

Canada and Kazakhstan may seem like they are far apart, separated by oceans on opposite sides of the world. But our countries have much in common, and our societies have many shared experiences. These similarities make us natural partners in a globalized, globally competitive world. They give us a solid foundation for partnership that will create better futures for our people and the world.

The Canada in Kazakhstan conference, organized by the Embassy of Canada to Kazakhstan in partnership with the Library of the First President of Kazakhstan, created a forum where students and academics can discuss, debate, and generate ideas for further collaboration between Canada and Kazakhstan. Students, faculty, and independent scholars were invited to submit papers on this topic.

The following is the **1st place paper**:

INNOVATIVE PUBLIC SERVICE REFORMS: WHAT KAZAKHSTAN CAN LEARN FROM CANADA?

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the implementation of innovative public service reforms in two countries: Canada and Kazakhstan from a comparative perspective. Both countries have large geographical territories and low population densities which require their governments to put an extra effort to ensure equal access and better quality service delivery across various regions of these countries. It is important to analyze how public service reforms have been shaped and implemented in Canada and Kazakhstan, particularly in the context of current political agenda in Kazakhstan to meet standards of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. As an OECD-member country and one of the world leaders in transforming public service delivery, Canada has good potential to share its good practices and lessons with Kazakhstan, a relatively young, transitional state with political ambitions to enter the group of 30 most developed countries in the world by 2030. Although the progress in public service modernization might vary in these countries, identification of similarities and differences with respect to the challenges and obstacles faced during policy implementation might prove beneficial for practitioners and academic community from Kazakhstan and other transitional countries.

Key words: service, integration, one stop shop, e-government, Canada, Kazakhstan

INTRODUCTION

This paper analyses the implementation of innovative public service delivery in two countries: Canada and Kazakhstan from a comparative perspective. Both countries have introduced, starting from 2005, public service reforms using the “One Stop Shop” (OSS) or “single-window” approach where multiple services from different government agencies are offered through one location (Hagen and Kubicek 2000). Both countries have large

geographical territories and low population densities which require their governments to put an extra effort to ensure equal access and better quality service delivery across various regions of these countries. It is important to analyze how public service reforms have been shaped and implemented in Canada and Kazakhstan, particularly in the context of current political agenda in Kazakhstan to meet standards of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Strategy “Kazakhstan-2030”). As an OECD-member country and one of the world leaders in transforming public service delivery, Canada has good potential to share its good practices and lessons with Kazakhstan, a relatively young, transitional state with political ambitions to enter the group of 30 most developed countries in the world by 2030. Although the progress in public service modernization might vary in these countries, identification of similarities and differences with respect to the challenges and obstacles faced during policy implementation might prove beneficial for practitioners and academic community from Kazakhstan and other transitional countries.

Public service reform has been launched in Kazakhstan in 2005 with two parallel initiatives: Public Service Centers (further referred to as the “OSS”) policy and e-government policy. Gradually, both policies have been merged under a single government program “Informational Kazakhstan-2020” and taken coordination by the Ministry of Information and Communication of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The OSS and e-government policies are aimed at improving quality of public services and reducing administrative corruption. The OSS represent a counter service, in a modern and well-designed space which is available for citizens, and which tries, in a more business-like atmosphere, to process citizens’ requests for official documents, payment of registration fees and similar services (Knox 2008, 489).

Service Canada (SC) is an integrated service delivery (ISD) network that reflects Canadian government's effort to move from a service delivery model that is focused on individual programs to the one that is centered on citizen needs and fulfilling these needs through a fully integrated and multichannel service delivery. SC provides public services on behalf of ministries and departments that belong to federal, provincial and municipal governments. It delivers services through 320 Service Canada Centres, 32 Passport Offices, the "1-800-O-Canada" toll-free call center and the "Canada.ca" web portal. In remote and rural areas that do not have full-time one-stop shop centres, the agency provides services 236 Scheduled Outreach sites, which are available on a regular, part-time basis (Service Canada, 2014).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the implementation of public service reforms in Kazakhstan and Canada from a comparative perspective. The paper is structured as follows. In this paper two main research questions are addressed: (1) how have public service reforms been implemented in Kazakhstan and Canada? (2) what lessons from Canadian experience can be drawn for Kazakhstan to improve public service quality? The first question is addressed by giving a brief overview of the public service modernization and identification of challenges faced in Kazakhstan and Canada. The second question is answered by providing policy recommendations for improvement of public service delivery in Kazakhstan following the good Canadian practices. The data was collected from extensive documentary analysis.

