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Article 04

Applying the 'One-Stop-Shop' Strategy for a Citizen-Centric Public Service Delivery in Sri Lanka: A Case Study of Magam Ruhunupura Administrative Building Complex

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Abstract

The concept of 'citizen-centric public service delivery' has gained global attention, particularly through administrative reforms prioritizing citizens as the core of service provision. A notable strategy is the 'One-Stop-Shop' (OSS) model, recognized for optimizing service delivery and effectiveness. While many nations employ OSS through network integration, the Magam Ruhunupura Administrative Building Complex (MRABC) implements OSS by physically consolidating administrative offices into one location. Implementing such reforms is challenging due to the dynamic interplay between ecological and administrative systems. This study explores factors influencing OSS implementation at MRABC, emphasizing a citizen-centric approach. Using a qualitative case study method, it identifies the digital divide, traditional mindsets, and provisions for citizen-focused services as key receptive factors. Notably, factors seen as resistance in one context can become receptive depending on ecological and contextual variables. The findings underscore that no universal blueprint exists for OSS strategies; instead, tailored approaches addressing citizens' unique needs are crucial. Policymakers are urged to adopt innovative strategies like 'co-production' and 'co-design,' working collaboratively with citizens to enhance governance and public service effectiveness.

Keywords: Citizen-centric Service Delivery, Co-production, One-Stop-Shop, Public Administrative Reforms, Whole of Governance

Introduction

In response to the rapid technological advancements and growing demands from the public, many countries around the world have introduced administrative reforms to enhance the quality of public service delivery accommodating both citizens and the government's demands (Samarathunga & Bennington, 2002; Clifton & Díaz-Fuentes, 2011; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017 cited in Lapunte & Van De Walle, 2020). The growing dissatisfaction of citizens regarding the issues in public service delivery has become a crucial factor that compelled public administration to be more citizen-oriented (Torress, 2005). According to the evolution of administrative reforms, during the 1960s, conventional public administration transformed into a new public administration (NPA) as a reaction to the demand for more accountable public administration (Kundo, 2018). In the 1980s, the New Public Management (NPM) reforms were implemented in the sphere of public administration, equipping the public sector with private-sector administrative strategies (Hood, 1991; Lan & Rosenbloom, 1992; Osborne & Gaebler, 1993; Pollitt, 1993; Holmes & Shand, 1995; Haynes, 2011; Gruening, 2001). The introduction of NPM aimed to advance the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery by incorporating market-oriented principles into the public sector. Since NPM principles brought up complex issues such as agencification[1] (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Lapunte & Van De Walle, 2020) and isolation of public institutions, the post-NPM wave began to react to those issues. New Public Governance (NPG) is the subsequent reform wave that highlights governance and integration in public service providing (Thomas, 2013). Delivering an effective service to the public is the top priority and the spectrum of administrative reforms has been adopted so far. The changing paradigms of public administration have located 'citizens' at different levels by treating them as the critical factors of service delivery. 'The NPA views the public as a citizen, the NPM views the citizen as a customer, and NPG views the citizen as a partner' (Thomas, 2013 cited in Kundo, 2018, p. 226). These types of changes were effectively implemented in peripheral nations to remedy any shortcomings in their public administration.

Since the sixteenth century, Sri Lanka was governed by colonial rules until independence was gained in 1948[2]. The colonial influence had impacted to a certain degree of formalization of the public administration in Sri Lanka. The administrative structure of Sri Lanka is highly centralized, with strong central government authority and limited powers of provincial councils and local governments. Within this framework, the public service delivery system is organized to render basic services such as health, education and transport are under the control of central ministries. Provincial councils had been established under the thirteenth amendment to the constitution administer the decentralized functions, although their autonomy is mostly limited to central government intervention. The overall structure of public service delivery in Sri Lanka is characterized by a hierarchical bureaucracy in which the central government plays a major role in decision-making and implementation.

As the literature proves, 'Sri Lanka's public service stands on a tripod: colonial legacies, local inventions, and components were borrowed from global reform waves' (Priyantha et al., 2019, p. 193). Seemingly, the Sri Lankan administration has been now entered into a new era that follows global reforms to advance the system (Samarathunga & Bennington, 2002; Kularathne, 2017; Priyantha et al., 2019). The idea of this 'component borrowed from global reform waves' (Priyantha et al., 2019, p. 193) could be traced back towards the emergence of NPM and post-NPM reforms in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan public administration entered into a highly controversial stage with the e-Sri Lanka programme in introducing e-governance in the context during 2002 (Rainford, ND). With the parallel development of e-governance, the administrative functions of the country entered into a wide range of changes in service delivery. The NPM is labeled as a second global wave of public administrative reform which is still regarded as a controversial reform that changes the mood of the public sector administration by allowing contradicting strategies to be adopted in the public sector service delivery (Hood, 1991; Lan & Rosenbloom, 1992; Osborne & Gaebler, 1993; Pollitt, 1993; Holmes & Shand, 1995; Gruening, 2001; Pollitt, 2003; Dunleavy et al, 2006; Christensen & Laegreid, 2006; Peters, 2007; Haynes, 2011).

