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EVALUATING MARKET ORIENTATION OF MASTER'S IN PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

In a bid to implement New Public Management and reinvent the public sector, empowerment through training of public sector managers has been at the top of the agenda of most governments. Many public managers are attending different management programs either on personal, government or development partner sponsorship. This study set out to evaluate the extent to which Masters in Public Sector Management (MPSM) is market oriented using a case of MPSM program at Africa University, Mutare, Zimbabwe. A survey was conducted in order to receive feedback from students who graduated since the inception of the program. The findings revealed that MPSM program at Africa University is customer-driven and meets the requirements of its customers. The MPSM knowledge areas are relevant to the job performance of its customers. The study recommends that knowledge areas that encourage innovations especially on business process engineering, integrated service delivery or one stop shop concept for government services should be initiated in the program. A doctoral program related to MPSM should be introduced so that those graduates may be able to further their studies in the same filed. It is recommended that further studies be conducted to evaluate other MPSM or related programs so as to compare the findings, and also to ascertain the relationship between relevance of and satisfaction derived from the MPSM program or other related programs. Although this is a case of the MPSM at Africa University, it is believed that the findings of the study can be beneficial to other universities or institutions offering similar or related programs.

Key words: *market orientation, MPSM, higher education, marketing, public sector, new public management, university program, Africa University, Zimbabwe*

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to Tolofari (2005), public administration has always been under constant review. From the end of the 1970s to the 1990s, governments around the world were engaged in widespread and sustained reforms of their public administration. These reforms were born out of economic recession, but also had political, social, intellectual and technological drivers. These reforms which came to be termed New Public Management (NPM) focused on transforming public services into results-oriented organizations driven by performance measures and incentives among others. All these management changes in the public sector to make them operate businesslike were geared at attaining efficiency and effectiveness in the sector.

In an attempt to implement NPM and reinvent the public sector, empowerment of public sector managers through training has been at the main agenda of most governments. Training is believed to result in efficient and effective running of the public sector by public sector managers. Possessing skilled and talented public servants is prerequisite to the success of the public sector.

Different African governments have made efforts to train their managers by, among other strategies, setting up Public Management Institutes or Civil Service Colleges and supporting their staff for further studies in Public Sector Management and Public Administration and Management, for example, Uganda Management Institute (UMI), Kenya Institute of Administration (KIA), Malawi Institute of Management (MIM), National institute of Public Administration (NIPA), Lesotho Institute of Management and Public Administration (LIPAM), Tanzania Public Service College (TPSC) in Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Lesotho and Tanzania respectively. The Public Sector Management Training Program (PSMTP) is another such program being funded under the Africa Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) in collaboration with World Bank. The PSMPT is being implemented in Zimbabwe to cater for the Eastern and Southern African Countries, in Ghana to cater for the English Western and Central African Countries, and in Gabon and Senegal to cater for the French speaking African countries (ACBF, 2012).

Under the PSMTP a 12- month Masters in Public Sector Management (MPSM) is offered to equip African countries with a critical mass of public sector managers with the skills and competences to enable the continent to meet its development challenges and to improve the performance of the public sector through the provision of a balanced academic and professional training in Public Sector Management (PSM) in Africa. The course is divided into four modules each with five course units and a research project. So far more than 120 Public sector managers at Africa University, Zimbabwe have successfully graduated through this residential training program which began in 2006 and more public sector managers are expected to go through this program.

According to Larbi (2003), customer orientation, as an application of NPM, has become an increasingly important ingredient of success in the public sector. Responsive service delivery is now prominent on the agenda of most countries. Several tools are being used to achieve this, the main agenda being to receive customer feedback on service delivery. This feedback would be used to make improvements to the service delivery. While various tools have been used to evaluate the performance of public sector managers through, for example, responding to customer feedback, the training programs have received little attention. The authors believe that in order to have effective public sector managers, there is a need to have effective training programs that meet the needs of the trainees. The training of public sector managers is well justified and appreciated and is in line with the main agenda of the NPM. However, to date no study has been documented to evaluate whether or not the MPSM program is meeting the trainee's needs and requirements. By contrast, similar programs such as the Masters in Business Administration (MBA) and Executive MBA have been a subject of various studies that were carried out to establish whether or not they meet the needs of the industry and the findings of such studies are well documented (Blass & Weight 2005; Dubas, Ghani, Davis & Strong 1998). Similarly, it can be argued that public management pedagogy should be oriented towards helping students learn about public organizations, government and governance, and the role of the public sector in a mixed society and economy. The training content should be related to the knowledge

