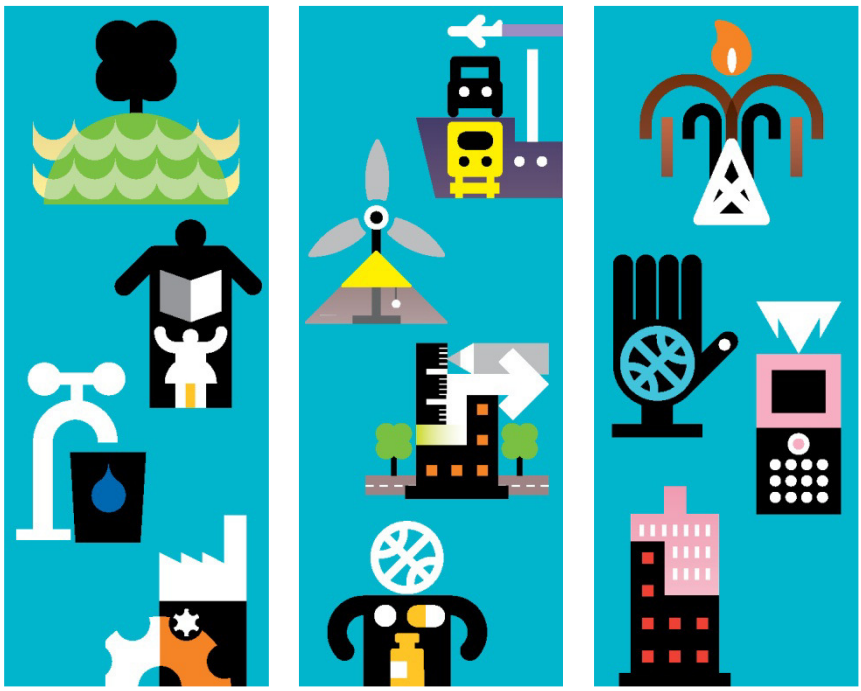

Delivery Units: can they catalyse sustained improvements in education service delivery?

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Aid Effectiveness

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Abstract

Despite the financial crisis in 2008 aid budgets among many multilateral and bilateral donors have been relatively protected, in some cases even rising. However, this has been accompanied by a significant increase in the focus on aid effectiveness demonstrated through scrutiny of impact and value for money. The Roadmap approach in Pakistan and the Big Results Now (BRN) approach in Tanzania are two recent attempts to introduce delivery units in developing countries. Both have links with the work Sir Michael Barber did in the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit established by Tony Blair in 2001.

This paper explores the use of both mechanisms as they have been applied and adapted in development contexts – one in Pakistan, one in Tanzania. We identify the political and financial conditions required to successfully establish roadmaps or delivery units; examine the extent to which these approaches can contribute towards developing a results-oriented delivery culture across government; and examine whether these mechanisms actually improve aid effectiveness in terms of their cost effectiveness and value for money. Finally, we explore the potential for embedding these new approaches across country contexts in order to deliver sustainable development impact.

A brief history of Delivery Units – what are they and what do they do?

Countries that have established Centre of Government Delivery Units have generally done so as a means to drive performance improvements in critical service delivery areas. One of the first examples of a dedicated centre of government Delivery Unit is the UK Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU) established by Tony Blair in 2001 under the leadership of Sir Michael Barber. The PMDU was tasked with ensuring that the Prime Minister's domestic policy priorities were implemented effectively so that they achieved tangible performance improvements and significant results on the ground. The PMDU focused on a relatively small number of key outcomes which were a real priority for the Prime Minister and his Government.

Located right at the centre of Government (initially in the Cabinet Office and then the Treasury) with direct access to the Prime Minister the PMDU was kept relatively small, with fewer than 50 staff, and attracted a blend of top talent from the civil service, private sector and frontline service delivery positions in local government. It worked across central government to establish joint performance measurement and accountability structures, shifting focus onto delivery of results as well as formulation of policy. The role of the PMDU and its understanding of the factors required for successful delivery evolved over time. By 2009, under the leadership of Ray Shostak, the Unit spent most of its time focusing on unblocking delivery obstacles (through priority reviews, the National Economic Council, problem solving and follow up work with departments) whilst also working on performance monitoring (data tracking and reporting), performance policy (e.g. through involvement in the Public Service Agreement framework) and capacity building and cross government learning on delivery.

