

PUBLIC SERVICE INTEGRATION IN KAZAKHSTAN: WHY ALTERNATIVE-ACCESS RATHER THAN SINGLE-ACCESS?¹

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Abstract:

This paper analyses implementation of the New Public Management ideas in Kazakhstan using the case of a joined-up public service delivery called “One Stop Shops”. Several public services are provided in a single building rather than different government offices in a business-like style of service delivery and in the modern physical environment. The service integration policy is an attempt of Kazakhstani government to reduce corruption and improve quality of public services. The author argues that despite positive achievements in making public services more transparent and accessible, the adopted “*alternative-access*” service delivery model was not able to implement in-depth changes in the working practices of the public sector and improve service quality. Implementation of the managerial ideas was limited and constrained by the institutional framework and culture prevailing in Kazakhstani bureaucracy. The main conclusion is that the governments of transitional countries need to critically analyse pros and cons of the new policies and reflect on their cultures before making further steps to adopt Western managerial initiatives.

Key words: service integration, NPM, transitional countries, Kazakhstan

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1. Introduction

The New Public Management (NPM) wave swiped not only in Western countries, also transitional countries. Kazakhstan was not immune to the global fashion of managerial ideas to improve government performance and attempted to embrace NPM concepts. Moving away from a command and control mode of government to integrated governance through multiple stakeholders is an emerging policy paradigm in Kazakhstan. This paper analyses implementation of the managerial ideas in Kazakhstan using the case of the service integration policy called “*One Stop Shop*” (OSS).²

The OSS represent a counter service, in a modern and well-designed space which is available for citizens, that tries, in a more business-like atmosphere, to process customers’ requests for official documents, payment of registration fees and similar services. The OSS “*have proved to be highly popular with citizens more used to being shunted from one public body to another by poorly motivated civil servants lacking in customer orientation*” (Knox, 2008: 489). At the period of data collection for this research project, December 2006 – December 2008, the OSS provided access to 25 services of three stakeholders: Ministry of Justice (MJ) of the Republic of Kazakhstan (RK), a coordinator of reform (getting passport, birth/death/marriage certificate, registration of business etc.); Agency for Land Resource Management (ALRM) (registration of land ownership and rent), and Ministry of Defence (MD) (registration of military servants in reserve).

The purpose of this paper is to examine implementation of the Western managerial ideas in transitional context using the case of the public service integration policy in Kazakhstan. This research aims to make contribution to the theoretical interpretation of the public service changes driven by the managerial reforms in transitional countries which in the academic discourse still remains unexplored.

The paper is structured as follows. The progress of the policy implementation in Kazakhstan is examined from the perspective of the NPM. In this paper I address three main research questions:

1. What characterises the service integration reform in transitional context such as Kazakhstan?
2. What are the drivers for service modernisation reform in Kazakhstan?
3. What challenges have constrained the policy implementation?

The first and second questions are addressed by giving a brief overview of the public service modernisation in transitional countries followed by the empirical data from service integration process in Kazakhstan that increases complexity. The third question is answered in the discussion by analyzing the underlying reasons for behaviours and actions of the policy-makers in shaping the policy framework around their personal interests. I will conclude with some reflections on the implications and effects of the NPM on public service changes. The empirical data were collected from interviews, participant observation and documentary analysis.

² Government Resolution of RK. *On Establishment of State Entities – Public Service Centres Using Single-Window Approach*. 5 January 2007, No. 1. The term “Public Service Centres” is “*Centry obslujivaniya naseleniya*” from Russian.

2. Challenges of the Managerial Reforms for Transitional Countries

Following the paths of developed countries, many developing countries have been trying to reshape their administrative systems along the logic of NPM. Kazakhstan was not immune to the international trends of NPM and adopted managerial ideas in current administrative reform. The previous research shows that there are both potential for and real limitations to applying such managerial elements in transitional countries.