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gap as potential clients wish to improve performance (Roman, Ruiz & Munuera, 2002). Training content should be defined as the knowledge provided in the training course to improve job performance or to provide personal development. The fit between program content and learners' needs is critical if learning is to take place and if that learning is to be applied in the workplace. Content has been found to influence training effectiveness (Longenecker & Ariss, 2002; Osman-Gani, 2000; Roman, Ruiz & Munuera, 2002; Soutar & Turner, 2002). It was against this background that the researchers were motivated to undertake the study to establish the extent to which the MPSM meets the customers' needs using the MPSM at Africa University in Zimbabwe as a point of reference. Although this study is a case of the MPSM at Africa University, it is believed that the findings of the study can be beneficial to other universities or institutions offering similar or related programs. The specific objectives of the study were:

- To establish the relevance of the knowledge areas of MPSM program to the customers.
- To determine the extent to which the knowledge areas incorporated in the MPSM program meet the customer requirements.
- To establish if customers would recommend the MPSM program to others.
- To recommend strategies to improve the MPSM program.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. About the MPSM Program at Africa University

The Africa University campus sits on 1542 acres of land, 17 kilometers north of the City of Mutare in Zimbabwe. The University campus is located in a prime farming area, a valley setting with a beautiful mountainous terrain that provides a scenic, tranquil and breathtaking environment. Mutare is Zimbabwe's fourth largest city and the provincial capital of one of the country's ten provinces; Manicaland. It is situated about 260 kilometers from Zimbabwe's capital, Harare. Mutare forms the country's eastern border town with Mozambique and is the country's gateway to the sea, as it is major overland route to the Port of Beira in Mozambique (Africa University Prospectus, 2012).

The MPSM program is offered in the faculty of Management and Administration and the program is funded under the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF). At Africa University, the PSMTP has two components, namely the innovative Master's Degree in Public Sector Management (MPSM) and the short-term training courses in management (Africa University Prospectus, 2012).

The PSMTP at Africa University caters for Eastern and Southern Africa. The program was designed to equip African countries with the critical mass of public sector managers with the skills and competences to enable the continent to meet its development challenges; to improve the performance of the public sector through the provision of a balanced academic and professional training in public sector management in Africa (Africa University Prospectus, 2012).

The Public Sector Management Training Program provides an intensive, 12 month, full-time training program, leading to the MPSM. The program addresses the critical need for highly trained managers who are able to respond to the increasingly complex demands of implementing new and emerging development frameworks, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These new realities have resulted in the need to reform the African public sector (Sheidu, 2003).

The MPSM is divided into four modules with five knowledge areas each and research project. The program runs for 12 months. The participating countries include Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. According to the PSMTP 4th Cohort Anniversary Report (2011), over 120 public managers in the various countries have graduated in MPSM since the program's inception in 2008. Table 1 below shows the 20 knowledge areas that are covered in the MPSM at AU (Africa University Prospectus, 2012).

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Table 1 Knowledge areas of the MPSM at Africa University

Module one	Module two	Module three	Module four
Public Sector Management in Africa	Strategic Planning and Management	Human Resources Management	International Relations
Public Policy & Management	Decentralization and Local Governance	Performance Management	International Trade and Finance
Governance & Leadership	Entrepreneurship and Public Enterprise Management	Ethics& Professionalism	Diplomacy and Negotiation
Macroeconomic Policies & Development	Program and Project Management	Applied Research	Conflict Management and Post Conflict Reconstruction
Politics & Public Sector Management	ICT and Public Sector Management	Public Sector Economics and Finance	Regional Co-operation and Integration

Adapted from PSMTP Handbook (2008: 10 -11)

2.2. New Public Management

According to Hood (1996), the study of public administration has been concerned primarily with the purported paradigm shift from principles of public administration to those of public management since the early 1980s.; an apparent move away from what is now seen as a traditional, progressive-era set of doctrines of good administration, emphasizing orderly hierarchies, depoliticized bureaucracies, and the elimination of duplication or overlap, and toward what has been described as the NPM.

Currently, the NPM is the principal paradigm in the discipline of public administration (Arora, 2003). Its common features include, inter alia, minimal government, debureaucratisation, decentralization, market orientation of public service, contracting out, privatization and performance management. Enshrined in these features is the desire to offer more efficient mechanism for delivering goods and services and for raising governmental performance levels (Kelly, 1998). According to Ayee (2005), the NPM perspective is often associated with positive, action-oriented phrases like: reinventing government, re-engineering, revitalization of the public service, organizational transformation, total quality management, paradigm shift, entrepreneurship, empowerment, results over process, downsizing, now rightsizing, lean and mean, contracting out, off-loading or outsourcing, steering rather than rowing, empowering rather than serving and earning rather than spending.