Today, in the UK, much of the previous work of the PMDU has been taken on by the Cabinet Office's Implementation Unit which focuses on strengthening implementation of the policies that have been determined by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister to be of the highest strategic significance. As with the PMDU the Implementation Unit brings together expertise from a wide range of sectors including local government, the private sector and experts from within Whitehall and internationally and undertakes joint 'deep dive' reviews with departments on key implementation issues.

Over the past decade a number of governments have established Delivery Units or similar structures, adapting some of the principles and practices from the PMDU's experience to their local contexts in an effort to improve implementation and focus on results. These Units have been created centrally, often under the auspices of Presidents and Prime Ministers, and within line Ministries to focus on delivery in specific sectors.

- Looking across those countries which have established Delivery Units we can identify six common public service delivery challenges that Delivery Units are intended to address (Todd 2012):
- National level discussions and policy announcements tend to focus on funds allocated for certain areas rather than results planned or achieved.
- A lack of clarity as to the practical steps needed to turn national policy commitments into tangible outcomes.
- A lack of joined up working at national level with policy priorities falling across or between Ministries with unclear accountability for results.

- The national level challenge of ensuring quality of delivery once responsibility is devolved to local and sub-national levels. If results are poor in one local area then it is still predominantly the national government which gets the blame for this failure.

- The general tendency in the civil service to focus on process and procedures rather than outcomes. In some areas of the civil service there is also little sense of urgency to make a positive difference when compared with the compressed time frames in which Ministers are in post and expected to deliver results.

- Lack of local level understanding of national commitments means that the intended results of new initiatives are never achieved by implementing agencies.

In Australia two notable examples of efforts to establish Delivery Units are Queensland's Implementation Unit and the federal government's Cabinet Implementation Unit. Queensland's Implementation Unit was established in March 2004 under the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) following the re-election of Peter Beattie's Labor government. The Unit was created out of the Premier's frustration with the performance of key ministers and agencies and focused mainly on ensuring that more robust and complete policy proposals were presented to Cabinet (Tiernan 2006; Lindquist 2006). The Cabinet Implementation Unit (CIU) was established in 2003 by Prime Minister Howard and initially focused on reviewing cabinet policy proposals to assess the quality of implementation analysis (Lindquist 2006). The CIU's role has evolved over time and today it "acts as a catalyst to drive the implementation and delivery of the Government's most important agendas as well as reporting on the progress of numerous policy initiatives across government" CIU 2013:4). Both the Queensland Implementation Unit and the Cabinet Implementation Unit have been described as less potent, directive, robust and aggressive than the UK's PMDU at overseeing improved delivery of key priorities (Lindquist 2006).

One of the most notable and high profile adaptations of the Delivery Unit approach has taken place in Malaysia where the Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU) was established as a unit under the Prime Minister's Department in 2009. Headed by Idris Jala, the high profile former Chief Executive of Malaysian Airlines, PEMANDU, perhaps more than any other centre of government unit, has made great efforts to publicise its transformation plans, invite critical comment and catalyse a delivery focused culture change across the public at large.

Two key innovations introduced by PEMANDU are 1.) creating 'Delivery Labs' to bring together a range of key stakeholders and experts to work intensively to draw up detailed, practical solutions to delivery issues and 2.) holding Open Days, attended by over 20,000 participants, to communicate the government's change programme and gain citizen buy-in. PEMANDU has also made efforts to promote its approach and methods internationally, holding seminars attended by a number of African and Asian governments. These international awareness raising efforts led directly to Tanzania's adoption of the 'Malaysian approach' in February 2013 with the launch of its 'Big Results Now!' programme.

Defining features of successful Delivery Units

The presence of a growing number of 'centre of government' delivery units, all of which have adopted somewhat different structures, practices and processes, enables us to identify some of the common features of successful units (Barber et al. 2011; World Bank 2010).

1. **Successful Units tend to be small and act as an extension of senior leadership** (generally the Prime Minister, President, Vice-President or relevant Minister). Keeping Units small means that they can

be flexible and cohesive while ensuring that management can be selective in choosing the best staff. Larger Units are more likely to become engaged in a wide range of activities and end up replicating some of the structures and functions which they are supposed to performance manage.