The central objective of change was improvement in the ways in which government is managed and services delivered, with emphasis on efficiency, economy and effectiveness. Public services were provider-dominated, especially in the case of professionalized provision where powerful, autonomous professions defended vested interests and could not be held to account (Pollitt, 1990). A new model was emerged with different titles, such as “new public management” (Hood, 1991), “market-based public administration” (Lan and Rosenbloom, 1992), “managerialism” (Pollitt, 1990), “reinventing government” (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992) and “post-bureaucratic” model (Barzelay, 1992). Whatever the title is, they provide similar premises, although there are significant country-specific variations and NPM’s overall suitability for different regimes still remains uncertain.

The literature on public management reforms also points to the development and availability of information and communication technologies as providing the necessary tools and structures to make workable managerial reforms in the public sector (Greer, 1994). NPM reforms have also been “globalized” by change agents (international consultants and international financial institutions) which have contributed to the “importation” of new management techniques from the business sector to the public sector (Greer, 1994).

Hence, a combination of factors coincided to produce an irresistible pressure for management reforms in the public services in developed and developing countries. In contrast to rigid, rule-bound, slow moving bureaucracies, NPM was presented as providing a future for smaller, fast-moving service delivery organizations that would be kept lean by the pressures of competition and that would need to be user-responsive and outcome-oriented in order to survive. These organizations would be expected to develop flatter internal structures and devolve operational authority to front-line managers. Professional dominance would be minimized to allow for the substitution of more cost-effective mixes of staff. The rationale is the shift of power from providers to users of public services which is argued to produce benefits in flexibility, quality and cost effectiveness (Osbourne and Gaebler, 1992).

Reformers face a number of challenges in repositioning public service recipients as customers. The limited experience of NPM in transitional states suggests that there are *institutional constraints* with implications for the capacity of central agencies to manage the process. Questions are raised whether the new model has sufficient conceptual coherence to provide an alternative to public administration as either a theoretical construct for academic research or an approach to the management of public services (Osborne and McLaughlin, 2002: 6). Doubts are raised regarding its universal applicability for both public service and civil society failures (McCourt, 2001). Particularly, the applicability of the new model in the developing world has faced many problems as many developing countries do not fulfil some preconditions for its

effective implementation (Minogue, 2001; Larbi, 1999). There are also *socio-cultural constraints* in reforming the administrative system along the NPM model. NPM initiatives are difficult to implement where there are social and cultural inertia (Zafarullah and Huque, 2001; Ray, 1999). State-civil society relations also remain problematic. The civil society has not been able to put enough pressures on state apparatus to implement reforms (Sozen and Shaw, 2002).

Hence, the dynamic managerial model of social and economic development which encourages building-up a customer-orientated, transparent, quality-driven and accountable government has posed a fundamental challenge for a traditional model of administration in Kazakhstan which is generally perceived to be inefficient, costly, corrupt and lacking public accountability.

3. Research Sites and Methodology

Two single-window centres which were launched in November 2005 in Astana, the new capital of the country, were selected as in-depth case studies. Compared to other OSS which were established one-two years later, my case studies have accumulated the most experience in integrated service design, and could provide rich empirical data. Each OSS has a manager who is appointed by the Minister of Justice, three deputy managers, supervisor of the customer service and 25-30 front-line employees. In addition to the case studies to strengthen the external and internal validity of my data I examined 9 OSS at the regional level to capture general patterns of change processes.

The OSS are open Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 20:00 pm and on Saturdays from 9:00 am to 13:00 pm. Typical OSS physical environment represents a newly built or re-designed building with the workplace roughly split into five sections: customers waiting area, front-line service area, administrative and ICT support office, managers' office and additional space for banking, notary, copying and photography services. The physical environment of the OSS is user-friendly and convenient with new furniture, open-plan design and professional looking front-line staff with uniform scarves and badges. Within this environment the single-window organizations serve around 800 - 900 clients on a daily basis. During the period of data collection the OSS provided 25 services divided into three areas by types of services:

1. Services of the MJ (16 services): issuing a passport, identity document; registration of residence, birth, death, marriage, divorce; registration of documents related to property issues; registration of legal persons and businesses;
2. Services of the ALRM (4 services): issuing an act of private ownership over a piece of land; permanent/ temporary use of land; temporary free use of land;
3. Services of the MD (5 services): record keeping of officers, soldiers and sergeants who are kept in reserve; issuing a document on entitlement for benefits to the target groups (veterans of the World War II, Afghan war, liquidators of Chernobyl disaster).