As Hood (1996) acknowledged, NPM is viewed as a management approach based on ideas generated in the private sector and imported into the public sector. In other words, NPM is a dynamic approach adopted by states the world over to restructure their bureaucracies supposedly in order to better provide services to the citizenry (Hood, 1995), thus shifting the emphasis from traditional public administration to public management and pushing the state towards managerialism. The traditional approach of organization and delivery of public services, based on the principles of bureaucratic hierarchy, planning, centralization, direct control and self-sufficiency, is apparently replaced by a market-based public service management or enterprise culture (Larbi, 1999; Walsh, 1995). This represents a paradigm change in the thinking and practice of public administration. The central feature of NPM is the attempt to introduce or simulate, within those sections of the public service that are not privatized, the performance incentives and the disciplines that exist in a market environment (Moore, Stewart & Haddock, 1994).

2.3. Implementation of NPM

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The NPM has been most comprehensively implemented in Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, with Australia, New Zealand, USA and the UK as the lead reformers. However, aspects of these reforms are being applied in many developing and transition countries, especially those that are heavily donor dependent. Lindquist (2006) states the Canada Public Service has, too, changed, due to NPM. Practices at the federal level in Canada have been influenced by and continue to be associated with New Public Management.

The NPM in Uganda was conceptualized as soon as the National Resistance Movement (NRM) captured state power on January 25th1986. The NRM's argument for this reform was to improve on its performance and to deliver the promises of the protracted people's revolution. Also, the reform was intended, in an accountable and transparent way, to enhance the performance of the Public Service to achieve good governance and optimum resource utilization that was in scarcity due to the misrule of the past regimes (Olum, 2004). In Zambia a major dimension of NPM was launched in 1993, it envisaged the establishment of a leaner and more effective public service.

2.4. New Public Management And The Training Needs Of Public Sector Managers

According to Hood (1991), among the NPM principles is the 'hands-on' professional management which emphasizes on letting managers manages. It stresses that professional management must be given substantive responsibility for management; the achievement of clearly specified goals rather than being administrators whose function is primarily to administer rules.

In Canada, in order to recruit, train and develop the kind of professionals who could adapt to public service reforms, a policy of continuous learning was adopted in 2000. Continuous learning involves training and development, which the government is committed to providing permanent employees with an opportunity to create their personal learning programs and the chance to follow it with a caveat regarding the operational requirements of their organizations. Gow (2004) argues that the policy of continuous learning fits into a strategy of public service reform based on the notion of a professional public service working in partnership with political leaders. NPM initiatives have had the objective of making managerial behaviour in public sector organizations more similar to that in the private sector and having knowledgeable and capable public managers is of fundamental importance lest NPM implementation remains rhetoric (Gow, 2004). According to Lekorwe (2010), it is critical that the public sector is managed efficiently and effectively since in most countries, especially developing ones where the public sector usually dominates the economy, the public sector contributes significantly to the performance and development of the economy.

For the public sector to be managed optimally public sector managers need to be equipped with the necessary skills through training and education. A continuous training program in best practice in administration and management must be in place to ensure that the staff is continually exposed to developments and new innovations in their field. Human resource capacity building for public service delivery has been recognized by developed, transition, and developing economies under the notion of the NPM reform (Taylor, 2001).

According to Pablo, Reay, Dewald and Casebeer (2007), public sector managers are increasingly expected to use managerial strategies to improve organizational performance. It is observed that the public sector manager should be a capable manager and a change agent. He should imbibe attitudinal and cultural change, possess domain expertise and negotiation skills; be knowledgeable about the nature of the public sector, and capable of performing his traditional functions and role while taking cognizance of the imperatives of regional and continental cooperation and globalization. Benington, Hartley, Nielsen and Notten (2008) agree that public professionals need to be trained more appropriately for meeting actual political, economic and social needs and challenges and university programs of professional education can make a major contribution to this.

Lapsley (2008) asserts that management processes are at the heart of the NPM movement. With the management processes being at the center of NPM,

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skilled, knowledgeable and capable managers are key to for NPM. Countries such as New Zealand and the UK regarded as high NPM proponents (Hood, 1995) placed an emphasis on the replacement of old style public administrators with general managers as change agents (Lapsley, 2008). Through attending a well-tailored MPSM, public managers can become the change agents they are supposed to be in the public sector (Sheidu, 2003). Boston, Martin, Pallot & Walsh (1996) established how such managers had pivotal roles in the transformation of the New Zealand public sector.

According to Antwi and Analoui (2008), in the context of NPM, human resource management and development have been recognized as crucial strategic policy elements of concern in the implementation of reforms in both developed, transitional and developing countries. Development of human resources in both public and private sector organizations has become critical in an increasingly knowledge-based globalizing economy. As already highlighted human resource capacity building for public service delivery, in particular, has been recognized by developed, transition, and developing economies under the notion of the NPM reform (Taylor, 2001).