CHALLENGES FOR PUBLIC SERVICE INTEGRATION

Public service modernization has been driven by the New Public Management (NPM) ideology (Hood 1991; Pollitt 1993; Greer

2004) which see managerial reforms 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. The critics of NPM raise concerns about the potential destabilizing effects of NPM, particularly for transitional countries like Kazakhstan, such as increasing social inequality, corruption and unmanageable change processes that could damage public service provision.

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 (McLaughlin, Osborne and Ferlie 2002). Doubts are raised regarding its universal applicability for both public service and civil society failures (McCourt and Minogue 2002). 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 (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 is social and cultural inertia (Zafarullah and Huque 2001; Ray 1999). State-civil society relations also remain problematic. Civil society has not been able to put sufficient pressure on the state apparatus to implement reforms (Sozen and Shaw 2002). Public service integrated delivery has posed a fundamental challenge for a traditional model of administration in Kazakhstan which is characterized as inefficient, costly, corrupt and a patronage-based system (Cummings 2005; Emrich-

Bakenova 2009; Perlman and Gleason 2007; Schatz 2004).

ONE STOP SHOPS AND E-GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENTATION IN KAZAKHSTAN

The public service modernization in Kazakhstan was driven both by the global trends for managerial reforms and country-specific political, organizational, technological and cultural factors. The global drivers for managerial reforms included globalization, pressure from the international community, public dissatisfaction with the government, and the opportunities offered by the technologies for shifts in service delivery (Janenova and Kim, 2016). A combination of these factors influenced the government's intention to turn to the opportunities presented for integrated working. The OSS policy was initiated by the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev in the Annual message to the people of Kazakhstan in 2005 (Nazarbayev 2005). Implementation of the OSS policy needs to be considered in relation to the changes that have taken place simultaneously in Kazakhstan within administrative reform. A range of innovative ideas inspired by the NPM such as performance evaluation, public-private partnerships and decentralization were initiated by the young and ambitious members of government. The OSS policy was driven, not only by aims to improve the cost-efficiency of administrative regulations and service quality, similar to Canada, but also by the political ambition to reduce the level of corruption.

Implementation of the OSS policy has started with division of front-office and back-office operations: consultation of customers, application submission for different public services was provided at the OSS, while other administrative processes on application review and decision-making remained in the

traditional government departments. A single access point at the OSS enabled clients to apply for a range of public services provided by multiple stakeholders in one visit. It allowed customers to save time and costs, and avoid bureaucracy during their application for public services. To a certain extent, the new Public Service Centers were forced to compete with traditional government departments for better service delivery. The OSS introduced longer working hours, comfortable modern waiting space for customers, polite front-line staff: all these factors presented a strikingly positive difference compared to the behaviour of the traditional bureaucrats who were generally perceived as indifferent, rude and unethical by the public (Jandosova et al. 2002).

The government authorities gradually realized that it was necessary to integrate back-office processes and administrative procedures for real successful public service integration. The decision was made to merge two policies: the OSS and e-government into a single government program. Currently, over 500 public services are provided both through OSS physical offices and online through an e-government system. An e-government program has been in place since 2006 to provide citizens with fast and reliable access to public services on-line. This has included the creation of a network of public electronic centers where people without direct access to the internet can avail themselves of on-line services, examples of which are: filing tax returns and making tax payments, pension fund deductions, property registration, and setting up a business (Knox, 2008).

Both policies, the OSS and e-government, have received strong political commitment and shown an unprecedented progress in improving access and quality of public services. In the United Nations E-government rating Kazakhstan has climbed up from 81 in 2008 out of 192 to 28 position by 2015. The OSS were perceived as the most transparent agencies, having the least administrative barriers among other public service providers (Jandosova, et.al, 2007; Civil Alliance, 2011; Zlotnikov and Malyarchuk, 2008). From 2005

to 2015 the number of the OSS has expanded from 4 pilot offices to 300 offices across all regions delivering 212 public services on behalf of the multiple stakeholders.¹ The public services provided through the OSS vary from registration of legal documents, starting up a new business, application for social benefits (such as public housing, public nursery, social allowance for unemployed).