Since January 2009 32 new services were added to the list of services delivered through single-window arrangements.

The research questions required detailed, empirical data, best collected through in-depth exploration of the issues with the selected participants. A number of primary sources were used to generate data for this paper. One is two in-depth case studies to examine service integration process through observations in each organization of daily work practices and interactions between the managers, front-line staff, stakeholders and clients. Second, semi-structured interviews with 11 OSS managers who were able to comment on changes, processes and technologies. Third is unstructured interviews with 5 senior managers of the MJ, 25 front-line staff and 10 officials from the stakeholder departments who shared their experiences on service integration and perceptions of new identities, roles and tasks.

Another element of this research is more “local” in terms of the exploration of the way NPM policy was implemented, and what impact it had on the public service delivery in Kazakhstan. Three types of secondary data have been used to examine policy implementation process. First, there are official documents that provided a legislative framework for public service integration policy. Second, there are mass media publications which give indication of the type of issues raised within debate on the policy by politicians, coordinating body and stakeholders. A final and important component is existing international and local studies that relate to evaluation of Kazakhstani government in terms of government effectiveness, control of corruption, technological development. Hence, triangulation has been used to apply a “family of methods” to construct a case study.

Anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed to the research participants. Respondents were given a brief description of the research goals at the beginning of the interview and could refrain from answering questions. Semi-structured interviews lasting for about an hour were conducted in Russian, recorded and often followed up with telephone calls. Data collection also included relevant legislation and organizational texts such as standards and regulations. All this data was integrated and analysed in order to explore, in an inductive and contextual manner, the values and norms of managerial culture, and the processes of service integration versus interpretation by managers and front-line employees.

Questions used in the semi-structured interviews included perceptions of customer service, challenges faced, and practices of managing service processes, learning new ways of working. Questions were asked in the same way but in an open-ended manner without offering specific options for responses, so as to let respondents speak their views in their own words. While the interview was structured around these standard questions, open discussions also developed around particular questions. Statements that were thought to indicate the respondents’ views were extracted from the interview texts and thematised on a cross-case basis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

In the following stage of analysis, the commonalities of each subject’s narrative were interpreted further and compared with patterns identified during observations and in the organizational texts studied. Finally, in the contextualisation stage, the patterns that were noted were applied back to the subjects’ narratives to reveal how the meaning of customer service management and learning changes from participant to participant. The process of inductive thematisation showed that similar patterns were evident in both case organizations as well as OSS across regions.

4. Public Service Integration in Kazakhstan: Key Steps

4.1 Policy Background

Kazakhstan is emerging as the most dynamic economic and political actor in Central Asia (Dave, 2007). It is the second largest country of the former Soviet Union, after the Russian Federation, and has rich natural resources, particularly oil and gas reserves, which are being exploited through massive foreign investment. Despite remarkable economic transformation under the leadership of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, in 2008 overall poverty rate was estimated at 18 percent of population, exceeding 60 percent in some oil-rich rural regions.³

Kazakhstan is in a much more challenging situation compared to many developed and developing countries with relatively small territories. Small population size (15.4 million people) is spread over a vast territory which is equal in size to the Western Europe (1 million square miles) with nearly half of the citizens, 43 percent, living in rural areas. The level of computer literacy among population is less than 15 % including half of the active users of Internet. General public dissatisfaction with quality of services delivered by public service organizations (government bodies, state hospitals, state schools and universities, traffic police, tax and customs bodies, courts, local municipalities etc.) has formulated negative image of the government (Jandosova, 2003; Jandosova, 2007; World Bank, 2002). The political system in Kazakhstan is characterized by patronage and clientelism relations (Cummings, 2005). The political leadership of Kazakhstan wants the country “*to become one of the world’s top oil producers and to be counted among its 50 most competitive economies*”.⁴

Kazakhstan is under growing pressure by the international community to engage in political reforms which include a modernisation agenda to improve quality of public services (Knox, 2008). This is particularly significant in light of upcoming chairmanship of Kazakhstan in the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010. However, serious concerns were raised that the country could undermine integrity of the OSCE’s human-rights principles.⁵ Hence, implementation of new managerial ideas on service quality improvement were particularly challenging for Kazakhstan compared to developed democracies given transitional context of the country with hierarchical, non-transparent and inertial public sector.

