



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

*An initiative of
the National Academy of Public Administration,
and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs
and the Bobst Center for Peace and Justice,
Princeton University*

Oral History Program

Series: Civil Service
Interview no.: E4

Interviewee: Faisal Issa

Interviewer: Andrew Schalkwyk

Date of Interview: 19 November 2008

Location: Utumishi House
Dar es Salaam
Tanzania

Innovations for Successful Societies, Bobst Center for Peace and Justice
Princeton University, 83 Prospect Avenue, Princeton, New Jersey, 08544, USA
www.princeton.edu/successfulsocieties

ANDREW SCHALKWYK: All right I'm sitting here on the 19th of November with Dr. Faisal Issa at Utumishi House in Dar es Salaam and before we start the interview, I would just like to ask that you've give me -- my -- your consent for me to interview you and record you?

FAISAL ISSA: *Yes, if there was no consent, you couldn't have been speaking to me now.*

SCHALKWYK: OK, thank you. So, I would just like to begin this conversation by -- could you tell me about what you do now, what your job is now, and what jobs you've had in the past that have lead you to this position?

ISSA: *Presently, I work as a Director for Human Resource Development in this office. I previously was teaching at the University -- Mzumbe University in Malogoro. And, my job at present is about supporting initiatives within the government to improve ability of leadership.*

SCHALKWYK: OK, thank you. I'd now like to ask you some questions about training programs and capacity building in -- in the Tanzanian Civil Service. What sort of initiatives do you -- do you support that you've just described? Could you talk to me about that a little bit?

ISSA: *Yes, given the mandate of this office we are supposed to...*

SCHALKWYK: The Public Service Management?

ISSA: *The Public Service Management. We are supposed to give guidelines on how best to carry out the needs assessment within the government; we develop training plans, and the implementation. So, we develop guidelines, we issue them, we make sure that Ministries understand how to use them, and we also follow up on implementation.*

SCHALKWYK: So, you've -- have you attempted during this reform process to identify gaps in capacity within the Ministry, and how did you go about doing this?

ISSA: *Yes, the instruments we use, we have developed and we have used, and actually we are continuing to make people know how to use them, and they're using them, and we develop them ourselves without any help from external consultants because we have adequate background to developing them. And, we develop them and assist the institutions, sometimes in groups, to be able to use those guidelines and arrive at a program for training their staff.*

SCHALKWYK: And when you've done these needs assessment programs, who was involved with that? Was that only people in your office? Were there other people involved?

ISSA: *The people in my office are responsible for initial development for these instruments, and later on we usually call people in workshops, they discuss them, and ultimately the documentation get approved, and in terms of the use, now the people who use are the people who manage employees in their own institutions.*

SCHALKWYK: What -- what involvement do you have with the line ministries, the MDAs in developing these instruments?

ISSA: *Like I said, we invite them in workshops and we share with them the ideas behind probably the guidelines for identifying training needs, and we emphasize to them the importance of capacity building, and the role of training in that. We also -- we get the opinions in how best they think that that particular activity is*

going to be handled, and we get the opinions on the guidelines and instruments we develop. And then we use their opinions to kind of complete our work in terms of designing instruments which could be used. And then, after that, we agree with them in manner of use and we speak to them and we require them to bring representatives from the responsible units who... We sit together and we go through the instruments together in a private manner because at least in one Ministry you could try to use those instruments in one department, get the results, and then use it more widely within that particular Ministry. At the same time, given the change in public -- the reform program in Tanzania, these institutions now are supposed to demand those services from us, and therefore we sat with them and they were able to identify areas in which they think it's important to the institution. And, the previous exercise -- among 25 Ministries, 13 of them thought that they need extra capacity and support in developing training needs, in carrying out training assessment, and developing training plans. And they have been sending now their requests to us, and we facilitate them by sending them the guidelines, we discuss it together, we tell them the manner of use because it's important. And when deciding on an individual need, the individual is involved, his supervisor is involved, the head of the department if not the supervisor is also involved, and then there should be some consultation at the end. So, we make sure that at least for each unit that representative in now translating the need into a training plan. Because identification of need is done through individually asked questions relative to their performance. We have a system of 180 degrees performance feedback; it's not 360. So, we use that in terms of who -- as is supposed to thinking about what capacity gaps there is including opinions of supervisors, in addition to that employee, in addition to performance feedback.

SCHALKWYK: All right, and are you involved in conducting any of the training programs for your department?

ISSA: *My department, I'm kind of within the Public Sector Reform Program, also is responsible for a key desired area which is called Leadership Development. And, that case, we plan for leadership government programs in, and implement them on behalf of the government. Therefore we identify key areas for capacity building through training, explore programs for our leaders from senior to very top leaders, and then we arrange them and we ensure that there is good participation and the use of that -- whatever comes from the attendance in those particular programs.*

SCHALKWYK: And, where are those programs held?