In March 2016 the state corporation “Government for Citizens” (further referred to as “G4C”) has been launched by merging four state enterprises: Public Service Centres², Scientific-Industrial Centre for Land Cadastre, Property Centre, and State Centre for Pension Payments.³ It is envisaged that land and property registration services, and services for pension payments would be integrated with the public services delivered by the Public Service Centers. These services (land and property registration, and pension payments) are perceived by the public as highly corrupt services (Jandosova et al., 2007; Civil Alliance, 2011), so the intention of the government is to reduce administrative corruption and improve quality of public services by integrating all public services using a single-window approach in the short-term perspective.

One of the reasons for launching the new policy G4C has been an attempt of the central government to overcome strong resistance from government departments to integrate their services with the OSS and e-government systems. The President appealed to the state bodies that *“they have to provide maximum support to the new state corporation and*

*transfer all their public services to the state corporation by the end of 2017.”*⁴ Another reason for launching this new initiative is cost-efficiency. By concentrating all funds for public service provision at one place, the government plans to provide *“better quality for less money”*. It is envisaged that the new state corporation will employ 21,000 staff in order to deliver 700 public services at longer working hours from 9.00 to 20.00 for customers’ convenience.⁵ The new organization is to be funded within limits of the public funds allocated for these four state enterprises.⁶ Third reason for merging government service providers under one umbrella is the recent tendency of the Kazakhstani government to strengthen centralized control and monopolize the public service delivery. Satpayev refers to the “Trojan Horse of Supercentralized System” with regard to intra- and inter-agency competition and weak synchronisation of the government’s processes (Satpayev, 2016). As a result, the decision-making center operates on warped and incorrect data, and, therefore, makes incorrect decisions. Intra- and inter-agency competition is one of the main impediment for public service integration in Kazakhstan.

Janenova and Kim (2016) summarize key positive achievements in terms of public service provision which have been made within a short period of policy implementation: (1) information about public services has become more transparent; (2) the physical customer service environment has significantly improved; (3) public services have become more accessible both through face-to-face interaction and e-government

¹ The History of the Public Service Centers, <http://con.gov.kz/about/history.php>

² Public Service Centers are “Centers obslujivaniya naseleniya” in Russian; “TSO” is an official abbreviation of the Public Service Centers.

³ Government Resolution No.39 dated 29 January 2016 “On establishment of the non-commercial joint enterprise “State Corporation “Government for Citizens”, <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1600000039>

⁴ “All public services will be transferred to the “Government for Citizens” Corporation by the end of 2017”, Damir Baimanov, 6 January 2016, Zakon.kz, <http://www.inform.kz/rus/article/2857192>

⁵ “One window” is expanded to the “Government for Citizens”, Svetlana Glushkova, Radio Azattyq, 22 March 2016, <http://rus.azattyq.org/content/con-gosuslugi-pravitelstvo-dlya-grazhdan/27555682.html>

⁶ Explanatory memo to the draft government resolution “On establishment of non-commercial joint stock enterprise “State corporation “Government for Citizens”, <http://info-con.mid.gov.kz/ru/pages/o-sozdanii-nekommercheskogo-akcionernogo-obshchestva-gosudarstvennaya-korporaciya-pravitelstvo>

system; (4) staff have learned new knowledge and skills to deliver a diversity of services in one place and work across different professions and organizations; and (5) the consultation mechanism has become more transparent (involvement of international experts, political parties and business associations).

During implementation the public service integration reform in Kazakhstan has faced strong resistance from the senior, mid- and low-level managers of the government departments who might be concerned about delegating their responsibilities, budgets and human resources with the new business-like innovative organisations like the OSS. There is still a lack of inter-governmental cooperation, and missing trust among different professionals groups.

SERVICE CANADA: IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES

In Canada service integration initiatives date back to 1992 when first Canada Business Service Centres, which provide “Single Window” services to businesses, were opened. The first Service Canada Centres that serve citizens were opened in 2000. These centers were a result of voluntary partnerships between various departments, rather than a comprehensive service integration project. Therefore, they provided a limited amount of services of partnered departments (OECD, 2014). The deep service integration, which characterizes the modern Service Canada, started with the launch *Government Online*, *Modernizing Services for Canadians*, and *Citizens First* initiatives (Roy & Langford 2008, Tan 2007). The *Government Online* (GOL) program was launched in 1999. The goal of the program was to achieve a comprehensive delivery of federal government services online by 2004. As a result of the initiative, government services from 34 departments and agencies were consolidated in a single user-friendly e-government portal (United

Nations 1999). The program was so successful that the Accenture consultancy firm (2005) ranked Canada’s e-government as #1 for five consecutive years, from 2001 to 2005 (InformationWeek, 2004). Nevertheless, despite the government’s desire to provide services solely in electronic format and e-government’s overall success, empirical studies showed that people still preferred to receive some services over phone and in-person. As Gagnon et al. (2010) put it, there was a mismatch between government’s and citizens’ preferences in public service delivery. In order to rectify this mismatch and to take the service integration development to a new level, the Modernizing Services for Canadians (MSC) initiative was launched in 2002.