Governance is a critical aspect of the NPM. According to Tolofori (2005), NPM is often mentioned together with 'governance'; with some authors, for example, Ewalt in 2001, explaining that governance is about the overarching structure of government and the setting up of overall strategy, while NPM is the operational aspect of the new type of public administration. As such, many authors and researchers use both terms interchangeably (Tolofori, 2005).

2.5. Master's in Public Sector Management Program

In 2003, recognizing the need to strengthen the skills required for effective public sector management in Africa. ACBF carried out a study, which revealed that certain critical roles were required in order to respond effectively to the continent's economic, political and social reforms. The PSMTP with MPSM was launched in 2006, with ACBF support and is currently being delivered by four institutions of higher learning in Sub-Saharan Africa. These are: the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) located in Accra, Ghana; the Africa University, in Mutare, Zimbabwe; the Ecole Nationale d'Administration and Université Omar Bongo, in Libreville Gabon; and the Ecole Nationale d'Administration, in Dakar, Senegal (ACBF, 2012).

Different African governments have made efforts to train their managers by, among other ways, setting up Public Management Institutes or Civil Service Colleges and supporting their staff for further studies in Public Sector Management for example Uganda Management Institute (UMI), Kenya Institute of Administration(KIA), Malawi Institute of Management (MIM), National institute of Public Administration (NIPA), Lesotho Institute of Management and Public Administration (LIPAM), Tanzania Public Service College (TPSC) in Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Lesotho and Tanzania respectively. The world in which public managers operate is rapidly changing and vastly different from that contemplated by the early intellectual stalwarts of public administration. Public agencies are expected to collaborate with each other, with nonprofit organizations and with citizen groups and to use modern technology strategically to manage and deliver services. This calls for them to be appropriately trained, knowledgeable and competent lest they don't deliver (Sheidu, 2003).

2.6. Knowledge Areas of University Programs

According to Dubas *et al*. (1998), various skills and knowledge areas have been identified by literature as to be important for management training. Based on the works of Fulmer (1997), Karakaya and Karakaya (1996), Levenburg (1996), Vicere (1996), Hilgert (1995), Vicere and Freeman (1990), Bolt (1989), Bolt (1987) and Berkman and Borden (1984), Dubas *et al*. (1998) identified twelve skills and knowledge areas they considered important for effective management education and training as follows:

- Interpersonal skills (leadership/influence, motivation, teamwork, etc.)
- Communication skills (oral and written)
- Managing human performance

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- Implementation of business strategies specific to the organization
- Productivity improvement
- Worldwide business issues (legislature, economic, political, cross cultural, etc.)
- New information technology
- Financial management
- General management skills
- Customer and market focus
- Total quality management
- Business ethics

According to Dixon (1996), a PSM course was developed to equip middle and senior managers of the right competency skills to help in reinventing the service in a bid to reinvent the Australian public service. The development of the course was done with such management competences as understanding the environment, strategic management, program delivery, managing change, managing people, understanding a human resource management framework, and personal effectiveness in mind. The four key focus areas of the program were: managing service and program delivery; professional identity; leadership and change; and financial, resource and people management. The PSM course's specific learning outcomes and curriculum were designed after extensive audience analysis and place a strong emphasis on the changing public sector environment, the implementing of administrative reforms and thus the managing of change (Dixon, 1996).

2.7. Market Orientation

According to González, Vijande and Casielles (2002), the market orientation concept has become one of the central issues of scientific and entrepreneurial study in the marketing discipline. In fact, the theoretical and empirical contributions to this field of research have proliferated in various contexts throughout the last decade. Market orientation refers to that set of activities concerned with the implementation of the marketing concept (Enright, 2001). However, Kohli and Jaworski (1990) define market orientation as the organization-wide generation of market intelligence pertaining to current and future customer needs, dissemination of the intelligence across departments, and organization-wide responsiveness to it. Narver and Slater (1990) view market orientation as the organization culture that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviors for the creation of superior value for buyers and, thus, continuous superior performance for the business. Thus market orientation involves every aspect of the organization and is concerned with superior performance of the organization. In support of this, Han, Kim and Srivastava (1998) emphasize that market orientation, as a corporate culture, characterizes an organization's disposition to deliver superior value to its customers on a continuous basis. The creation of superior customer value requires an organization wide commitment to continuous information gathering and coordination of the needs of customers, capabilities of competitors, and the provisions of other important market agents and authorities.

According to Dubas *et al*. (1998), a university program can be product-driven or market-driven. A product-driven program is one that is principally based on the research of the faculty while a market-driven program is mainly based on the needs of the managers who are customers in this sense. Dubas *et al*. (1998) emphasize that university programs should satisfy the needs of the customers if these program if these programs are to have long-term survival. Customer-driven programs would also ensure help students to make immediate impact on their current jobs.