By the end of the 1980s, scholarly writings and research dimensions had been changing towards investigating the reactions to NPM malfunctions (Dunleavy et al, 2006; Christensen & Laegreid, 2006). Many scholarly articles explained the need for reintegration and digitization changes in the public sector service delivery (Dunleavy et al, 2006). The 'Whole of Government' (WG) was a modern trending approach which was highly recommended to remediate the resistance of growing complexities in public service delivery (Christensen & Laegreid, 2008; Koltveit, 2015 as cited in Aoki, 2023). WG practices synchronize with the Joined-up-Government[3] (JUG) (Pollitt, 2003). This was the first attempt at amalgamating various public sector works to streamline service delivery and tackle the challenges. This concept is mostly had been evidenced in Anglophone countries, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and the Netherlands, once seen as the trailblazers of NPM (Christensen & Laegreid, 2006). Similarly in developing nations such as Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Bangladesh WG practices are evident (Kularathne, 2017; Aoki, 2023). The holistic nature of the WG concept is achieved by employing various strategies such as One-Stop-Shop (OSS). The OSS is one of the strategies had been widely used under WG dimensions. OSS technically means providing service under one roof or in one place (PwC, 2012). Many countries across the world, have been adopted OSS as a reaction for the issues that are straddling the boundaries of public administrative organizations (PwC, 2012; Fredriksson, 2020). The OSS is used by network and structural integration to bring up the essence of providing easy access service to the public in one place.

In the context of Sri Lanka, it has been reported that the OSS was diversely practiced in different regions (Kularathne, 2017)[4]. Every government is striving to prioritize citizens' demands by implementing citizen-centric strategies, despite encountering

barriers. In MRABC, the OSS model had been used to consolidate multiple administrative services into a single location, thereby improving accessibility and efficiency. This approach reflects a broader international trend towards simplifying service access and enhancing user experience (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992).

Despite the widespread adoption of network integration to deliver OSS services in many countries worldwide, the Magam Ruhunupura Administrative Building Complex (MRABC) in Sri Lanka had been employed structural integration by consolidating diverse public institutions into a single location. Given this approach, it is essential to explore the primary concerns associated with utilizing structural integration for OSS service delivery within the MRABC. Several factors, both receptive and resistant, could influence the implementation of new strategies such as OSS. Consequently, this study focuses on identifying the receptive factors that facilitate the implementation of OSS in creating a citizen-centric public service delivery system through the physical consolidation of administrative buildings in one location. The research objectives aligned with this study are: to identify and analyze the key factors influencing the implementation of the OSS strategy at the MRABC in Sri Lanka, and to be evaluated the effectiveness of the OSS strategy in enhancing citizen-centric public service delivery, with a particular emphasis on the contextual and ecological factors inherent in the Sri Lankan administrative system.

Literature Review

Citizen-Centric Service Delivery

The approach of placing citizens at the core of public service delivery is commonly referred to as citizen-centric service and it is also regarded as an essential aspect of effective and efficient service delivery. Torres (2005) says the 'growing dissatisfaction of citizens with public service inefficiency is the key factor that has been compelled public administration to be more citizen-centric and to add value for money' (Torres, 2005 as cited in Kundo, 2018, p. 226).

Bridge (2012) explains the citizen-centric approach had been designed in terms of what people are looking for from the government. Furthermore, he asserts that the idea of citizen-centric is simple: you can't design good citizen-centric services without working with citizens - the people who use and deliver those services (Bridge, 2012, p. 168). Bridge's concept is important because it encourages us to think beyond constructing a citizen-centric system that appears to be good, but instead focuses on designing it to be more effective.

Hung (2012) had been analyzed the Taiwan case of citizen-centered E-government and highlights 'countries hoping to build a citizen-centered-government need to be adopted a more bottom-up approach to allow greater citizen participation and think critically

about redesigning and reorganizing the way that government works' (Hung, 2012, p. 253). Hung's analysis provides the importance of putting citizens at the core of service delivery through their participation.

Although the welfare states treat the citizens as mere recipients of government services the recent trend of literature had been taken a turn to consider citizen-centric as more citizen involvement in government services.

Reforming Nature of Public Administrative Backdrop

The field of public administration had undergone significant changes, placing citizens at the core of service delivery. Although this citizen-centric approach had become more prominent and democratic in governing strategies, there has been a growing debate regarding its effectiveness and the need for better approaches that could be yield better results. Administrative reforms have been implemented in various countries however, their success had hardly been reported. The evolutionary journey of public administration shifted into a new public administration, new public management and new public governance emphasizing the need for change along with citizen-centeredness (Thomas, 2013). Whole-of-Governance is the successive administrative reform which indicates the idea of amalgamation in contrast to structural devolution (Christensen & Laegreid, 2006).

