refereed journal articles are widely acknowledged in scholarly circles as the standard for quality, however this may not be sufficient in itself as negative findings and other studies may be excluded

from publication. So while important, publication is only a place to start this search and provides only one method of assessing quality. Even within published material, as noted, there is a difference in standard and/or status within refereed journals and we focus on the top ten (by impact) journals on public administration and development, searching these online. Dissertations and theses have an internal and external marking and referring/marketing process providing an external check on quality. International organizations often have internal reviewing process, which, although not often as rigorous as academic refereeing, provide some quality check, and these are also included as meeting quality standard. Newspapers and magazine articles provide useful published material, and also have some internal quality checking. Unrefereed websites and blogs will be avoided. These lack external quality review and vary widely in quality and reliability.

These articles and reports will be further selected for quality and relevance as follows. There is no simple objective method of removing professional judgement from this process. No method will do this when confronted with a mix of largely qualitative research and description, and to claim otherwise would pretend an objectivity that does not exist. As such, the selection based on the following judgements. First, quality and relevance of the research question. Second, clarity of research design and data collection and reportage of results. Third, contextual sensitivity and empirical detail. As noted, most studies will be qualitative and/or case studies, demanding a considerable degree of judgement on the part of the reviewers. The nature of the study is that in some cases non-academic and non-referred literature will be important in the study.

Studies, *prima facie*, meeting these quality criteria will be downloaded into reference software and/or printed for coding and database purposes, and entered into a second database, this time the EPPI database. These *full* articles and reports will again be reviewed for relevance and minimum quality, and those studies not meeting these criteria will be excluded, giving the authoritative database.

The final selection will be checked for citations, and those citing articles will also be examined for possible inclusion.

2.3.2 Overall Approach to and process of synthesis

We are not aware of any extant systematic reviews on this research question. Given the predominance of qualitative and case-studies in the literature, an original method of synthesis needed to be developed. First, drawing on the team's understanding and published research on civil service reform, three ideal types were developed, as noted in the introduction. These will allow categorisation of countries into predominantly bureaucratic, predominantly new public management, predominantly post/NPM, and a fourth category of hybrid, by scoring countries against a specified list of criteria, as outlined in the appendix. This measure will be separated into reform agenda scores and reform success scores; the later being an assessment to the degree to which reform agenda is implemented. This measure will be used at three census dates, 1996, 2002 and 2008, to capture the historical dynamic of the reform process. Countries will be coded independently by the reviewer and team leader. In the case of divergence on judgements, the third team member will act as umpire. This coding will demand a great degree of sensitivity on the part of review participants, and due to its limitations will need to be contextualised with

considerable narrative and historical background. Coding is further outlined in the appendix.

2.3.3 Selection of outcome data for synthesis

This first stage of coding will be to provide a measure of public management reform agenda and 'reform success' for each country. However, reform success does not of necessity imply more effective government and/or services delivery. Internal data from developing states is not likely to be useful in determining such success, due to data inadequacy and moral hazard. However, there are existing publications that may serve as useful proxies, which are published in various World Bank reports (Kaufmann et al. 2007). These examine measures of quality of governance and the quality of public service, amongst other things. Probably the most widely known is the World Bank *Worldwide Governance Indicators* which measures Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law, and Control of Corruption (Kaufmann et al. 2007) and other studies. Good performance on these measures are *ends* in themselves – as measures of better delivery where such things as democracy, lower corruption, voice, capacity, and so on are desirable outcomes for government to deliver. These measures are also *means* to other ends, with these institutional factors possibly linked to other desirable outcomes such as reduced poverty, better human development and economic performance (Rodrik 2000).

One argument in the literature is that civil service reform contributes to effective government and 'good governance' outcomes, which themselves are strongly related to good performance on a number of social and economic indicators

(Rodrik 2000). To examine the service delivery performance of government will examine a number of social and economic outcomes. Data that we will focus on are derived from the literature and discussions with DfID officials, and from the UN Millennium Goals. We will present this data individually rather than relying on indexes. Outcomes examined will include life expectancy at birth, infant mortality, literacy and schooling rates, poverty and income inequality levels and GDP per capita. Government fiscal data will also be used including fiscal deficits as percentage GDP, and social services spending. Much, but not all, of this data is published in the *Quality of Government* study (Teorell et al 2010) or in World Bank and UN reports. As such, we will be drawing on published or released reports, allowing us to treat them as secondary material in line with systematic review requirements. This allows for a two-pronged systematic review, using a review of literature to establish patterns of reform, and other reports/publication to build a broader pattern of reform success in terms of service delivery.

2.3.2.3 Process used to combine data

We explore reform agenda, and reform success understood to mean the degree to which the reform agenda is implemented. This will allow us to develop a dataset outlining and scoring reform across various countries, as noted in the draft coding tool in the appendix. This will then be combined with data gathered from other publications. Coding will be carried out once this protocol is approved.