Sheidu (2003) advances that for any training program to be relevant and attain the desired impact there should be close interaction between providers and beneficiaries. There should also be constant review of programs to meet the challenges of the dynamics of the environment. Thus, public management development institutions should constantly interact with the public sector. According to Sheidu (2003), in a feasibility study funded by the Africa Capacity Building Foundation on the training needs of Africa's public sector, it was found out that the interaction between the training service providers and the beneficiaries was low. Of all the educational and training institutions studied, only the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), the National Institute of Public Administration, Zambia (NIPA) and Zimbabwe Institute of Public Administration and Management (ZIPAM) were informed to some extent, by the results of training needs analysis in the design of programs.

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Many universities are informed by assumed changes in the environment in the design of programs. There is need to close the gap between practitioners and training institutions, as they both need each other to develop (Sheidu 2003). This view is also supported by Dubas *et al.* (1998) who noted that business schools need to satisfy the needs of their customers i.e. student executives and their employers.

2.8. Customer Satisfaction

Mahatma Gandhi had these words:

> *A customer is the most important visitor on our premises. He is not dependent on us. We are dependent on him. He is not an interruption of our work. He is the purpose of it. He is not an outsider of our business. He is part of it. We are not doing him a favor by serving him. He is doing us a favor by giving us the opportunity to do so.*

According to Serenko (2010), the implication of Mahatma Gandhi's words is that 'the customer is always right' and that 'the customer is king'. The customer is identified as the only one who determines quality on the assumption that he or she is informed about the correct choices, has the purchasing power, and the alternatives are on a timely basis available for decision-making. The satisfaction one derives from being attended to can be enormous (Olum, 2004).

Matzler, Hinterhuber, Bailom and Sauerwein (1996) demonstrate that striving for customer satisfaction means understanding and anticipating what customers want of the products in the future but do not expect of them. The point is to delight the customer with products and services which engender a very positive response in the customer and surprise him. According to Nigel, Brierley and MacDougall (2002), customer satisfaction measurement enables the service provider to understand how customers perceive your organization and whether your performance meets their expectations, identify priorities for improvements areas; areas where improvements in performance will produce the greatest gain in customer satisfaction, undertake a cost benefit analysis to assess the overall business impact of addressing the priorities for improvement. Customer satisfaction helps to pin point 'understanding gaps' where your own staff have a misunderstanding of customers' priorities or their ability to meet customers' needs; set goals for service improvement and monitor progress against a customer satisfaction index, benchmark your performance against that of other organization, increase profits through improved customer loyalty and retention.(Nigel *et al.*, 2002)

Kotler *et al.* (2001) state that whether the buyer is satisfied after the purchase depends on the offer's performance in relation to the buyer's expectations and whether the buyer interprets any deviation between the two. If the performance falls short of expectations, the customer is dissatisfied. If the performance is beyond the expectation, the customer is highly satisfied or delighted. According Kotler *et al.* (2001), in general, satisfaction is a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations. If the performance falls short of expectations, the customer is dissatisfied. If the performance matches the expectations, the customer is satisfied. If the performance exceeds expectations, the customer is highly satisfied or delighted. According to Sahney, Banwet and Karunes (2003) the alignment between customers' expectations and their perception of the service received is often referred to as customer satisfaction. In the same vein, Munteanu, Ceobanu, Bobâlca and Anton (2010), reason that customer satisfaction largely depends on the degree to which a product supplied by an organization meets or surpasses customer expectation. According to Oliver (1999), satisfaction can be defined as 'pleasurable fulfillment', which means that consumers perceive that consumption fulfills some need, desire, goal, or so forth and that this fulfillment is pleasurable.

More and more business enterprises realize that customer satisfaction is crucial for future business success Matzler, Rier, Hinterhuber, Renzl, Stadler (2005). Thus, striving for customer satisfaction means understanding and anticipating what customers want of the products in the future but do not expect of them. Browne, Kaldenburg, Browne and Brown (1998) found that global satisfaction within a university was driven by a student's assessment of course quality and other

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curriculum-related factors associated with a university. McCollough and Gremler (1999) also found that satisfaction guarantees have a positive impact on student confidence in lecturers and they help set clear expectations that both students and lecturers will work hard. As a pedagogical device, satisfaction guarantees set performance standards and help increase the accountability of both students and lecturers. They also influence student evaluations of lecturers and courses positively without losing rigor in the classroom (Gremler & McCollough, 2002).