Aoki (2023) explains it is difficult to make a conceptual delineation regarding the involvement of the stakeholders in the collaborative platform, as there is no universal agreement on that. In the late 1980s, WG was extensively used in public administration with the aim of amalgamation of the different agencies into one platform. The term "WG" has multiple definitions. According to Christensen and Laegreid (2006) Whole of Governance (WG) is regarded as a collaboration of relevant government or other outside agencies to provide better outcomes for the clients/citizens. Aoki (2023) had conducted a systematic literature review; it is shown that WG has been utilized in diverse fields as a strategy. 219 journals have published articles across various disciplines such as 'environmental studies, criminology, crisis management, health and medicines' (Aoki, 2023 p. 10). The highest number of articles primarily belongs to the field of public administration.

As the literature implies the WG brings up a wide range of solutions to be overcome the negative impact that were pertinent in the post-NPM reforms. Dunleavy (2005) says 'New Public Management has essentially died in the water', however, some of the NPM reforms are still afloat (Dunleavy et al, 2005, p. 467). Although widely accepted, the factors affecting WG implementation vary from context to context. The study conducted by Perri 6 (2004) explained the importance of understanding the one-size-does not-fits-all[5] method.

The history, developments and reforms of Sri Lankan public administration had been explored through many studies and provide a view of the nature and current trends of public administration in Sri Lanka (Warnapala, 1974; Somasundaram, 1997; Samarathunga & Bennington, 2002; Bandara, 2013; Nanayakkara, 2015; Priyantha et al., 2019, Kularathne, 2017, Ramasamy, 2020).

One-Stop Service Delivery

The "One-Stop-Shop" is a widely utilized model in the private sector, where customers can access various services under one roof. This approach had also been adopted in the public sector service delivery as a strategy in different working groups around the world. To operate OSS in the public service, WG had already provided theoretical background.

In New York, the One-Stop Shop Model is called NY 311 (PwC, 2012). New York citizens can dial 'one single number twenty-four hours a day and speak to a customer service agent in over 180 languages' (PwC, 2012, p. 05). In Hong Kong, citizens could log into HKGov.org to search for frequently-sought government information (PwC, 2012, p. 05). In the UK citizens can complete transactions by using direct.gov.uk is regarded as OSS in the UK. It is shown that the OSS has been placed in different contexts diversely.

Frederickson (2020) explains the impact of Poupatempo ("Save time"), a Brazilian Citizen Service Center that works as an OSS in Brazil. The author has mentioned further in his article, 'that the branches of utility companies, the consumer protection agency, a bank and a post office, as well as printing, photocopying, and other auxiliary services are also integral to these "One Stop Shops" for the public services' (Agarwal, Pfeil, & Schott, 2017b; Kubrick & Hagen, 2000 as cited in Frederickson, 2020 p. 1133). Having multiple institutions in one location to support public service delivery, can also be viewed as OSS. The Canadian OSS service delivery system is identified as Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) which entails the meaning of a 'One-Stop-Shop' or 'Single-Window' (Fluming et al, 2007). Kernighan & Berardi (2008) says 'the Canadian traditional 'Bricks-and-Mortar'[6] approach to delivering service had been improved since the creation of one-stop walk-in centers that provide multiple services of a related or unrelated nature, by telephone call centers that provide both personal service and interactive voice response, as a result of the rapid growth of service delivery through the internet (Pp. 417-440).

Richard Mulgan (2002) describes the Australian Centre-link concept. This article provides a theoretical explanation of how the Australian government adapted the concept of WG to develop their service as a centre-link (Mulgan, 2002). According to these ideas, OSS is diversely being implemented while it provides a strong platform to interpret OSS and inspire others. The PwC (2012), 'Transforming the Citizen Experience One-Stop-Shop for Public Services' paper provides key elements of OSS such as speed, engagement, responsiveness, value, integration, choice and experience.

The practice of OSS in an Asian context is not a new phenomenon. Malaysian one-stop service delivery is regarded as a no-wrong-door policy (UN e-government survey, 2012). In Sri Lanka, The Motor Traffic Department had been using OSS to speed up the revenue license-issuing process by introducing an e-revenue license-providing system (Kularathne, 2017). Hence, this approach not only streamlines the process but also enhances efficiency and effectiveness in providing essential public services to the community. The OSS that applies in the public sector with the emergence of WG was also evident in the context of Sri Lanka in some cases. Kularathne's (2017) study shows that to offer specific services through the Department of Motor Traffic, the OSS strategy was being used. Further, citizen satisfaction was quite high regarding the innovative changes were placed in the public sector service delivery (Kularathne, 2017).