ISSA: *The programs are held within the country, they are also held outside the country. Countries which we send some of our leaders, and those countries which kind of who -- they are part of who the east and southern -- East and Southern African Management Institute; ESAMI. ESAMI is the original training institution, and it undertakes its programs within the east and southern African region. So, some of our leaders go to programs in other countries so that they can be together in a study environment with people of the same caliber from other countries. But, at the same time a -- we also prefer sometimes to give experience to our leaders to learn from the East Asian countries because we -- those countries the experience of developments in kind of you can see how it began. It's difficult to understand countries, although leaders also go for capacity building in those countries. But, it's not really as easy to show somebody the historical development of particular kind of development. For example, if you go to let's say Singapore, you can easily learn from them through the experience because it will only take you some 50 or 60 years back. We love to work to see a -- the way*

it all began much more longer, and so the experiences might not matter, but the practice matters because even those countries which are developing -- the East Asian countries -- they learn from the west and they adapt to their own development. And therefore, the practice you can learn them in the western world in terms of who -- how things should be. But, how things are done to be how things should be, then you can see where the level of development is different but it's not very much different.

(BREAK)

SCHALKWYK: OK, this is part two with the interview with Dr. Issa. Did you have on the job training? Did you bring people in to do training with people as they were working, or was it mainly done in classrooms and at workshops?

ISSA: *On the job training is a very continuous event. You know, it's not like having the concept of having apprentices. This is not -- the government offices do not provide probably enough room for apprenticeship, or similar to that, people learn because they work together. People learn because they get moved from one position to another and it's done purposely. And, people learn because it's emphasized that you should work with your subordinates. And again, it's not about emphasis. The way work is structured within the ministries, the only way for you to do a job properly is to work with the people who are working with you, and therefore that basically is on the job training regardless of whether it is formal or informal. While in addition to placements which happen, and deployments, people work together. You have to unless you want to be declared incompetent, and we work with joint offices, and we depend on them, and they also depend on us because we are more experienced and we have much more wider understanding and we handle more than they do. So, on the job training is very much significantly emphasized in different governmental documentation in relation to relation development. And, we think this area is going to be given more emphasis within the reform program which actually is in a phase which has started in 2008. And, because the government's intent also to kind of start what it calls "fast tracking" into leadership, and the focus of these efforts is going to be junior to mid-level personnel who are seen to have caliber to -- and potential for future leadership that once it is established, then the on-the-job training is going to get a more formal touch.*

SCHALKWYK: How is your -- has your department changed in the reform process? Was there a human resource department before, or is it a new...?

ISSA: *Previously, given the history of this country, this particular office was responsible for making sure that the government has enough local personnel. And, what it was doing until early 1990s is to be able to identify the needs of personnel in the country given economic growth and other changes in population statistics. And, then deploying them. At that time the government was the biggest employer, it is now, but at least the government has not any more or undertake business activities. At the time they were public operations and together with central or the civil service the government was responsible for creating professionals, and also deploying them. And, this Ministry was responsible for that and until when the reform program started, that began with the Civil Service Reform Program in the 1992, it was 1999. 1999 seems to be very close because at that time we had the first management and employment policy which kind of -- was indicative of change and how the government now considered itself, or kind of manages the employment processes, because that policy now kind of transformed government institutions now to be employers. The employment activity was handled centrally at that time, and this particular office was responsible for that activity. But, once*

a -- the implement practices were decentralized then it became important now for the government to be able to consider the issue of leadership capacity development because that entails the leaders' need to have more capability in management; not only in matters which are specific to those ministries, but also matters related to management of the human resources. The Civil Service Reform, actually, although it started by acknowledging the fact that capacity development is important, and that there are some key skill and knowledge areas which actually are needed to be strengthened, it only -- and identified those particular needs and a number of training programs to acquire that. But, the movement from that particular reform program, to the now Public Service Reform Program which is now PSRP, rather than the Civil Service Reform Program, then it was considered now probably we give leadership development, and a little emphasis in the whole framework, and that's when the department for leadership development was created actually. The same organ was responsible for the allocation of manpower within the country. Now, it was transformed into a department which will support capacity building initiatives within the government.

SCHALKWYK: Who was the deployment and employment responsibility decentralized to? You describe it being decentralized, where did that -- that responsibility go?

ISSA: *Yeah, that responsibility went to every Ministry. Every executive agency, every local government authority.*

SCHALKWYK: It went into the Ministries, the executive agencies, the LGS?

ISSA: *Yes, it did.*

SCHALKWYK: OK, how long are your training programs typically?

ISSA: *Long? Yeah, they vary from two days, three days, to a week, to two weeks.*

SCHALKWYK: And what is your relationship with universities and the training schools such as the Public Service College?