2. **For a Delivery Unit to succeed there has to be a real willingness from the very top of government to change behaviour and improve outcomes.** Experience shows that establishing a Delivery Unit without this wholehearted commitment is unlikely to lead to improved results. The fundamental operating model of the Delivery Unit relies on using the reflected authority of the senior system leader. The Unit ensures that this authority is pushed down the delivery system so that leaders at all levels are held accountable for results. There is an implicit assumption in this model that the delivery system can be held to account and the whole model breaks down if political authority derives from sources other than successfully achieving assigned tasks.

3. **In order to be most effective Units should have a direct line of communication to senior leadership and be located outside the system's line-management hierarchy.** If a Delivery Unit has a line management relationship with the people whom it is trying to influence or those with direct delivery responsibility then this can compromise the nature of its advice, influence and effectiveness. There needs to be a strong connection and understanding between the Delivery Unit and the relevant senior leader in order for the delivery system to view and respect the Unit as a direct extension of the leader's authority. There also need to be good communications routes between the Unit and relevant Ministries and delivery agencies.

Whilst most successful Units are located at the centre of government this does not have to be the case and a number of effective Units have been established in key Ministries or for specific priority programmes. From experience great care has to be taken when establishing Ministerial Units to ensure that they have sufficient prestige to attract top talent from within and outside government and that they do not become embedded within the 'business-as-usual' departmental management hierarchy.

Most Units employ staff with a mixture of civil service, private sector and front-line delivery experience. Units should make every effort to attract the most talented staff possible and the very best Units ensure that the Unit Head has direct involvement in all recruitment to ensure quality. Often staff are employed on short-term contracts (3 years in Malaysia's PEMANDU whilst 2 years was the norm in the UK's PMDU) to ensure that they remain fresh in their outlook and enthusiasm. 2-3 year timescales also mean that Units can easily take staff on secondment and loan from the private sector and front-line delivery organisations.

The most successful Delivery Units tend to recruit staff on the basis of 5 core competencies (Barber et al. 2011):

i. Problem solving
ii. Data analysis
iii. Relationship management
iv. The ability to provide feedback and coaching
v. A can-do attitude and a practical, delivery-focused mind-set

Successful Delivery Units generally carry out a combination of the following key functions:

- Articulating and signalling the importance of a small number of key government delivery priorities.

- Overseeing a simple and direct monitoring mechanism for these priorities to connect senior leadership with front-line outcomes and keep the delivery system focused on their achievement.

- Sending a clear message throughout the system that senior staff are being held accountable for performance against key priorities.
- Providing analytical support and recommendations to enable departments to overcome key delivery challenges and unblock obstacles.
- Providing support to enhance delivery capacity in key departments and agencies.

Lessons Learnt and Key Principles

There is a growing body of literature on the lessons learnt and key principles of successful delivery. Eleven key points from the literature and our own experience are summarised below[1]:

1. Ensure focus on a **limited number of key priorities**. There should be clear leadership so that these priorities are understood and can be articulated across the delivery system.

2. Develop a **strong link between key priorities and resources** so that adequate budgets are available to support each priority. Budgeting should not be a role of the Delivery Unit which must assume that budgets for each priority are already fixed so that they can focus on unblocking obstacles to deliver more for less rather than opening up system wide discussions about resource allocation. Some governments have looked to increase coherence between delivery and budgeting by co-locating their Delivery Unit within the Ministry of Finance[2].

3. Focus on developing a **clear understanding of citizen centred outcomes** so that key priorities are viewed from the perspective of what is achieved at the level of individual citizens rather than what government spends or what services do. This will often involve a shift in focus of Ministries and service providers which should then drive behaviour change across systems.

4. Develop good **quality data and metrics to measure what matters**. Systems should collect regular data and not impose excessive cost or burden on front-line workers in the process. Focus on collecting reliable and attributable data for a small number of priorities and then ensure that data is analysed and used regularly to inform decision-making and hold the delivery system to account.