The literature review provides a comprehensive overview of previous research on using One-Stop-Shop in public service delivery to provide more citizen-centric public service delivery. In the synthesis, the literature review brings up the research gap of lack of attention in exploring the receptive factors that are affecting the effectiveness of OSS in creating a citizen-centric public service delivery through physically consolidated administrative offices in one location in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this research is pertinent in filling the above research gap and providing implications for policymakers and policy implementers regarding the use of structural integration in OSS service delivery.

Materials and Methods

This case study had been conducted in the Magam Ruhunupura Administrative Building Complex and this was selected to collect empirical data as it employs OSS through structural integration. Focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews were allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives and yielded qualitative data consistent with the qualitative research design. Focus group discussion and interview questions were asked according to a pre-determined framework that focuses on identifying factors influencing the implementation of the One-Stop Shop Strategy (OSS) in the Magam Ruhunupura Administrative Building Complex (MRABC). Furthermore, relevant documents such as policy documents, government reports, and administrative records were reviewed to gather secondary data.

The participatory research method involves a joint process of knowledge generating that leads to new insights for both scientists and practitioners (Jarrett et al, 2021). In this participatory research, a focus group discussion had been designed to observe the ideas regarding the implementation of OSS in the MRABC. This focus group discussion was conducted as a professional conversation[7] that is identified as a form of participatory research (Jarrett et al, 2021). This was held in response to pedagogical and content-focused questions which highlighted the idea of OSS in service delivery and the effectiveness of physically co-located agencies in Hambantota District. The researcher

had moderated the discussion where the co-researchers (academics), community and practitioners actively participated in the responses ground. Around fifteen members had been responded to the pedagogical and content-focused questions which were tabled after the moderator opened the floor of discussion. The professional conversation was held for about two and half hours by responding to each participant's questions and views. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data from the service receivers. Purposely selected service receivers[8] were interviewed and the main interview questions were designed to assess service satisfaction, service access and utilization of the service centers.

Triangulation of data apparatus of data drawn from different sources and at different times, in different places or from different people (Flick et al, 2004). In the triangulation, the researcher had employed the data gathered during 2017, this research explored the factors that affect the implementation of the Whole-of-Governance in Sri Lanka[9]. The empirical data gathered through focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and secondary sources had been used in the data analysis.

The descriptive method (White et al, 2003) had used for presenting data. The findings of the study have been analyzed thematically while designing data-driven themes.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study are presented in this section in line with the descriptive method where the respondent's ideas are quoted accordingly.

Magam Ruhunupura Administrative Building Complex is a result of the proposed development plan of the 'Greater Hambantota Development Plan'. The main aim of the plan was to establish a main administrative hub by amalgamating forty-two government institutions currently running in different places in the Hambantota region. Under this plan, there were thirty-six[10] organizations have been located inside the administrative building complex. The project's main purpose was to enhance the convenience of operating the administrative functions within one location.

Knowledge on Public Administrative Reforms

The administrative backdrop was changed timely according to the advancements and developments of society. Hambantota administrative building was also planned and aligned with the concept of OSS that emerged in the parlance of public administration during the era of New Public Governance. WG is one of the main approaches that is pertinent in joining up government institutions for citizen-centric service delivery. This is the theoretical background of the OSS approach. In response to the purpose of testing the knowledge and background of the OSS approach and its theoretical basement diverse questions were raised in the discussion.

“The government wanted to provide citizen-centric service to the people, so they decided to co-locate all the buildings in one building complex according to a ‘*government decision*’.[11]”

(Respondent 01 & 02, A Practitioner, FGD)

The results show that the majority of respondents are lack of knowledge about the essential WG approach and OSS theoretical knowledge for designing services. Hence it was revealed that the policy makers' and planners' knowledge has not properly flowed to the lower levels of the administration regarding the transformation of the service delivery mechanism into a new model.

During the discussion, the moderator tabled the matter regarding the knowledge of WG and how other countries use it in their service delivery. Additionally, the use of alternatives[12] for providing OSS was also discussed.

“Other countries in the world, especially the developed countries are comprised of resources, knowledge, and skilled personnel. Hence, they are very competitive in using alternatives such as online mode of service delivery compared to our part of the world. But in our countries, such online strategies will not work properly as there are numerous barriers.”

(Respondent 01 & 02, A Practitioner, FGD)

The above response shows that the government's decision-making had not properly been blended with the policy implementation. The decision to build MRABC is implemented at par with the current conditional situation of the area without any investigation regarding the future demand for service delivery.

One-Stop-Shop

Subsequently, the discussion turnover in studying the factors that affect the effectiveness of the mode of OSS that was used in the Magam Ruhunupura Administrative Building Complex. The OSS strategy of WG is used differently compared to other nations.