The MSC team focused its efforts on studying previous service integration practices internationally and across Canada. They also conducted a public opinion survey, which revealed that most public services were still delivered in offices of individual departments and that 96% of people supported the idea of delivering public services through one stop shops (Tan 2007). Overall, both GOL and MSC laid a solid foundation for Service Canada, which was officially launched in September of 2005. In its first year of operation Service Canada re-designed its website and added new interactive services, integrated 24 call centers under the single “1 800 O-Canada” call number, opened new comfortable offices, which have tailored zones for different age groups with appropriate “environment, lightning, music and fittings” (Tan 2007). The SC is also constantly upgrading its operations, equipment and services integration. In comparison with 2005, in 2015 the number of visits to Service Canada Centres grew from 7.6 million to 8.2 million, phone calls fell from 56 million to 2 million and the web portal visits increased from 5.5 million to 82.3 million (Tan 2007, ESDC 2016). These numbers demonstrate increased accessibility and comfort of SC Centers, as well as dramatic improvement of the web-portal’s functionality, which eliminated the need for millions of phone calls. Moreover, according to OECD (2014) the Service

Canada is regarded as one of the best integrated service delivery networks among its member states.

Despite achieved success, SC faces also considerable challenges. Kernaghan (2005) and Flumian et al. (2007) identified the following four broad barriers, which may limit further development of Service Canada: political, structural, operational/managerial and cultural. Political barriers refer to adverse incentive structure, which discourages departments from investing into shared ISDs because of diluted recognition of efforts. Structural barriers refer to difficulties during collaboration between departments and jurisdictions. Further jurisdictional collaboration may prove especially difficult considering that provinces wish to preserve their autonomy. As Fafard et al. (2009) point out some citizens in Canada value Federalism higher than efficiencies that are generated from integrated service delivery. Service Canada also has to deal with operational/managerial barriers, which arise when regulations, practices and even technology standards of different jurisdiction and departments turn out to be incompatible. SC also needs to be mindful of cultural barriers that can arise from incompatibility of existing practices and value systems of partner departments and jurisdictions (Flumian et al. 2007).

LESSONS FROM CANADIAN PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM

Service Canada and Kazakhstan's Public Service Centers share some similarities. Both agencies were created in 2005 to improve quality and accessibility of public services. Both of them are focused on improving citizen satisfaction through extensive networks of comfortable service centers. Moreover, governments of both countries operate in large territories and low population densities,

thus, have to put an extra effort to ensure service accessibility and quality across their countries. However, there are also major differences. In this paper we will focus on three key differences, which may guide further development of Kazakhstan's Public Service Centers. First, Canada's national service integration system development is evidence-driven. Service Canada heavily relies on findings of a regular national survey, which assesses people's satisfaction on public service delivery. Second, Service Canada emphasizes multichannel delivery of services. Finally, SC benefits from a culture of collaboration in the Canadian public service.

Evidence-driven development

Since 1998 the Citizen Centered Service Network⁷ has been studying people's needs and expectations through the comprehensive national survey called *Citizens First*. The survey identifies people's satisfaction with specific services such as receiving birth/marriage/death certificates, health card application, receiving pension, etc. Because the survey is conducted on a regular basis, Service Canada can monitor people's satisfaction over time. The survey includes an almost comprehensive list of public services from all levels of governments, many of which are not delivered by Service Canada. This allows assessing improvements in services that are delivered by federal, provincial and municipal governments as well.

Moreover, the survey identifies factors or so called "drivers" that shape people's attitudes towards specific public services. Although a set of "drivers" change from survey to survey, they seem to form around the initially discovered five drivers: timeliness, knowledge and competence, courtesy and comfort, fair treatment, outcome (Erin Research, 1998). In other words, the survey results show that people mostly value fast service, knowledgeable and polite staff, to be treated fairly and want to receive positive decisions to

⁷ An association of public servants from various departments and jurisdictions, as well as consultants and academia.

their applications. Overall, the survey serves as a perfect guide for Service Canada to meet people's expectations and needs.