5. Use regular data as the basis for establishing **effective performance management routines**. Baseline data, benchmarks and other relevant information should be used to produce mutually agreed targets which are both realistic and achievable. Evidence based trajectories should then be developed in order to track progress over time. Establishing regular monthly, quarterly and six monthly routines to review progress will help to ensure continued focus on delivery. Forums need to be established to review progress and ensure that the appropriate people are held accountable for results (in the UK Public Service Agreement Delivery Boards performed this purpose). Plans should be developed with specific actions and named responsibility and efforts should be made to ensure that there are consequences for performance right throughout the system to local level in order to develop a results culture which is everybody's business. Published quality and service standards can play an important role in this regard. There also needs to be adequate support and personal development opportunities to assist delivery

[1] Please see 'References' section at the end of this paper for a comprehensive list of the literature used to compile these key points.

[2] This was the case with the UK's PMDU between 2007 and 2010 when it was located in HM Treasury and had responsibility for ensuring delivery of the government's Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets within the multi-annual budgetary constraints set by the Treasury.

improvement and recognition that successful performance management regimes are as much about people as they are about systems.

6. Delivery Units need to have a **clear understanding of delivery systems** so that there is a strong understanding of the connection between policy makers and service users and the range of actors involved in their delivery. This understanding enables the Unit to identify the drivers of successful outcomes and the motivations and perceptions of actors throughout the system. Delivery system analysis and customer journey mapping are both useful tools in enabling greater understanding of delivery systems.

7. Ensure that **stakeholders are actively engaged in analysing delivery issues and owning outcomes**. Delivery labs, first introduced in Malaysia by the PEMANDU, have proved very effective in focusing a range of stakeholders on planning and implementing solutions to tackle delivery issues. Likewise regularly publishing performance data, plans and targets and soliciting feedback can significantly enhance citizens' engagement and ownership of service delivery. Where progress is positive it is important that the Delivery Unit doesn't take or seek credit for success but instead ensures that acclaim is received by the relevant department and service providers.

8. **Understand and involve front-line workers** in analysing problems and developing solutions. It is the quality of the skilled interaction between frontline workers and citizens that enables effective outcomes achieved. Finding ways to involve those people with an understanding of the actual pressures and challenges of delivery in developing policy and analysing issues will help to ensure that successful citizen-centred outcomes are achieved.

9. Delivery Units needs to play an effective **support and challenge** function and add real value to Ministries by working collaboratively to build capacity and solving problems if they are to play a successful role in achieving outcomes. Units need to gain the respect and trust of Ministries and act as an amplifier of the authority of the system's senior leader rather than seeking to impose their own. Units which establish an adversarial relationship with Ministries are destined to fail.

10. Strike the **right balance between planning and delivery**. While some results can be achieved quickly it can often take several years to achieve significant change in some outcomes. Many governments run an annual planning and budgeting cycle which may encourage a focus on measuring leading indicators rather than meaningful outcomes. Changing to a longer-term (for example three years) planning and budgeting cycle allows more opportunity to align plans, budgets and outcomes.

11. It is also very important that the delivery unit has an **effective communications strategy**. A key function of a delivery unit is to rapidly engender change and reform to 'turn around' a perceived decline in standards of service delivery. To do this entails engaging multiple stakeholders and creating in them both the belief that things can change and the willingness to engage in change. This in turn means that significant effort has to be put into publicising the work, and eventually the successes, of relevant Departments.

Experience in Tanzania and Pakistan

Pakistan and Tanzania provide two recent examples where the Delivery Unit approach has been applied and adapted to education systems within a development context.

In Pakistan the Punjab Schools Reform Roadmap has been in place since mid-2011. The Roadmap team, headed by Sir Michael Barber, is working alongside the Government of the Punjab to transform education

quality in the province. The approach taken is simple and is very much in line with the principles and practices already outlined in this paper. The Chief Minister and the Roadmap team set out a small number of priorities and related targets. A regular performance management routine is then established in the form of bi-monthly stock-takes with the Chief Minister, Sir Michael Barber, Directors from key departments and the Programme Monitoring and Implementation Unit (PMIU). The Roadmap team uses information and data gathered by PMIU to prepare progress reports against targets for each district. One of the major achievements of the Roadmap team is that it has managed to help PMIU institute a process whereby this data is gathered and fully analysed on a monthly basis- effectively in real time.