We will use the data described above to assess the impact of public management agenda and reform success on service delivery success. We will carry out cross-national times-series regressions using Stata 10®. The dependent variable

is service delivery measured variously as: poverty reduction, income, education, life expectancy, literates, state capacity measures such as transport and communications, outcomes of good governance (Rule of law, Capacity, Democracy) and various related Millennium and HDI Goals derived from publications and other reports, as discussed above. This data is drawn from published or reported sources. The three types of public management will be independent variables with bureaucratic being the comparison category. Appropriate control variables will be specified. If necessary, we will correct for autocorrelation and/or fixed-effects. Robust standard errors will be generated.

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Appendices

Appendix 1.1. Authorship of the report

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EPPI-Centre reference number [To be completed by EPPI-Centre]

Month/year of publication [To be completed by EPPI-Centre]

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Acknowledgements

Adam Golberg and Nila Patel, Research Office, Nottingham University Business School

Appendix 2.1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Information included in the main text

Appendix 2.2: Search strategy for electronic databases

In this section, we present our search strategy. We do this to allow future replication of our searches.

As we mentioned earlier, while searching in electronic databases we are going to use seven key terms: *Public Administration*, *Public Management*, *Civil Service*, *Government Management*, *Public Sector*, *State Sector*, and *Good Governance*. In the first place, we used those terms together with *Developing Countries* term, and then for individual countries. For example, the ISI Web of Knowledge allows for the following search options: 1) topic, 2) title, 3) author, 4) group Author, 5) editor, 6) publication name, 7) year published, 8) address, 9) document type, 10) funding Agency, and 11) grant Number.

Since our research project focuses on low income countries we will also look for publications on specific countries. The two strategies are treated as complementary.

We will also hand search the top ten public administration and development journals.

The same procedure will be used with all electronic databases selected for this study. We plan to repeat the process using Academic OneFile, Academic

Search Premier, JSTOR, Expanded Academic ASAP (AVL), Project Muse, WorldCat and Google scholar. However, different database providers allow for different search options. For example Proquest allows search by: 1) citation and abstract 2) citation and document text 3) abstract 4) author, 5) column, 6) company/organization, 7) dateline, 8) document ID, 9) document text, 10) document title, 11) document type, 12) image caption, 13) location, 14) NAICS code, 15) page, 16) person, 17) product name, 18) publication title, 19) section, 20) subject. It allows the combination of terms using logical operators. For example, 1) And 2) Or 3) And not 4). Thus, we will search in Proquest by 1) citation and abstract (c&a) and 2) citation and document text (c&t). We will search for each key term and developing countries term using logical operations as follows:

search 1 [key term (c&a) OR key term (c&t)]

search 2 [developing country (c&a) OR developing country(c&t)]

search 3 = search 1 AND search 2

In addition to scholarly articles, we will search by our key terms for other publications on the subject, such as dissertations, proceedings, magazine and databases of newspapers articles, as well as trade publications and reports produced by the international organizations.

World Bank websites will also be searched with specific country studies and other relevant material.

Once we have a final selection of articles, we will also check them for citations and review those citing articles. Results initially found relevant will be downloaded in PDF form into the EPPI software. These will undergo further in-depth review.

Appendix 2.4: Draft coding tool

Three ideal types were developed, based on the civil service literature, and publications from a member of the team on this issue and other publications, as cited in the main body of the report. Scores are given on the basis of each country's adoption of the following policy reforms, listed by particular 6 attributes in all ideal types – 0, 1 for reform agenda and 0, 1, 2 for reform success on each attribute. For example, if a country's civil service system accords with 4, 5 or 6 of the NPM agenda, it would be accorded 'largely' NPM and coded as NPM; less than 4 as somewhat NPM; 2 or less as not NPM. This is standard practice in public management and political science, and similar to coding practices used by the World Bank and other international organizations. There is likely to be considerable overlap between ideal types in some countries, leading us to provide a fourth category of 'hybrid'.

These ideal types are as follows:

1) *Bureaucratic*

- Division of labour/specialization
- Defined hierarchies between and within agencies
- Administration based on rules, usually written; often characterized as input or process controls
- Recruitment and promotion of officials on merit/technical ability, often by written exam
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- Internal and external market or quasi-market mechanisms to imitate market competition, 'contracting-out' and ultimately privatization; including a customer focus for citizens

Adapted from Hood (1991) Politt (2001); Boston et al (1996) Goldfinch (1998) and Goldfinch and Wallis (2010).

3) *Good governance/post-NPM*

- Civil service pay and training (including professional and ethics training and a focus on 'leadership' rather than 'management')
- Anti-corruption mechanisms
- Policy and administrative participation
- Whole of government/intergovernmental development
- Budgetary transparency and accountability mechanisms
- State capacity and effectiveness as opposed to smaller state

Derived from Goldfinch and Wallis (2010); OECD (2006) and Dorussen (2005).

This measure will be used at three census dates, 1996, 2002 and 2008, to capture the historical dynamic of the reform process. Countries will be coded independently by the reviewer and team leader. In the case of divergence on judgements, the third team member will act as umpire. This coding will demand a great degree of sensitivity on the part of review participants, and due to its limitations will need to be contextualised with considerable narrative and historical background. Some tests will be conducted against individual ideal type items to test robustness. Reform will be coded into reform agenda type and reform success against type (which is the degree to which the agenda is implemented).