Multichannel service delivery

The *Citizens First* public opinion studies show that people prefer to contact the government using various channels, either by phone, mail, website or in person. They also tend to use two or more contact modes to receive a service (Erin Research, 2003). This finding was key in establishing multichannel delivery of public services, which is one of the main features of Service Canada. According to its Charter, Service Canada (2013) is committed to providing a choice in the mode of contact, information that is easy to understand, and service in the official language of client's choice. That is, SC strives to provide equal opportunity to access services regardless whether they want to communicate via phone, mail, in-person or internet and whether they want to receive services in English or French languages. This attention to so called Integrated Channel Delivery (ICD) has been emphasized from the very beginning. Previously fragmented service delivery channels such as e-government, a number of disintegrated call-centers, as well as service points that were run by various departments have been integrated to deliver a consistent service and experience across the various channels. The well managed ICD also allowed nudging people to use cost-effective contact mode such as e-government without depriving anyone from accessing services using other modes (Kernaghan 2005).

In order to maintain high ICD standards, the Ministry of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), which oversees SC, annually sets specific accessibility and quality targets across various modes of contact. In its latest Report on Plans and Priorities the ESDC (2016) set the following targets: by March of 2017 90% of Canadians should have physical access to Service Canada points of service within 50 km where they live, ensure that 100% of 1500 government websites integrate into a single

Canada.ca website, achieve 95% response rate to the single "1-800-O-Canada" call center.

Networked government

The Service Canada has to cooperate and find service integration solutions not only with other departments within the federal government, but also with various public entities in all 10 provinces. The SC has been successful in accomplishing this task. In the very first year of operations it managed to open a Service Centre in cooperation with governments of Ottawa city and Ontario province, which delivers services of three levels of government. For example, Ontario residents can receive provincial birth certificate and federal Social Insurance Number in one application. In order to achieve such level of coordination public servants managed to develop informal and formal networks, which cut through departmental, jurisdictional and other formal borders. The formal networks include arrangements such as the Public Sector Service Delivery Council (PSSDC), the Public Sector CIO Council (PSCIOC) and Citizen Centered Service Network (CCSN), which bring together civil servants, academics and experts from various ministries and jurisdictions. These associations, which were created in the late 1990s, played a major role in Service Canada's establishment and development. In fact, the first service counters with "Service Canada" brands were established based on voluntary partnerships between several departments (OECD, 2014).

Recommendations for Kazakhstan public service improvement

Establish a service performance measurement survey similar to the *Citizens First* in Canada. Ideally the survey should inquire about people's satisfaction with a wide range of services that are delivered by OSS, and also by individual ministries, municipalities, police, hospitals, etc. The survey can be carried out by public research centers such as the Institute for Public Policy

under Nur-Otan party, National Analytical Center, Nazarbayev University or specialized private companies. For quality and benchmarking purposes the survey can utilize the Common Measurements Tool (CMT), a set of questionnaires and methodology, which was developed by Canadian Institute for Citizen-Centred Service. The CMT is used by *Citizens First* and other surveys in Canadian provinces, and also in New Zealand, Singapore, Kenya, Namibia, the U.A.E and Australia (Government of Victoria 2010).

Strengthen multichannel service delivery that would improve service accessibility through internet, in-person and over phone. In Kazakhstan people are accustomed to receiving services in-person regardless of their type (getting information, conducting transaction or applying for benefits). It is possible to ease workload of physical OSS by improving both quality and awareness about online services and over the phone consultations. As mobile phone penetration in Kazakhstan has reached 100% and access to Internet has been considerably improved with reduced cost, public service delivery using mobile technologies has good potential for successful implementation.

To achieve greater service integration, there is a need to **improve cooperation among ministries** and agencies, i.e. public service providers. This can be the toughest goal to achieve as ministries and even departments within individual ministries are accustomed to working in silos. Changing this situation will require a long term shift in organizational culture. However, in the short term cooperation can be improved through measurement of the degree of openness and cooperation of individual ministries and agencies. The Ministry of Civil Service Affairs could launch an online survey among public servants and relevant OSS employees, which would rate openness and cooperation of public bodies to which they are exposed (similar to 360 degree feedback tool). Training in network management and teambuilding sessions for different groups of professionals from various government departments which could be organized by the Public Administration Academy and Nazarbayev University would be beneficial to help in building trust and communication among front-office and back-office staff.

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