The Roadmap team has much in common with the characteristics of a Delivery Unit. The team is small and can be seen as an extension of the Chief Minister's senior leadership located outside the system's line management hierarchy. The Roadmap team has good linkages with relevant ministries and agencies, particularly the Programme Monitoring and Implementation Unit (PMIU), which enables them to identify and then work to jointly solve seemingly intractable problems.

So has this approach delivered results? Sir Michael Barber's 2013 publication 'The Good News from Pakistan' lists a number of impressive achievements including: one and a half million extra children in school in January 2013 compared with 2011, student attendance over 90%, 81,000 new teachers hired on merit, 35,000 more teachers present in school every day, over 90% of schools with basic facilities compared with less than 70% in 2011, and a narrowing of the gender gap across all indicators (Barber 2013 b).

An assessment of this data by a World Bank staff member (Das 2013) is more cautious about listing the achievements of the Roadmap approach and in identifying causalities but does conclude that: "there seem to have been real changes in monitoring and management practices in the Punjab Government, and much more centralised management appears to have been enforced. The evidence is consistent with continued improvements in school inputs, and potentially small changes in enrolment. On learning, we can't say much at this point".

It is certainly the case that the Roadmap approach has led to the production and use of far greater amounts of performance data than was previously the case and that the Punjab government now has access to district-specific data which enables variations in district level performance to be identified and assessed. Going forward this provides the basis to decentralise performance management and develop analytical, problem solving and performance management capacity at District levels in order to drive sustained improvements in local performance.

In Tanzania President Kikwete launched the government's Big Results Now! (BRN) programme in early 2013. BRN is a transformational government programme which seeks to adapt the successful Malaysian approach to economic development and improving service delivery. This involves a switch to 'business unusual', operating in a new, more open and accountable way and focusing on delivering tangible results in priority sectors. BRN will initially focus on achieving a set of specific objectives by 2015 in 6 sectors: Education, Energy, Agriculture, Water, Transport and Resource Mobilisation. Ultimately the intention is that BRN will play a key role in Tanzania's ambition to become a middle income country by 2025.

A six week Delivery Lab was carried out for each of the six priority BRN sectors – Education, Agriculture, Energy, Water, Transport and Resource Mobilisation. Facilitated by staff from Malaysia's Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU) each Lab involved the participation of key Tanzanian experts and government officials. Each Lab identified a set of priority actions and targets along with a detailed

delivery plan (called a '3 Feet Plan') setting out exactly what needed to be done by whom and when in order to deliver the proposed activities.

The plan developed by the Education Delivery Lab focused on significantly improving the quality of primary and secondary education. Tanzania has seen rapid expansions in enrolment at primary and secondary levels in recent years but this expansion has not been accompanied by improvements in quality. In fact by 2012 pass rates at primary (Primary School Leaving Examination- PSLE) and secondary (Certificate of Secondary Education Examination- CSEE) level had declined to 31% and 43% respectively. This decline sparked a national debate about the standards of education in Tanzania.

In response to this situation the Education Delivery Lab developed a plan containing nine activity strands including improved delivery of school capitation grants, greater focus on the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) during the early years of primary school through teacher training and assessment, the mass roll-out of remedial classes for students scheduled to sit primary and secondary examinations and measures to address the significant number of outstanding teacher claims in the system. The overall aim of the BRN Education plan is captured in 3 targets to be achieved by 2015, namely:

- To create transparency on 3R skills levels in Standard II.
- To achieve 80%+ pass rates in Primary PSLE Exams.
- To achieve 80%+ pass rates in Secondary CSEE Exams.

These targets are known as the 'National Key Results Area' (NKRA) for Education. In order to oversee progress across the 6 NKRAs Tanzania has established a comprehensive BRN delivery architecture and regular performance monitoring regime. At the centre of this architecture is the President's Delivery Bureau (PDB) headed by Omari Issa, the former CEO of the Investment Climate Facility for Africa and former Executive Director of Celtel International. The PDB is an independent unit in the President's Office responsible for ensuring delivery of BRN objectives. The PDB monitors and reports on BRN progress and is the secretariat to the Transformation Delivery Council (TDC). Chaired by the President the TDC meets on a monthly basis and incorporates the Vice President, Minister of Finance and all relevant line Ministers and Permanent Secretaries. The TDC monitors overall delivery progress and problem solves difficult issues.