Manifestations of satisfaction vary from one person to another and from one product to another. The state of the so-called "satisfaction" depends on a number of psychological and physical variables, and correlates with certain behaviors (Munteanu *et al*., 2010). According to Serenko (2010) and Mohr, Eiche and Sedlacek (1998), indicators or manifestations of satisfied customers/students will include institution loyalty, student retention, positive word-of-mouth, the probability of making donations after graduation, intellectual development and overall program reputation. For instance, overall dissatisfaction with the program quality, manifested through poor academic guidance, limited school-related information, inadequate instruction and institutional alienation, dramatically increases the probability of disenrollment even close to graduation (Mohr *et al*., 1998). Satisfied alumni are more likely to make financial donations, participate in various fund-raising activities and encourage prospective students (Serenko, 2010).

3. METHODOLOGY

According to PSMPT Anniversary Report of 2012, 148 students had completed the MPSM program at AU. Of the 148 alumni only 100 were contactable and thus questionnaires were mailed to 100 former students. This follows the recommendations of Delaney (1995) that alumni, apart from current students, are key stakeholders since they are direct customers who would have received the services from the institution. From the 100 questionnaires mailed, a total of 82 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 82%. The main questions addressed in the questionnaire were based on the study objectives concerning the market-orientation of the MPSM program at Africa University and are as follows:

- How relevant are the knowledge areas of the MPSM program to the customers?
- To what extent do the knowledge areas of the MPSM meet the customer requirements?
- Would you recommend the MPSM to others?
- What strategies can be adopted to improve the MPSM?

The survey questionnaire comprised mainly four sections based on the above questions. Relevance or importance of knowledge areas and the extent to which the knowledge areas meet customer requirements were measured based on 20 items i.e. 20 knowledge areas of the program. This follows Dubas *et al.* (1998)'s study where the knowledge areas of the Executive MBA were treated as items. A number of evaluative questions/items were also used to determine the extent to which the respondents would recommend the MPSM program to others. In each case a 5-point Likert scale was used following previous studies. The last section of the questionnaire asked the respondents to suggest strategies that can be adopted to improve the MPSM program. The suggestions of the alumni/customers were deemed instrumental in improving the program as suggested by Browne *et al*. (1998) who argued that satisfaction within a university was driven by a student's assessment of course quality and other curriculum-related factors associated with a university. SPSS Version 21 was used as the main programme to analyze data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents include gender, age, employer, level of position held, cohort attended, experience in the public sector, and country of the respondents. Table 2 below shows a summary of demographic characteristics of the respondents.

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Table 2 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	45	54.9%
Female	37	45.1%
Age		
26 – 35	19	23.2%
36 – 45	55	67.1%
Above 46	8	9.8%
Employer		
Public Sector	77	93.9%
Private Sector	3	3.7%
Civil Society	1	1.2%
Other	1	1.2%
Level of position held		
Junior level	1	1.2%
Middle level	43	52.4%
Senior level	38	46.3%
Cohort attended		
First Cohort	14	17.1%
Second Cohort	17	20.7%
Third Cohort	14	17.1%
Fourth Cohort	19	23.2%
Fifth Cohort	18	22.0%
Experience in the public sector		
5 years and below	10	12.2%
6 - 10 years	25	30.5%
11 - 15 years	35	42.7%
16 - 20 years	7	8.5%
21 years and above	5	6.1%
Country of the respondent		
Botswana	5	6.1%
Ethiopia	5	6.1%
Kenya	6	7.3%
Lesotho	8	9.8%
Malawi	7	8.5%
Mozambique	2	2.4%
Swaziland	10	12.2%
Tanzania	7	8.5%
Uganda	4	4.9%
Zambia	7	8.5%
Zimbabwe	21	25.6%

Of interest to note from Table 2 is that Zimbabwe had the highest number of respondents (25%). The possible explanation is that Zimbabwe is the host country of the program and, thus, it is easier for Zimbabwean students to study this program since preference is given to local students.

4.2. Relevance of the MPSM Knowledge Areas

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The objective to be addressed in this section was to establish the relevance or importance of the knowledge areas of MPSM to the customers. Respondents were asked to rate the relevance of each of the 20 knowledge areas of the MPSM program on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). The mean and standard deviation of the responses are summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Mean and standard deviation of relevance of knowledge areas

Item/Knowledge area	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Public Sector Management in Africa	4.87	.343	82
Public Policy & Management	4.77	.594	82
Governance & Leadership	4.89	.315	82
Macroeconomic Policies & Development	4.66	.549	82
Politics & Public Sector Management	4.74	.439	82
Strategic Planning and Management	4.88	.365	82
Decentralisation and Local Governance	4.55	.804	82
Entrepreneurship and Public Enterprise Management	4.50	.741	82
Program and Project Management	4.83	.379	82
ICT and Public Sector Management	4.71	.484	82
Human Resources Management	4.76	.460	82
Performance Management	4.71	.484	82
Ethics & Professionalism	4.73	.522	82
Applied Research	4.63	.578	82
Public Sector Economics and Finance	4.66	.549	82
International Relations	4.49	.689	82
International Trade and Finance	4.46	.757	82
Diplomacy and Negotiation	4.61	.643	82
Conflict Management and Post Conflict Reconstruction	4.60	.585	82
Regional Co-operation and Integration	4.44	.803	82