“This administrative building complex was designed by the government according to the government concept called ‘One-Stop-Shop’”

(Respondent 01, A Practitioner, FGD)

In addition, the respondents revealed that their service receivers are satisfied with the service provided as many of them can get the service within a stipulated time.

“Citizens who live in Hambantota district are quite happy with the service provided and the way government interact with the citizens.”

(Respondent 01, A Practitioner, FGD)

“It is a productive way of service providing. It does not waste citizen’s time, effort and money. Therefore, the citizens are highly satisfied with the service provided.”

(Respondent 01, A Practitioner, FGD)

“Many people throughout the southern region visit the MRABC to obtain their services. For instance issuing revenue licenses”

(Respondent 03, A Practitioner, FGD)

Further, they did not receive any complaints from the citizens regarding dissatisfaction with service delivery as the service seekers could access for number of services under the same location.

In this regard, the participants raised a few questions in terms of the quality of service and accountability of public servants in providing the service.

“The citizens like the old-aged, and disabled, cannot get the service by reaching this place, if you are informed of such cases what have you already planned to do?”

(Respondent 01, 02 & 03, Participants, FGD)

“A mobile service is used as an alternative for providing services. There are old aged citizens and some others who have chronic health issues cannot come and get the service. Hence, we as more responsible and accountable service providers, use alternative methods such as launching mobile services.”

(Respondent 01, A Practitioner, FGD)

The professionals in the discussion asked to apply a new technology for delivering services and enhancing the quality of the service delivered.

“We implement the decisions taken by the government. We cannot change them. We can provide inputs to some extent. However, we cannot assure that the inputs provided are being incorporated in their decision-making.”

(Respondent 01, A Practitioner, FGD)

On this ground, the discussion turned to analyze the political intervention and evaluation process of policy implementation.

“This discussion ground was contributed by the number of respondents and explains changes in government politics, political intervention, malfunction in policy planning, the influence of societal factors and citizen interaction are also affected by the effectiveness of the functionality of service delivery”

(Respondents 01,02, 03, 04, 05 & 06, Practitioners, Moderators, Participants, FGD)

The focus group discussion flowed as a professional conversation regarding the effectiveness of OSS in the administrative building complex.

Citizen-centric Service Delivery

The discourse of citizen-centric was traced back to the end of the 1980s as a result of customer-driven market-based strategies in the public sector. The study hence explores the way of being citizen-centric in the service provided at MRABC.

“Providing quality service to the citizens indicates two ends such as the service that the citizen (or service receiver) expected and the service that the public officials (service providers) are eligible for. There is a mechanism for assessing the service receiver’s satisfaction regarding the service that they received. At the same time, if there is a mechanism for testing service providers’ satisfaction regarding the service that they have to provide it and will be effective also have for positive impact.”

(Respondent 01, A Practitioner, FGD)

“There are few administrative officers who live in Hambantota area. Others are from outside. It had been reported that the officials are facing difficulties in reaching the work place. Although these are very minor matters, they could seriously be affected for making a negative impact in service delivery.”

(Respondent 01 & 02, A Practitioner, FGD)

“We are bound to provide optimal service to the citizen. Hence whatever, they request we are responsible and accountable for that service.”

(Respondent 01 & 02, A Practitioner, FGD)

“As we can easily reach Hambantota to get the services, we do not need to go to Colombo to get the services done for some cases”

(Respondent 01 & 02, Service Receiver, Interviews)

“Number of services could be obtained through one place, which is the best government services”

(Respondent 03, Service Receiver, Interviews)

The results of the study directly indicate that the effectiveness of OSS service delivery depends on both internal and external factors which need to be addressed for positive changes in service delivery. As per the responses of the service receivers/seekers it is revealed that their satisfaction regarding the service provided at MRABC was placed at a significantly high level as the access of service is quite convenient for them.

Further, being citizen-centric does not reflect treating citizens as mere recipients of service delivery. The citizens have to be responsible in seeking services through the public administrative officials. On the other hand, issues faced by service providers need to be addressed for quality-of-service delivery.

The study gathered the data considering the areas in knowledge of public administrative reforms, One-Stop-Shop and citizen-centric service delivery. Based on the results following data-driven themes were developed and considered as the most influential receptive factors for the implementation of OSS in MRABC.

Digital-divide

The digital divide is the gap in technology usage and access (Nandasara & Mikami, 2014). In this research area, the digital divide had become a crucial factor in applying the OSS approach. It was revealed that MRABC[13] has been planned according to the ecological factors such as the digital divide that are pertinent in the area. These ideas were revealed in the focused group discussion and semi-structured interviews further analyzing with the statistical data available at DCS[14].