Each of the 6 BRN ministries then has its own Ministerial Delivery Unit (MDU). The Education MDU reports to the Minister for Education and is responsible for progress monitoring and reporting on the Education BRN plan, problem solving and analysis, supporting delivery capacity and communicating on BRN. The Education MDU acts as the secretariat for the NKRA Education Steering Committee, chaired by the Minister for Education, which meets every month prior to the TDC to look in detail at progress and issues against the Education BRN plan. This delivery architecture is very new and, in theory, provides a regular and rigorous performance monitoring regime with appropriate levels of senior ownership. In practice one of the initial challenges which the MDU is tackling is to set up a system which enables accurate and timely performance data to flow on a monthly basis from Tanzania's 136 District Education Offices through the 25 Regional Education Offices to reach the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MOEVT) in Dar-es-Salaam and the Prime Minister's Office Regional and Local Government Administration (PMO-RALG) in

Dodoma.[3] Without this flow of timely and accurate progress information it becomes very difficult to run an effective performance monitoring and management system.

It is too early to consider whether BRN has had a positive impact on primary and secondary quality (BRN was only officially launched in the education sector in August 2013 and it is difficult to attribute the bulk of the improvement in 2013 PSLE results from 31% to 50.6% to BRN given that it was only launched one month before students sat their exams) but it is clear that BRN has created a window for change in the Tanzanian education system. Throughout the education system, from remote village schools through district education offices to regional offices and national ministries, people are aware of BRN and recognise (whether willingly or unwillingly) that it is something which they must embrace. There has been a noticeable shift within the Ministry has senior officials and Ministers spend much more time discussing delivery and performance rather than protocols, process and administration.

The challenge for Tanzania now is to take advantage of this window of change and develop a coherent results oriented performance management culture through regions to districts and individual schools. In an education system where approximately 50% of teachers are absent at any one time the development of transparency, accountability and a focus on results is a necessary step in improving educational outcomes.

Key Lessons Learnt from Tanzania and Pakistan

The application of the Delivery Unit approach to education service delivery is still at a very early stage in both Pakistan and Tanzania. It is too soon to make definitive judgements as to its success or impact. However it is possible to identify a number of emerging themes where lessons can be learnt.

1. **The role of delivery units in providing a catalysing opportunity for public sector culture change.** The formation of a Delivery Unit in Tanzania and the introduction of the Roadmap in Pakistan have both attracted attention across the delivery system from senior government officials through to teachers in remote schools. Communications and messages about the importance of results and local level delivery can play a role and shifting public service culture. This is particularly the case at District level where officials see that their actions and performance are being monitored at national level. Previously they would have received little feedback or recognition at national level but now there is a new level of interest and scrutiny. This provides an initial basis for making deeper and more lasting changes in performance recognition and reward systems in order to improve the motivation of local officials, heads and teachers.

2. **The advantage of keeping things simple and focusing on a small number of measureable priorities**. The Roadmap Approach in Pakistan focused on bringing about a measurable change in one key metric- teacher attendance- as a foundation and proof of concept for improvements in other areas. The benefit of this approach is that it enables problem-solving and data gathering capacity to focus on a specific issue. Once progress is made on this issue it builds political will and confidence in the approach and provides the foundation for systems to address other issues.

   In Tanzania the government has taken a different approach by attempting to simultaneously implement nine BRN initiatives in the education sector. Such a broad range of initiatives may be necessary to bring about improved results but the focus across such a wide range of activities at the same time has created issues. These issues include budget (it is difficult to prioritise funds across so many activities),

[3] In the Tanzanian system MOEVT is responsible for policy development whilst PMO-RALG is responsible for implementation.

focus (there is limited capacity to focus on problem solving, data collection and getting the mechanics of delivery right across all initiatives) and understanding (fieldwork by the Education MDU in late 2013 showed that, whilst there was excellent understanding of BRN's objectives at local level, people where less clear when it came to naming the nine specific initiatives intended to achieve these objectives). In a system where an intensive focus on delivery and performance monitoring is a new concept it may be advisable to take a phased approach to implementing priority initiatives.

3. **The need to establish streamlined data collection and analysis systems**. Accurate and timely data is the lifeblood of the Delivery Unit approach. It is central to the establishment and maintenance of performance management routines. Weak data systems can be exploited at all levels particularly if there are inherent incentives to report success without adequate checks and balances throughout the system. These are important as it is not feasible to expect the centre alone to quality assure the system as a whole.