Summary: mean = 4.674; standard deviation = 0.554

The analysis shows that all MPSM knowledge areas at AU are relevant to the respondents (mean = 4.674; standard deviation = 0.554). Governance and Leadership was considered as the most relevant knowledge area (mean = 4.89; standard deviation = 0.315) while Regional Co-operation was considered the least relevant knowledge area (mean = 4.44; standard deviation = 0.803) in terms of ranking.

4.3. Satisfaction with the MPSM Knowledge Areas

The objective in this section was to establish the customers' satisfaction level with each of the 20 knowledge areas of the MPSM program on a 5-point Likert scale (1=extremely dissatisfied to 5=extremely satisfied). The mean and standard deviation of the responses are summarized in Table 4 below.

Table 4 Mean and standard deviation of relevance of knowledge areas

Item/Knowledge area	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Public Sector Management in Africa	4.30	.602	82
Public Policy & Management	4.30	.622	82
Governance & Leadership	4.38	.488	82
Macroeconomic Policies & Development	4.37	.599	82
Politics & Public Sector Management	4.20	.675	82
Strategic Planning and Management	4.16	.577	82

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Decentralisation and Local Governance	4.10	.678	82
Entrepreneurship and Public Enterprise Management	4.16	.728	82
Program and Project Management	4.34	.689	82
ICT and Public Sector Management	3.93	.828	82
Human Resources Management	4.22	.522	82
Performance Management	4.00	.609	82
Ethics & Professionalism	4.00	.754	82
Applied Research	4.30	.560	82
Public Sector Economics and Finance	4.23	.551	82
International Relations	4.17	.540	82
International Trade and Finance	4.27	.545	82
Diplomacy and Negotiation	4.30	.581	82
Conflict Management and Post Conflict Reconstruction	4.12	.692	82
Regional Co-operation and Integration	4.02	.666	82

Summary: mean = 4.194; standard deviation = 0.625

The analysis shows that the respondents are satisfied with all MPSM knowledge areas at AU (mean = 4.194; standard deviation = 0.625). The most satisfying knowledge area to respondents in terms of ranking was Governance and Leadership (mean = 4.38; standard deviation = 0.488) and the least satisfying knowledge are in terms of ranking was ICT and Public Sector Management (mean = 3.93; standard deviation = 0.828).

4.4. Comparison of Relevance and Satisfaction Ratings

As indicated in Table 3 and Table 4, the mean rating of relevance is higher than that of satisfaction. We, therefore, seek to determine whether or not these two means are significantly different. A Paired Samples *t*-Test was conducted and the results are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Comparison of relevance and satisfaction rating

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	RELEVANCE	4.67	82	.341	.038
	SATISFACTION	4.19	82	.393	.043

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	RELEVANCE & SATISFACTION	82	.189	.090

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 RELEVANCE - SATISFACTION	.480	.469	.052	.377	.583	9.262	81	.000

The results show that the mean rating of relevance (4.67) is significantly higher than that of satisfaction (4.19) at CI = 95%, t = 9.262, df = 81, p value = 0.000*. This implies that the MPSM program is

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more relevant (important) to the customers (public sector managers) than it is satisfying. The correlation between relevance and satisfaction is weak and positive (0.189) but insignificant (*p* value = 0.090); implying that there is no significant association between importance attached to and satisfaction derived from the MPSM program.

4.5. Recommendation of the MPSM Program to Others

The objective in this section was to ascertain if customers would recommend the MPSM program to others. Respondents were asked seven questions (items) if they would recommend the MPSM program to others. A 5-point Likert scale was used (1=strongly agree to 5=strongly agree).