In the focus group discussion, it had been extensively discussed that delivering OSS aligning with network integration required sound IT infrastructure along with citizen interaction. The citizens' IT literacy is a crucial factor for accessing OSS (network-based). Hence it is worth to analyze by the statistics available on their IT literacy in DCS. By the end of 2017, internet and email usage in the household population in the Hambantota district was considerably low[15] (DCS, 2018). Given the low rates of IT literacy in the Hambantota district shows that a network-based OSS would not be significantly effective in promoting citizen-centricity. On the contrary, the Colombo district has started delivering citizen-centric service delivery using the network-based OSS approach during the same time[16]. In Colombo, the Computer literacy rate by 2015 was 38.4% (DCS, 2018) and at the end of 2021, it was rated at 45.9%[17](DCS, 2021).

However, the new ratings of computer literacy show a considerably positive development. The computer literacy is increasing especially among the younger generation. Young youths (aged 15 -19 years) show the highest computer literacy rate (71.4%) among all other age groups (DCS, 2021). In 2021, at least one computer was available in 22.9 of households in the country. That is more than one out of every five households owns either a desktop or a laptop computer (DCS, 2021). Hence it could be

analyzed that the IT literacy rate is continuously increasing and most importantly the younger generation requires new strategies to be implemented within the public sector as well. There is a possibility of requiring a network-based OSS working environment inside public sector offices by job seekers in the future.

In this study hence it is clear that the digital divide is persuasive in the context of implementing network-based OSS. Further, the digital divide has diverse ends such as access to digital services, availability of digital devices, knowledge of using digital devices, and language of the digital devices[18] etc.

MRABC had diversely used the OSS compared to the other regions where the OSS was being adapted in a way of network integration[19]. However, the OSS is applied in MRABC by collocating administrative organizations in one ground where the citizens could access public services easily without wasting time, effort and money. Hence, it is clear that applying OSS in service delivery is the evident in a different way at MRABC on the one hand. On the other, although the digital divide is regarded as a key resistant factor in network-based OSS and it had not been resisted by the citizens in the Hambantota district as they have access to the service in MRABC. It is important to note that the term 'citizen-centric' could have different meanings depending on the context in which it is been used. Hence the above findings note that, in certain circumstances, the same factor exhibits resistance while displaying receptiveness in other administrative contexts.

Traditional Mentality of the Service Receivers

The concept of citizen-centric service delivery implies placing citizens at the heart of public service delivery. This involves incorporating multiple modes of service delivery. While citizens have the option to access certain services conveniently from their households, they still tend to go with the traditional method of receiving services from public institutions. In some cases, public officials issue receipts to certify that the service had been provided at their institution. And also, in some cases, if the service seeker is requested to come and get the service again, they also provide a receipt of the case identification number. As per the findings of the study, individuals exhibit reluctance to place trust in machines while seeking services. They require an assurance of the provision of services, payments, and the active participation of public officials in delivering the services. This is a phenomenon that could even be directly observed in many public and private bank premises where the public always requires a receipt of the transactions. To establish an effective network-based service delivery system, both public officials and citizens must be well-informed about accessing the services.

Generally, citizens expect the same level of accountability and transparency in online transactions as well. However, ensuring the trust of citizens regarding public institutions

is a hard task as many of them have significantly low trust in public institutions in Sri Lanka. This was even observed through this research. Some Kiosks[20] were placed on the premises and those machines were out of work and it was revealed that those were not been used for the functions as citizens are not capable of using them. The Kiosk is used for electronic public service delivery which provides citizens a self-service platform. Kiosks are being used in many countries both in the public and private sectors providing citizens with multiple opportunities such as transparency, easy service access and diligent service delivery. The implementation of network-based service access points had faced certain challenges due to the prevalent traditional mentality of citizens who were accustomed to receiving services through administrative officials in the past. Therefore, the implementation of digital service-providing points (machines) was not operated properly.

It is necessary for citizens to meet certain requirements in order to provide better services and ensure comfort in receiving public service through innovative technology. The reformations that place through the new public governance highlight the idea of citizen participation in public administration. This idea had been emphasized by scholars who are referring to it as 'co-production'. Use of citizen effort as a coproduction both in policy implementation and service delivery. It can be analyzed by considering the ecological factors that affect the implementation of OSS in the Hambantota area. Riggs (1961) theorizes that public administration is a sub-system of society, which can be influenced by other sub-systems. This phenomenon has rightly been explained through the Riggsian theory what is known as the ecological study of public administration. Riggs says that 'public administration operates in different social and environmental settings and adapts itself to environmental conditions to achieve a set of social goals' (Bhattacharya, 2007, p. 124). Hence, it is clear that the nature of society had been significantly affected the effectiveness of service delivery. In the study citizens' past experiences or the traditional mentality has become an influential factor in public service delivery. Further, they are satisfied with receiving services physically at public offices instead of receiving the services through online platforms/or through machines.

Hence it is analyzed that, public administrative service delivery in Sri Lanka is increasingly influenced by a need to balance traditional bureaucratic structures with innovative practices.