   The culture of reporting in the Tanzanian education system has historically focused on producing large volumes of district level data on a quarterly basis in voluminous reports. While this may provide reassurance that the system is functioning much of the data collected is not analysed by the reports' recipients whilst the time lag between actions and reporting are too great for the requirements of the newly established BRN regime. There is a need, following a series of best practice principles regarding clear definitions, relevance, quality, timeliness and the requirement to not impose a burden on front line delivery, to introduce new streamlined processes to ensure that data can be collected and analysed in a timely, regular manner. Mobile technology has an important role to play in the development of such systems.

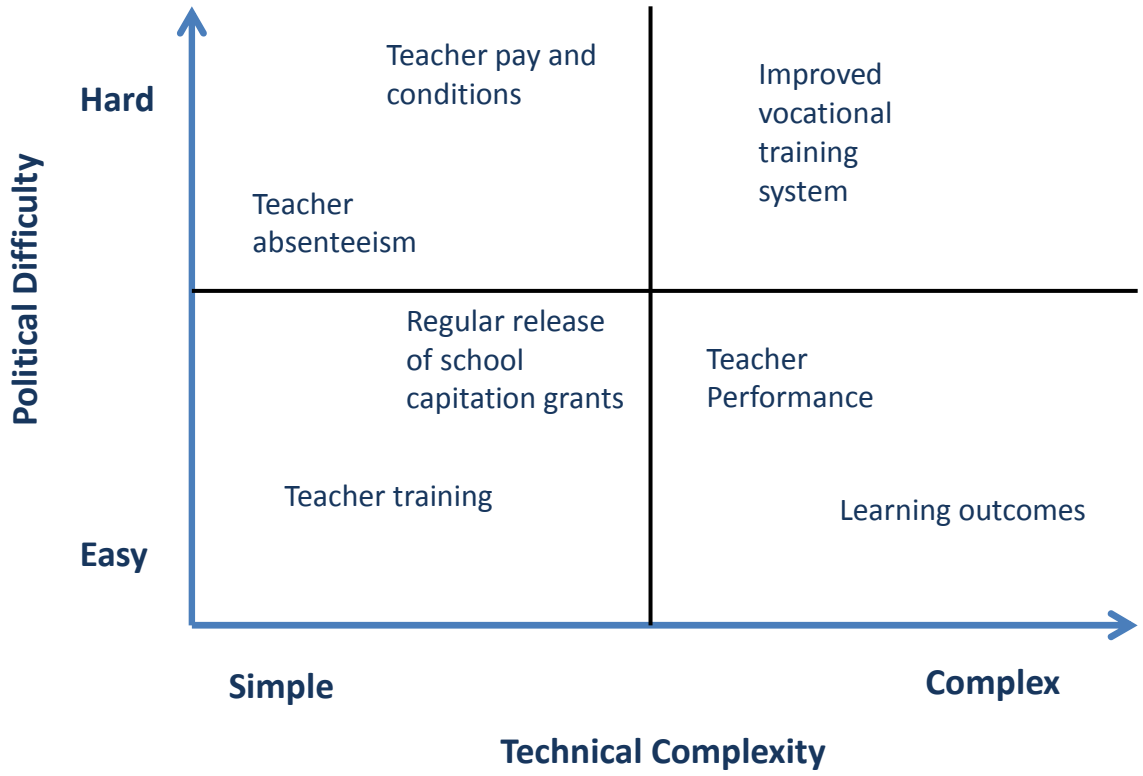
4. **Delivery Units may well have more success in bringing about rapid improvements in easily measurable and understood outputs**. Delivery Units' approach of establishing a regular performance monitoring regime with timely and comparable data and consequences for performance against targets lends itself well to bringing about rapid improvements in easily measurable and understood outputs. An example from Tanzania of such an output is the number of teachers undergoing a new short professional development and training course whilst in Pakistan the issue of teacher absenteeism could also fall into this category. Both our practical experience and the literature in this field suggests that success is much harder to achieve in areas where the logical link between activities, outputs and outcomes is less clear.