The service integration policy was initiated by the members of the Presidential team, many of whom are graduates from Western European and American universities. A young generation of the political managers has brought from developed democracies new knowledge, skills and enthusiasm about success of managerial reforms in those countries where they have studied. A set of new ideas driven by the NPM ideology has been initiated simultaneously such as performance measurement and management, external

³ World Bank, 2008, “*Ten Things You Never Knew about the World Bank in Kazakhstan*”

⁴ The Economist, 13 November 2008, “*Eyes on the Road*”

⁵ The Economist, 6 December 2007, “*Kazakhstan and the OSCE*”; The Economist, 8 December 2007, “*Joining the Club*”; The Wall Street Journal, 3 June 2009, “*Kazakhstan Not Ready for OSCE Presidency – Rights Group*”

audits of government bodies' performance, separation of strategic and operational functions, delegation more autonomy to the managers, setting public-private partnerships etc. In this respect, public service integration is a particularly interesting case to examine as it embraces many components of the NPM ideology.

Introduction of single-window arrangements in the public sector of Kazakhstan evolved into two key policies: e-government and OSS. According to the State Programme for Further Development of E-government in 2008-2010, the OSS are to be integrated in the e-government system by providing public services both through face-to-face customer service and online.⁶ The important observation is that the OSS policy in Kazakhstan was driven not only by ambitions to improve the cost-efficiency of administrative regulations and service quality, as in many developed and developing countries, but the political ambition to reduce corruption. Given high level of corruption criticised by the international organizations and mass media, the President of RK, N.A.Nazarbayev, stated aims of the OSS policy with strong emphasis on combating corruption and service quality improvement.⁷ The concept of the single-window centers as a tool for facilitating transparency in the public sector was also reflected in the State Anti-Corruption Strategy in Kazakhstan in 2006-2010.⁸ Hence, the political leadership has put high expectations on the service integration policy as a panacea from public service failures and corruption.

4.2 Stages of Policy Implementation

Borrowing ideas from NPM ideology the OSS policy has been accompanied by wide media coverage aimed to demonstrate to the public and international community the political intention to achieve a “*more responsive and transparent bureaucracy*”. Figure 1 presents an overview of the policy implementation process roughly divided in four stages:

- I stage – announcement of the new policy and launch of the pilot projects (February 2005 – December 2006);
- II stage – the OSS were assigned legal authority to deliver 25 services and expanded from 30 to 300 offices across all regions (January 2007 – December 2008);
- III stage – 32 new services were added, new service delivery methods were introduced (January 2009 – current stage);
- IV stage – the vision of the government is that by 2011 over 100 services will be delivered through 500 OSS offices, coordinating authority will be delegated from the MJ to the local municipalities, the single-window centres will be integrated with e-government system.⁹

⁶ Government Resolution of RK entitled “*Programme for Further Development of E-government in 2008-2010*,” 30 November 2007, No. 1155-1

⁷ Annual Message of the President of RK entitled “*Kazakhstan on the Way to Accelerated Economic, Social and Political Modernisation*,” February 2005

⁸ Presidential Decree of RK entitled “*State Anti-Corruption Programme for 2006-2010*,” 23 December 2005, No. 1686

⁹ Ministry of Justice of RK. 2009. *Main Directions of Performance of the Justice Departments*. Report presented at the Lower Chamber of Parliament, 17 March, in Astana, Kazakhstan.