There were numerous and unending discourses that related to public service providing which meets the citizens' demand, hence the changes in public service delivery began '*for the citizen*[21]' in the first stage. Consequently, in the second stage, it had been changed towards providing services with citizen involvement likewise '*with the citizen*[22]'. Currently, the trends of public administration imply the service providing is a part of citizens, likewise '*by the citizen*'[23]. In contemporary public service delivery, it

is widely recognized that in order to better align citizens' demands there is a growing emphasis on involving citizens as 'co-producers' in service delivery. This knowledge provides significant value for policymakers and leaders who are allowing them to implement innovative strategies like "co-production" and "co-design" to advance administrative reforms that are more citizen-centric which had been led citizen to be more active rather than being passive recipient of government services. Working collaboratively with citizens instead of treating them as mere recipients of services needs to be the central point that policymakers could apply in improving public services and creating more effective governance.

Citizen-Centeredness

The results of the study denote that to serve the citizens' demand in delivering public service, the government institutions in Sri Lanka had significantly been formed and changed. According to the data found in the 2017[24] study, several departments[25] have employed the WG approach by adopting OSS in service delivery to accomplish the citizens' demands and needs. Online platforms or in other words integration through networks was the strategy that had been widely used for the implementation of OSS throughout the world. The current study's results also present, that the aim of establishing citizen-centric service delivery had been accomplished differently when compared to the previous modes of OSS. Although it carried out certain issues which could be identified as situational, however, its prime purpose was to establish a citizen-centric service delivery centre. Hence, it could be analyzed that to provide citizen-centric service the public administrative institutions had significantly been changed both structurally and functionally. The utilization of the place is significantly high as an administrative hub for the region. Adapting to administrative reforms can present a challenging task, requiring careful attention to various regional factors.

Bridge (2012) explains the citizen-centric approach was designed in the terms of what people are looking for from the government. Furthermore, he asserts the idea of citizen-centric is simple: 'you can't design good citizen-centric services without working with citizens - the people who use and deliver those services' (Bridge, 2012, p. 168). The citizen-centric approach in service delivery is addressed diversely and puts forward the need for citizen participation instead of treating them as mere recipients in the service delivery. In modern times, 'public services are not only delivered by professional and managerial staff in public sector organizations but are also co-produced, to some extent, by the citizens (individuals and groups), non-profit organizations and communities' (Braci et al., 2016, p. 13). Some scholars had expressed their ideas regarding this approach and highlight the idea of 'citizen participation' instead of treating citizens as mere recipients of services. Their stance posits that citizens should be actively involved in both the design and implementation of public services. Elinor Ostrom (1996) explains clearly the concept of 'co-production' and 'co-creation' however, more than in her time, this

concept could easily be implemented now due to the advancement of technology and cultural changes (Brandson et al., 2018).

Conclusion

Public service delivery is an extensively discussed topic in the parlance of public administration which had broadly drawn government attention in reforming along with the contemporary needs and technological innovations. Despite the broader scope of public service delivery, it has been proven that the way of delivering service needs to be changed, to provide better service to the citizens. In order to ensure that the administrative reforms are effective and beneficial for citizens, it is important to recognize that different methods might be necessary for different situations. By embracing diverse approaches, we can better tailor our efforts to meet the specific needs of those we expect to serve. This research has revealed several crucial factors that significantly influenced the effectiveness of establishing administrative buildings on one site. However, it is pertinent to note that the citizens' perspectives regarding this matter may undergo a transformation in light of the advancements in technology that had been introduced in recent times. Moreover, citizens in the modern era are increasingly conscious of their rights and the availability of information, leading them to demand higher service standards. The implementation of OSS in MRABC reveals diverse key forces which fundamentally require citizen-centeredness in service delivery. As per some literature, the key guiding forces in a citizen-centric one-stop-shop model are listening to your customers, breaking down the silos, enabling a multi-channel service experience, continuous improvement through customer feedback and set customer-centric service standards (Pwc, 2012). Many countries around the world use the above key forces for the implementation of customer-centered cost-effective service through the OSS model. However, in the context of Sri Lanka, different modes of the OSS model were being implemented to cater for the citizens' needs as it becomes the main priority of service delivery. Hence the trend in the public administrative system of Sri Lanka could finally be seen as a traditional public administrative system where they are forced to balance traditional public administrative structures with innovative practices.

What is not yet clear, however, is whether citizens willing to participate in public service delivery as a respective part that contribute to the governing process of the country. Henceforth, to treat the citizen as the core of service delivery their participation should be significantly high. Both the policy makers and policy implementers should collaborate with citizens, rather than treating them as passive beneficiaries of services, could improve public services and establish more effective governance. Therefore, policymakers and leaders who prioritize citizen engagement could be established a more citizen-centric approach to governance, ultimately leading to more efficient, effective, and responsive public services. The adaptation of administrative reforms and vice versa implementation of administrative strategies require a wide range of investigations

before implementing the strategies in the system. A careful examination of influential factors provides valuable insights for building a robust and responsive administrative system. These insights are crucial to have a thorough investigation and assessment of ecological factors that are directly and indirectly may cause the process of implementation of administrative strategies.