   One example of this is learning outcomes. In Tanzania there is careful consideration of options for a school incentive scheme to reward schools which have made the greatest improvement in their exams. International evidence (Yuan et al. 2012) suggests that teachers and head teachers are often not clear as to the logical linkage between specific behaviours and improved learning outcomes. As such putting too great a stress on achieving outcomes can lead to demotivation and despair if the person or institution being incentivised doesn't feel it is within their power to improve. An example of this would be a head teacher who is held to account for poor exam results when he or she doesn't have the authority to hire, effectively discipline or dismiss their teaching staff. In such a situation effective incentives are those linked to specific behaviours which teachers, head teachers and officials have the capability to achieve.

   In Figure 1 below we have categorised potential outputs in a four by four matrix reflecting the technical and political difficulty of achieving results. We believe that Delivery Units are more suited to achieving results in the left hand quadrants of this model where the linkages between activities and outputs are more clearly understood by actors within the delivery system. In particular Delivery Units can be very effective in solving problems in the top left hand quadrant and these are the problems that are

traditionally hard to unlock. If left unresolved such issues often form a barrier to the solution of other problems in the right hand quadrants.

Figure 1 Outputs and Outcomes classified by Technical Complexity and Political Difficulty



5. **The approach taken by Delivery Units in Pakistan and Tanzania may well enable education systems to improve from 'poor' to adequate' but different measures will probably be required to shift systems from 'adequate' to 'good'.** Related to the point above about easily measurable and understood outcomes, targets and rigorous performance measurement can be a very effective means of shifting elements of an education delivery system from 'poor' to 'adequate'. However we must not lose sight of the fact that the central feature of any education system is the interaction between skilled and motivated professionals and learners.

   Targets and performance monitoring can help to address chronic issues such as teacher absenteeism by they are likely to be less effective in helping to build the cadre of skilled and motivated teachers required to shift a system from 'adequate' to 'good' or 'good' to 'excellent'. We have to recognise, from experience in the UK and elsewhere, that targets can have a negative impact on front-line professionals and undermine their motivation and sense of professional integrity. Delivery Units can play a valuable role in assisting systems to transition from 'good' to 'excellent' but their focus needs to shift towards more collaborative problem solving, capacity building and enabling of a decentralised system rather than focusing on centralised performance monitoring. This can be achieved by moving over time from a centralised approach to data analysis and problem solving to a system whereby analytical and problem

solving capacity is built throughout the system, perhaps through district and local authority based variants of Delivery Units.

6. **The importance of getting the right people in the right place at the right time.** Getting the right mixture of staff in place is critical if a Delivery Unit is to catalyse change and contribute to sustained delivery improvements. The experience in Tanzania suggests that it is important to consider staffing and recruitment right at the start of any major change efforts. Whilst the Tanzanian government did an excellent job in recruiting a high quality and prominent Chief Executive for the President's Delivery Bureau in early 2013 the same cannot be said for the Ministerial Delivery Units. Permanent recruitment and selection for the MDUs took many months and hampered efforts to establish an effective performance monitoring regime. The PDB recognised this and sent some of its staff, who were originally seconded from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, into the Education MDU in an effort to enhance its capacity. It is important to consider the dynamics and internal politics caused by creating a new, high profile unit in an existing Ministry so that initial operating problems can be minimised.

So can Delivery Units catalyse sustained improvements in education service delivery?

The short answer is that it is too soon to make any definitive judgements but that in certain contexts and if certain preconditions are met we believe that Delivery Units can play a role in catalysing improvements in certain aspects of education service delivery. Properly implemented they seem to be particularly effective in galvanising and directing political will, in raising public awareness of major issues, and of bringing data to the fore. There are risks however including the need to ensure data integrity so that success is not over-reported, focusing on what matters rather than what can be easily measured and ensuring that they do not undermine the critical relationship between front-line professionals and citizens. These risks need to be explicitly recognised and addressed in the Delivery Unit's design, operations and interaction with the wider public service delivery system. If Delivery Units look to work as a catalysing presence to improve existing delivery and data systems then, with the right preconditions, they can deliver improvements.

In conclusion Delivery Units are not a panacea on their own but we believe that if they are combined with other approaches they offer a way to solve some of the more intractable problems often seen within the education sector or other areas of public service delivery.

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