A reliability analysis was done to measure the reliability index of the recommendation scale using SPSS. Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items was found to be low (α = 0.569). This follows the recommendations of Zikmund *et al*. (2010:306) that scales with α coefficient between 0.80 and 0.95, between 0.70 and 0.80, between 0.60 and 0.70, and below 0.60 are considered to have very good reliability, good reliability, fair reliability and poor reliability respectively. Further analysis was done to determine the reliability index of the scale if certain items were deleted and the results are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6 Recommendation to others

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I would recommend others to attend the MPSM at AU	17.91	.608*
I would only recommend public sector managers to attend MPSM	19.28	.488
I would recommend all managers from all sectors to attend MPSM	18.39	.632*
I would only recommend junior level public sector managers to attend MPSM	19.99	.471
I would only recommend middle level public sector managers to attend the MPSM	19.94	.433
I would only recommend senior level public sector managers to attend the MPSM	19.78	.576
I would recommend all public sector managers to attend the MPSM	18.39	.602*

** Denotes item deleted*

Three items (marked *) were removed from the scale and the reliability index was calculated. Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items was found to be fairly high and acceptable (α = 0.774). The mean and standard deviation ratings of recommendation of knowledge areas are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7 Mean and standard deviation ratings of recommendation of knowledge areas to others

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
I would recommend public sector managers to attend MPSM	3.00	1.523	82
I would recommend junior level public sector managers to attend MPSM	2.29	1.232	82

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I would recommend middle level public sector managers to attend the MPSM	2.34	1.219	82
I would recommend senior level public sector managers to attend the MPSM	2.50	1.345	82

Summary: mean = 2.534; standard deviation = 1.33

The results show that the respondents are less likely to recommend the MPSM program to others (mean = 2.534) even though the responses were highly inconsistent (standard deviation = 1.33).

4.6. Strategies to Improve MPSM Program

The objective in this section was to identify strategies that can be adopted to improve the MPSM program. The respondents were, therefore, asked to suggest ways of improving the MPSM program at AU. Respondents acknowledged that MPSM program was amply designed; however, there exists room for improvement. Respondents gave the following suggestions;

- A doctoral program should be initiated so that interested cadres can advance with Doctorate level
- It was suggested that opportunity be given to capable and willing alumni to lecture some of the course units in the program
- It was recommended that the program allocates adequate time for the research project.
- There was need to review credit hours upwards allocated to some of the modules, in order to avoid a cursory coverage of a subject in a module or else some knowledge areas maybe electives/optional.
- It was suggested that the program should emphasize best practices in Africa and not to always draw examples from the West as is the case so that "the likelihood of forgetting some indigenous means of governance that Africans have embraced from a cultural point of view is not experienced. These traditional views are still practiced to this present day in chiefdoms and villages notably in Swaziland, Lesotho among others. There is a likelihood of losing this aspect if it's neglected to propagate the good side of African tradition and cultural values" (field data).
- Knowledge areas that encourage innovations especially on business process engineering, integrated service delivery or one stop shop concept for government services should be initiated in the program
- It was suggested that symposiums for the MPSM alumni and participants be held periodically to share experiences and achievements. This would go a long way in sharing best practices and networking thus improving job performance and service delivery in Africa's Pubic sector.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the survey results, it can be concluded that that all the 20 knowledge areas of the MPSM at Africa University are highly relevant to the jobs of public sector managers; with Leadership and Governance being the most relevant and while Regional Co-operation being the least relevant in terms of ranking. It was also established that all the 20 knowledge areas of the MPSM at Africa University satisfy the participants except for ICT and Public Sector Management which moderately satisfy the participants. Similarly, Leadership and Governance is the most satisfying knowledge area. The implication of the findings suggests that the MPSM program at AU is market-oriented as it focusses on the needs of the customers. Leadership and Governance as knowledge area is considered as very important and satisfying the customers (public sector managers). This finding is line with the view of Tolofori (2005) that governance is a critical aspect of the NPM. According to Tolofori

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(2005), NPM is often mentioned together with governance; with some authors, for example, Ewalt in 2001, arguing that governance is about the overarching structure of government and the setting up of overall strategy, while NPM is the operational aspect of the new type of public administration. As such, many authors and researchers use both terms interchangeably. Although the MPSM program at Africa University is highly relevant and satisfying, this does not necessarily translate to the recommendation of the program as indicated by a low level of the willingness to recommend the program to others. The study also concludes that there is no association between relevance or importance attached to and satisfaction derived from the MPSM program. We recommend that further research be conducted in order to ascertain the relationship between relevance and satisfaction of knowledge areas.

Knowledge areas that encourage innovations especially on business process engineering, integrated service delivery or one stop shop concept for government services should be initiated in the program. More so, Africa University should initiate a doctoral program in the management field since customers are interested, this will help African personnel to advance further in their studies which is good for Africa and the rest of the world. In addition to that, there is a need for teaching institutions/universities to be customer driven in determining and designing the course content. If this is done, they will be able meet the customers' needs and keep them satisfied and delighted thus they will perhaps be able to make referrals among others. There is a need, also, to always keep in touch with the alumni as their feedback/ input can help to inform the institution appropriately. This feedback can help to design the appropriate products that the customers want. Finally, it is it is recommended that further studies be conducted to evaluate other MPSM or related programs so as to compare the findings.

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