Finally, it is worth for considering that what works well to one system may not necessarily be effective for another, depending on the unique ecological factors at play. By leveraging the insights of the study, the policymakers and policy implementers could be worked on creating a system which enables citizens a convenient service delivery system allowing them to be more interactive in the process of public service delivery. Further, in the co-production in service delivery could be studied in future with based on the results of the study by providing implication on citizen to be more involved in public service delivery.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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Endnotes

[1] Agencification is creating semi-autonomous public bodies based on a contractual relationship with the main government (Kim & Cho, 2014) which is regarded as an issue in the NPM reform.

[2] The Pre-Colonial period (laws that existed before the influence of colonialism) - before 1501, Portuguese period - 1505 to 1656, Dutch period -1656 to 1796 and British period - 1796 to 1948

[3] The concept, of “JUG was first introduced by Tony Blair’s government in 1997 in the UK. The main aim was to build a better grip on the core issues that emerged within the boundaries of public sector organization, administrative level and policy areas” (Christensen & Laegreid, 2006, p. 08).

[4] In Colombo, WG practices were adapted to issue e-revenue license under Department of Motor Traffic, Maligawatta, Department of Registration of Persons, Department of Registrar General Department was also practicing WG approach to provide citizen centric service to the people (Kularathne, 2017).

[5] One-size-does not-fits-all- When one country implements a change, it may not work for another due to unique factors. (6 Perri, 2004 as cited in Kularathne, 2017).

[6] Bricks-and-Mortar denotes the idea of providing service in a one physical location.

[7] Professional Conversation is an optimal way of participatory research to gather qualitative data. Feldman's sharing of knowledge and the growth of understanding" (1999, p. 2, as cited in Jarrett, 2021) explains the importance of professional conversation for gathering knowledge through participation in the discussion.

[8] Seven respondents were interviewed to get their ideas about the OSS. They were selected purposely at the premises of MRABC. Further, randomly selected citizens (Thirty-Five) were interviewed from the southern province regarding the service rendered through the MRABC.

[9] This research was conducted as a partial fulfilment of the MA Degree Programme in 2017. In this research selected departments' service delivery patterns are studied to investigate the way of using WG and factors that affect to the implementation of WG in the context of Sri Lanka.

[10] Motor Traffic Department, Urban Development Authority, National Insurance Trust Fund, Gymnasium, Cafeteria, Main Auditorium, VIP Auditorium, Election Department Office, National Transport Medical Organization, Southern Development Authority, Sri Lanka Export Development Board, Corporative Development, Post Office, Probation and Child Care Service Office, Southern Province Engineering Service, Divisional Secretariat Office, Executive Officer's Auditorium, Animal Products and Health Department, Ocean Environment Protection Authority, Land Commissioner's Office, District Labor Office, Bank of Ceylon, Building Maintenance Unit, Control Office, Coconut Cultivation Board, Peoples Bank, National Saving Bank, Road Development Authority, District Secretariat Office, District Engineer's Office, Corporative Development Department, Provincial Irrigation Office, Local Government Office, Department of Valuation, Industrial Department Office, Agriculture Director's Office.

[11] Several times the practitioners mentioned that these changes were adopted according to a government decision, revealing that they have no idea of the WG approach. However, one of them was aware of OSS.

[12] Online integration for providing OSS

[13] Magam Ruhunupura Administrative Building Complex

[14] DCS- Department of Census and Statistics

[15] Percentage distribution of Internet and E-mail using household population

Hambantota - In 2017 Internet - 13.3%, Email -7.4%, In 2018 Internet - 15.3%, Email - 3.9%

Available at:

<http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/en/ComputerLiteracy/Bulletins/2018-FirstSixMonths.pdf>

- [16] Department of Motor Traffic – E-revenue license issuing service (Kularathne, 2017)
- [17] Available at:
<http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/en/ComputerLiteracy/Bulletins/AnnualBuletinComputerLiteracy-2021.pdf>
- [18] Language of the digital devices - Many digital devices are comprised of English language.
- [19] Motor-Traffic Department- E-revenue license issuing
- [20] Kiosk is an information system operated in diverse public and private sector organizations providing the best platform to the citizen in their self-service accesses.
- [21] For the citizen' – Service provides along with the citizen's demands
- [22] With the citizen – Citizen's ideas are incorporated into the service delivery process.
- [23] By the citizen – Citizens take part in the service delivery process
- [24] Data triangulation with the research conducted in 2017 - Implementation of WG Strategies in Sri Lanka
- [25] Department of Motor Traffic, Department of Emigration and Immigration, Department of Registration of Persons.