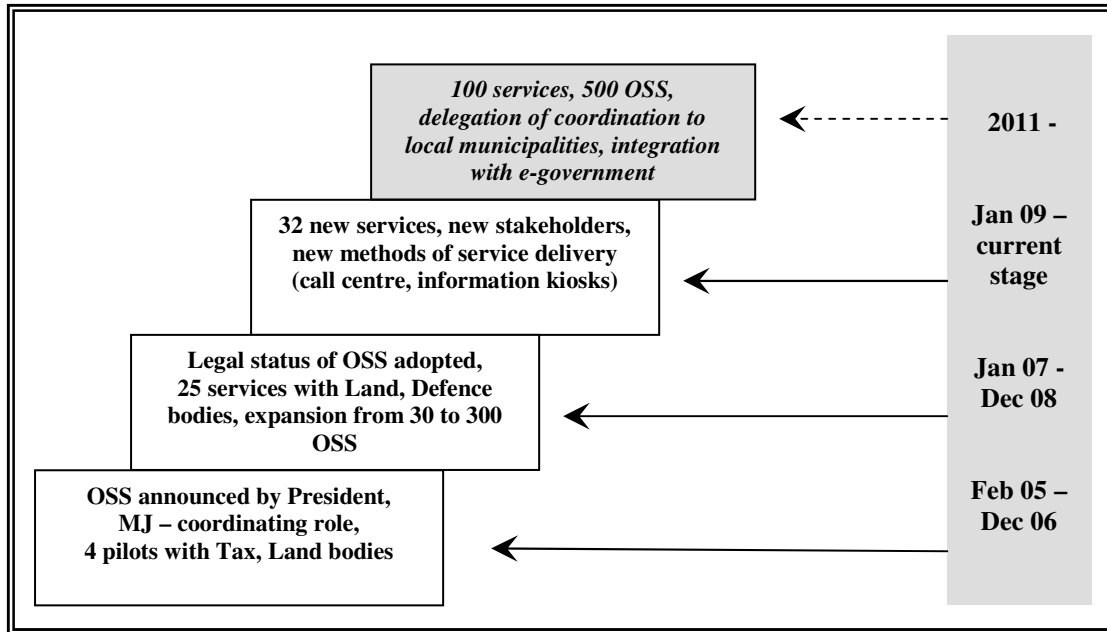


Figure 1: Stages of the Service Integration Policy Implementation

As highlighted above in the introduction, Kazakhstani government did succeed in creating user-friendly physical environment in the single-window centres which is characterized by the business-like atmosphere of the offices, an open-plan design, an electronic queuing system, access available for disabled, the polite and trained front-line staff, the information booklets on service standards, the notary, banking, photo and copy services located within the same building. The international consultants of EU delegation gave a highly positive evaluation of the policy progress by admitting that Kazakhstani OSS had already met international standards and could serve as examples of best practice for some European countries.¹⁰ However, this paper presents less optimistic view on the progress of service integration by analysing the underlying factors that constrained service integration to a full extent.

4.2.1 Pilot Project

Figure 2 presents a “single-access” model of service delivery which was piloted from November 2005 to December 2006. Pilot projects were launched in the four OSS: two offices in Astana – a new capital and Almaty – a former capital, now a business and cultural centre.

¹⁰ Newspaper “Express-K”, 5 May 2009, “One Stop Shop is the Example of Best Practice”