ISSA: *Yeah, the Public Service College is very important and most of the mid-level personnel they are supposed to be trained by the Tanzania Public Service College. It's also responsible for a number of public service examinations which kind of are important, and it has the mandates of some kind to undertaking the actual training within the government, and that is the Tanzania Public Service College. But, at the same time we have been having a relationship with Universities, and often when we think a particular program is important, sometimes we invite the universities who seek to run those programs when we find out that those programs cannot be run by -- an identified institution so we use them. Our development partners might be interested in supporting capacity building in a particular area. We link them with our training institution, the universities, the Tanzania Public Service College. Well, I think our relationship is good, but we also need to improve the capacity of some institution so that most of the capacity building initiatives, they should be organized somehow. By those institutions in collaboration with us, rather than us organizing them, and then them running, when we think they should run them.*

SCHALKWYK: And the people who do the training, are those typically Tanzanians or foreigners?

ISSA: *In a program which is being -- most of the programs which are implemented in the country, they are being run by Tanzanians. Some programs which kind of involve facilitators from second country, often we require them to partner with locals and to run those programs together. That has been the emphasis, and it*

has been helpful in terms of getting capacity within our institutes to be able to run such programs.

SCHALKWYK: And, are the programs given in English or Swahili?

ISSA: *Most programs are given in English, but Swahili is our national language. English is an official language as Swahili, therefore in facilitation -- even in the lecture theaters at universities -- some words of Swahili are often - they're said within the lectures. So, we use English often and it's an official language, but Swahili is also an important language.*

SCHALKWYK: Who pays for most of the training?

ISSA: *Training? (pause) As I said, the ministries, the executive agencies, they are employers, they are supposed to budget for whatever they are doing including training of the employees, so in that sense most budgeting for training is done within those institutions. At the same time, centrally, there could be some funds to support some training initiatives, or when resources might be needed to augment the resources which those institutions have.*

SCHALKWYK: It is often a concern that people who are trained leave the Civil Service to use their skills in better paid positions in the private sector. Has this been a problem?

ISSA: *Frankly speaking, I don't see it to have been a problem that much because there's something about the public service that once you join it, leaving is -- becomes a little difficult although the salaries are much lower than most -- or some private sector institutions. The private sector institutions outside large organizations, the salaries are much lower than the governments. But, still the public service provides opportunity for employment, for people with basic university qualifications, and in most of the time people might feel that they are where they are supposed to be. There's that feeling of satisfaction which often is there from my experience. Maybe it's not a very long experience, but I've never heard of somebody leaving employment from this Ministry for example, and then going out and joining the private sector institutions. I'm not sure if that is because outside there is too competitive, and people cannot compete. You know, sure, because employees of the public service also undergo training, and they're supported to go for masters degree, MBA, and sometimes abroad and therefore they tend also to select government agencies. And any time somebody upgrades himself in some way either by acquiring another degree, that's when somebody might think of moving, but they do not. IF they think of moving, they move within the government itself, because the executive agencies sometimes have so much to offer. Like, probably sometimes there's better pay at the executive agencies. Somebody who has aspirations can move up and get a job which is to be more satisfactory in terms of pay and the other issues of responsibility and recognition. So, there's not much problem. You could say the government or the public service is still the biggest employer. And for that matter, I'll say there's less competition to deserve extracting people from the government to the private sector. Maybe that's the issue, but that's not a problem as yet.*

SCHALKWYK: How often do people get trained in the public service?

ISSA: *It's -- the question is a little broad in the sense that -- OK, how often? As often as the resources allow, but there's a little emphasis on training. It's kind of -- people are very much interested in learning. People are very much interested in getting extra qualifications and developing themselves. So, there's so much need than can be met. Therefore, it's different than where you're coming from because here if*

somebody has a first degree qualification it certainly feels incomplete until he gets a second degree. And therefore, it means more cost to him if he pays for himself. If an institution -- if the institution pays for him; and for that matter, it can also affect the frequency in which somebody could have accessed training, but it does not make him fail to get some training.

SCHALKWYK: How have you been measuring the outcomes of your leadership development?

ISSA: *The outcome is measured in many ways. For people who have been in the government for a long period of time, or who have been working in the government supporting the specific government, they can realize how the public service in Tanzania is more responsive and receptive. Tanzania is a country where a lot of this stake holder involvement in initiatives in Africa is very much advanced. The private sector, the NGOs, the development partners, they all play very full developmental roles, and they can do that if they have people they can partner with and these are the public service personnel, and that is in general. And, we have public expenciary reviews yearly, and a policy cannot be developed with the consultation of the stakeholders, and these are developed by the local personnel themselves; the public service employees. And then they are brought out for the masses to be able to deliberate upon. That must entail capacity. But, there is some -- a year ago we did an impact assessment for the capacity initiatives which we handle centrally, and we were able to understand that there had been significant increase in terms of the use of acquired knowledge over time.*

SCHALKWYK: Thanks.