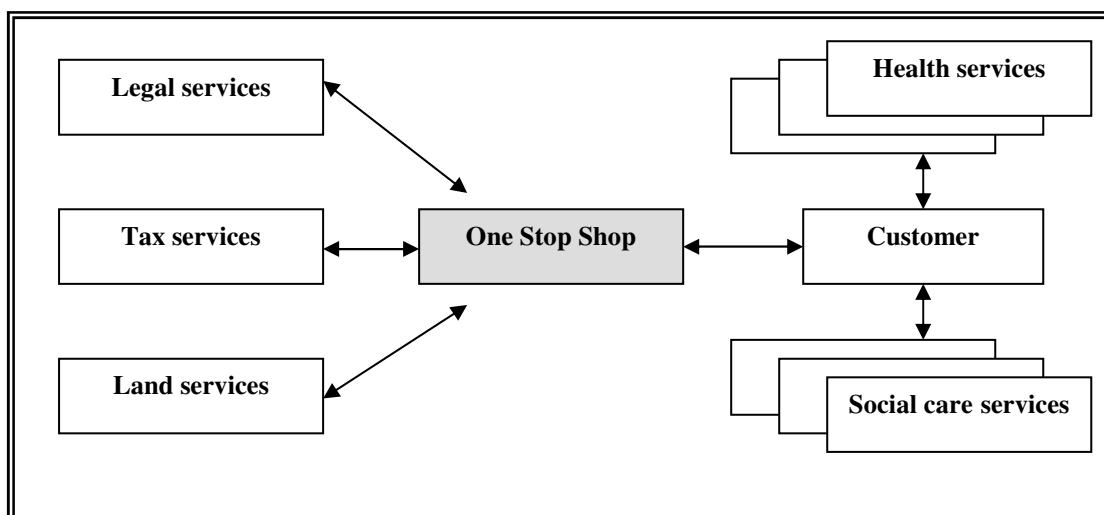


Figure 2: Single-Access Model of Service Delivery at the Pilot Stage

As shown in Figure 2, the pilot OSS provided *single* access to the services of three stakeholder departments, MJ, ALRM and Tax Committee. The major change compared to the previous practice of customer service was creation of the single-access centres which enabled clients to get services from three different government bodies during one visit. The front-line employees did not make decisions on applications, then the emphasis was only on quick and correct acceptance and delivery of documents. The applications were posted to the back-offices of the stakeholder departments for processing, and final documents were then posted back to the front-office for their delivery to the service users.

Hence, from the very beginning of the policy implementation technical functions were assigned to the front-line employees who played a role of “mediators” (as the managers from the MJ were used to call them) between the service providers and customers. It is worth to emphasize that at the pilot stage of implementation the OSS represented a single-access point to fragmented, non-integrated public services which were physically located in one place lacking back-office service re-engineering.

It is useful to remember that each partner in a collaborative undertaking has something at stake and brings in a host of preconceived notions to the partnership. The stakes may be reputation, but often entail more substantive considerations as resources (people and funds), turf, autonomy, or control (Bardach, 1998). Large investments were put in the pilot projects allocating the best resources in the public sector. The case study organizations were provided with modern offices, new furniture and computer equipment. The stakeholders were obliged to send experienced staff to the OSS who played the role of informal team leaders. The team leaders conducted intensive training for new staff and managers of the OSS on diverse public service provision. Several inter-governmental working groups were created to examine best international practice and develop recommendations involving government officials, international consultants, members of the political party “Nur-Otan”¹¹ and business association.

¹¹ “Nur-Otan” is a pro-presidential political party named after the President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, “Otan” means “motherland” from Kazakh.

As the service integration required a new set of knowledge and skills, Kazakhstani government allocated significant investments in training political and administrative officials in the leading foreign institutions across United States, Western Europe and South-East Asia (Singapore and Malaysia). The local institutions, such as the Public Administration Academy under the President of RK and Eurasian Civil Servants Training Centre, delivered training courses to the managers of the MJ and OSS on service quality and performance standards. International consultants (for example, EU Tacis project “Support to the Development of Performance Standards in the Public Sector of Kazakhstan”) provided advisory support in introducing international experience of the performance standards, in particular the United Kingdom’s Charter Mark scheme (Knox, 2008: 489-490).

4.2.2 Transfer from Single-Access Model to Alternative-Access

Service integration posed a significant challenge for the traditional bureaucrats who were used to work separately within their professional and organizational boundaries. For the first time in the public sector of Kazakhstan there has been a shift from separate functioning of the government authorities towards building partnerships for joined-up service delivery. The international practice suggests that government bodies might be reluctant to hand over competence and activities as this can bring a potential loss of power over human, legal and financial resources (Bardach, 1998). Turf battles between politicians had negative impact on the relationships between the front-office and back-office staff. The political managers as well as administrative civil servants were concerned to lose their personal power, authority and access to illegal benefits. The ministers put strong pressure on the central government to return their control authorities over service provision justifying their arguments by the low level of professionalism among the front-line employees. The front-office workers were considered by the civil servants as “*universal semi-professionals*” (because they delivered diversity of services without education degree in these sectors) as opposed to the “*professionals*” - traditional bureaucrats who were educated and specializing in one specific area, e.g. tax, land, or legal services). As a result of the strong pressure from the politicians, the OSS rejected a single-access model and adopted an *alternative-access model* (see Figure 3) which best suited interests of the political elite.

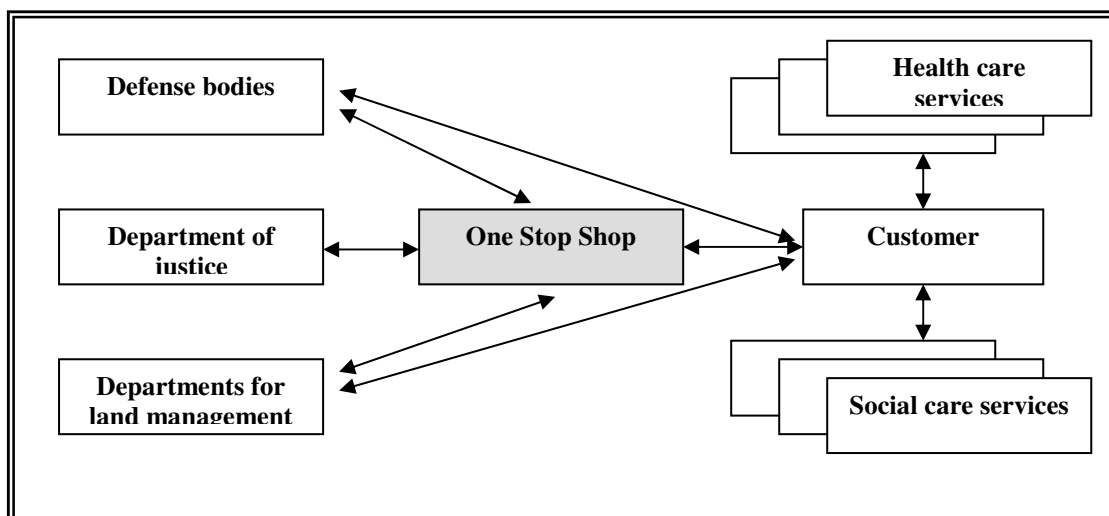


Figure 3: Alternative-Access Model of Service Delivery, January 2007 – present (as of May 2009)

A key difference between Figure 2 and Figure 3 is two new arrows connecting the stakeholders (departments of defence and land resource management) and customers, i.e. the new model enables public service delivery at the OSS as an alternative to the same services available at the traditional departments unlike the pilot model where services were delivered at a single-access point - OSS. Only the MJ, while being a policy coordinator, continued to deliver services through single-window centres.

This paper argues that the concept of integrated service was undermined by this strategic change which pulled back the policy implementation. Within alternative-access model the government officials continued to have direct interactions with customers and seek illegal payments by influencing the application review process. The wide anti-corruption campaign regularly “naming and shaming” government officials provides strong evidence of the catastrophic scale of corruption at all levels of the government and in all spheres of activity in Kazakhstan. The weaknesses of the alternative-access model compared to the single-access model are discussed below in the following section.

5. Why the Traditional Bureaucrats Rejected Single-Window Approach?

What are the political and social implications of the service integration policy? The new policy in Kazakhstan was driven by the NPM appeal of “better services for less cost”, combined with the political ambitions to reduce corruption in the civil service. The political leadership considered single-window arrangements as a panacea for public service failures and poor performance of the state apparatus. The new policy was also exploited as a demonstration of the government’s dedication to promoting transparency and public accountability for the citizens and, more importantly, international community.

It is worth to highlight key positive achievements within a relatively short period of the policy implementation:

- public service and information have become more transparent and accessible;
- multi-channel access has been provided with the use of technologies (call-centre, mobile technology, postal offices and information kiosks);
- physical environment of the customer service has been significantly improved;
- service standards and regulations have been developed and introduced across the public sector;
- the front-line staff and government officials have learnt new knowledge and skills to work in inter-organizational partnerships;
- consultation mechanism has become more transparent involving not only government officials, but also international experts, members of the political party and business associations.

Despite positive achievements of the policy, this paper argues that the present alternative-access model of service delivery has not been able to implement in-depth, real changes of the working practices in the Kazakhstani public sector. The research evidence showed that the government has stepped back in promoting transparency and public accountability by rejecting a single-access model and adopting an alternative-access model which best suited interests of the political elite in exercising power, seeking illegal

payments and distributing resources (jobs, tenders, services etc.) without public accountability. Several important points need to be raised in this regard.

First, in certain way the single-window centres were competing with the traditional government bodies by providing the same services but in a more comfortable space and in more accessible ways. In the rating of 34 public service organizations in Kazakhstan conducted by the local research centre “Sange”, the OSS were given a positive evaluation by the service users as having less administrative barriers and lower corruption compared to the situation in the stakeholder departments (Jandosova et al., 2007).

Second, by being a *single* access point to the public services, the OSS were able to reduce personal contacts between the civil servants and customers, and opportunities for bribe-seeking behaviour from both sides. The front-line staff were not able to influence on the application review process as they performed entirely technical functions by accepting and returning documents. The customers as well as the front-line workers could not know who was going to review their applications at the back-office as the applications were distributed among the officials on a random basis. Certainly, the government officials could still seek bribe for accelerating the speed of service under single-access model, however, not as easily as before and with higher risk of being accused.

Third important point, the coordinating authority such as the MJ got access to the statistical performance data of the stakeholders in terms of number of processed, rejected and delayed documents, speed of service. This information was previously inaccessible by the external organizations which allowed the government bodies to interpret statistical data for composition of better performance reports. The central government had to rely on these reports as the only source of government bodies’ performance given the lack of evaluation of customers’ satisfaction and independent audit reports by the research organizations. With introduction of the electronic performance monitoring system the situation has changed. Defending personal image as a political leader and corporate interests, the Minister of Justice in response to the public critique on poor performance of the single-window centres was able to provide a report on the performance of the stakeholders which held collective responsibility for service quality. This might have an impact on the career of the political managers. Hence, the OSS turned to be a powerful means of control over government bodies’ performance.

The service integration policy has the potential to offer remedies to “monopolies-of-information situations” where the traditional departments are used to withhold information from citizens and businesses, and deprive equal access and social inclusion. The single-access model of service delivery has posed a fundamental challenge for the traditional bureaucracy:

- (1) it competes with the government bodies in provision of the same services, but making them of better quality, in terms of accessibility, speed of delivery and public accountability;
- (2) it has the potential to reduce corruption;
- (3) it can provide reliable and transparent information on performance data of the stakeholders.

The research findings showed that the emergence of a new player in the public service arena was not desirable by the traditional bureaucrats who were concerned about their power and gaining personal benefits through illegal payments and resource distribution. The turf battles between politicians over functions, type of services and scope of authority has become a regular agenda at the high-level meetings in the government. Under the pressure of the political elite the alternative-access model was adopted which best suited individual interests of the politicians rather than interests of the society. Unlike the single-access model, the alternative-access model facilitated manipulation of the service users by seeking illegal payments for successful application review, provided a partial rather than a comprehensive picture on the statistical performance of the service providers and positioned the OSS as an additional financial burden on the public budget. This paper argues that the institutional framework and culture prevailing in the public sector have constrained public service integration in Kazakhstan as change and service improvements to a greater extent were not desirable by the traditional bureaucracy.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to analyze implementation of the NPM policy in Kazakhstan using the case of the public service integration policy. The research evidence showed that the extent to which NPM ideas were imported was limited and constrained by the institutional framework and culture prevailing in the Kazakhstani bureaucracy. The pilot model of the single-access service provision has more potential to reduce corruption and improve quality of the services compared to the present alternative-access model which followed the traditional, centralized and corrupt pattern.

Serious questions were raised concerning the ability to initiate changes by the service integration approach in the inertial and centralized context. Because of the transition and political ambitions to engage in democratic reforms, there has been significant pressure from the political leadership to introduce service integration governance agenda without giving enough time to analyze and adopt this idea in depth. The ineffective personnel management practices and the prevailing common values in Kazakhstani civil service made the situation even more complex. Kazakhstani government risks to invest huge investments in public service modernisation and setting-up new technologies without real cost-benefit outcomes in the service quality for the citizens whose needs were ignored following the traditional administrative pattern. The overall conclusion for transitional countries is that critical thinking and an in-depth analysis of the public sector and specific cultures are needed before Western managerial reforms would be implemented. Otherwise the governments risk to fall into the trap of “fashionable approaches” while overestimating the positive outcomes of the new ideas and underestimating the negative drawbacks.

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