

# Public Administration Research in Tanzania: An Assessment of Journal Publications, 2007-2014

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**ABSTRACT----** *Public administration has been given a cold shoulder by some of its sister disciplines within the social sciences probably due to lack of the theoretical basis and perennial reliance on related disciplines to explain and direct, and inform rigor and relevance. On the contrary, science is informed by theory to investigate, explain and predict the phenomena because any scientific investigation and/or explanation have to be grounded on certain article of faith to develop new rigor and influence its relevance. In this setting, this article attends Tanzania Public Administration Research. An analysis was done by appraising two journals hosted by Mzumbe University in Tanzania namely the Journal of Policy and Leadership (JOPL) and the Uongozi, the Journal of Management and Development Dynamics from 2007 to 2014 in order to establish the contribution of research in the field. A database of 80 articles was compiled, including 49 articles from JOPL and 31 from the Uongozi. Content analysis and triangulation of the findings from the five main analytical variables that is: research topic; research purpose; research methodology; research focus; and institutional funding findings obtained by and large illustrate that there has been little theory development in Tanzania public administration research. In order to improve public administration research particularly in Tanzanian context, causing reasons are provided and the article proposes remedial interventions.*

**Keywords---** Public administration, public administration research, theory

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Public administration as an academic field is said to be a newcomer among social sciences (Bava, 1992). Strangely enough, the study of man and society has been the broad canvas of all social sciences. Theories of relationships between an individual, society and state have been at the forefronts of the academic discourses since time immemorial (ibid). From erstwhile to date public administration has been conceived as both a scholarly field and as a practical man's domain. Therefore, any balanced treatment of the discipline must take onboard this twin dimensional character (Oyedele, 2015; Bava, 1992; Cameroon, 2008).

With the expansion of the discipline of Public Administration, the need for literature analysis on public administration theory is being increasingly desired (Prasad, *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, academic research in applied fields such as public administration operates at the intersection of basic and applied social sciences, whereby scholars develop knowledge to advance their fields while solving daily problems of practices (Dodge, *et al.*, 2005). Achieving this balance requires researchers to effectively address two dimensions of scholarly quality; rigor and relevance (ibid). In this context, this article argues that there is no enough literature on the development of the public administration theory with particular reference to the contributions made by researchers towards development of this discipline in Tanzania. This lacuna provided an impetus to account for the contributions of researchers to the development of the discipline by analyzing the articles in two peer reviewed Public Administration Journals in Tanzania; the *Uongozi*, the *Journal of Management and Development Dynamics* and the *Journal of Policy and Leadership* (JOPL) hosted by Mzumbe University in Tanzania from 2007 to 2014. A database of 80 articles was compiled, consisting 31 articles from the *Uongozi*, the *Journal of Management and Development Dynamics* and 49 articles from the JOPL.

## 2. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section provides the meaning of key concepts relevant to the subject matter in order to clarify and direct the channel of enquiry by ensuring that relevant terms and concepts are clearly understood.

### 2.1 Public Administration

The word "public" essentially means the practice of administration in a society specifically for the public sector (Oyedele, 2015). Woodrow Wilson (1887), perceived Public Administration as the most visible side of government.

Therefore, Public Administration is a governmental administration and machinery for implementing government policy.

## 2.2 Theory

The term “theory”, on the other hand, is derived from the Greek word “*theoria*” which entails ‘looking at’, ‘viewing’, ‘contemplating’, ‘speculating’ (Prasad, *et al.*, 2012). Theories are ideas organized in a logical order to reinforce or demolish an existing conviction or to form the basis for the new conviction. Theory represents a systematic explanation of causal factors and their fusion within a conceptual framework (*ibid*). Sarantakos (1997) defines a theory as a set of systematically tested and logically interpreted propositions that have been developed through research and that explains social phenomena. It is a generalization or series of generalizations through which the researcher attempts to explain, describe, understand or even predict some phenomena in a systemic manner (Amin, 2005).

## 2.3 Public Administration Theory

Public Administration theory borrows insights from humanities and the validated prepositions of the social and behavioral sciences, apply these insights and propositions to the tasks of improving service delivery by constitutionally mandated means (Bailey, 1968). However, in the public administration field theory building has proven to be a daunting task, a situation which Caiden (1971) associate with proliferation of theories in Public Administration and lack of general theory.

In sum, Oyedele (2015) provides three main reasons on why we have to study public administration theory. First and foremost, theories provide a stable focus for understanding what we experience. Second, theories facilitate effective communications and easy relationships with others. Third, theories challenge us to continue learning about our world.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 Public Administration as an Academic Discipline

It is customary to attribute the origin of public administration to the “seminal” essay “the study of public administration” published in *Political Science Quarterly* by Woodrow Wilson in 1887. However, the discipline is much older than 1887 (Bava, 1992). Literature is full of evidence that the genesis of the subject of public administration can be traced to much earlier days, between the fifth and fourth centuries before Christ (*ibid*). Plethora of sources from the occident and orient bears testimony to this view.

As far as history records indicate, we believe that Socratic-Platonic doctrine that “virtue is knowledge”, that is good life both for the individual and state is objective, and can therefore be turned to be the object of the study, defined by methodological intellectual process and intelligently pursued (Sabine, 1964). Equally, the establishment of Plato’s school (427-347 BC) and his concern for discriminating true knowledge from appearance, opinion, downright illusion and his doctrine of philosopher king (Sabine, 1964). Provide ample evidence that teaching of the art and science of politics, and statecraft was impinged on public administration.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century noble King Frederick William I of Prussia created professorates in Cameralism in an endeavor to train new crop public administrators (Basheka, 2012). Later on, cameralism which was the study of systematic management of government became the specialty of Germany scholars in Western Europe even if in the East no academic institution christened public administration department ever existed. Simcox (2010) reminds us that in ancient China as far back as 124 BC, there was a University called Thai-hio which was dedicated on teaching public administration. Moreover, the teaching of the philosopher Confucius 500 B.C, not only laid the foundation for how Chinese administrators must think, feel and act but also impacted the meritocratic practices such as civil service examinations and human resource development through training which characterize modern governance the world over (Basheka, 2012). Later on, the system came to be known as the “Literati-bureaucratic tradition” (Bava, 2012). Equally, Raaad-schelders (1998) report the contribution of Kautilya in India and Ibn Khaldun in the Middle East in the development of the discipline.

Indeed, as Basheka (2012) posited that history ought to be an important tool for any discipline. It ought to be a “password” and “walking stick” for an elderly discipline like public administration which is credited to be more than 100 years old. Connoisseurs of public administration research quality must appreciate the fact that while the practice of public administration has ancient origins, the academic study of the discipline is not very old.

It started with Professor Von Stein in 1885 in Germany, who is considered to have been the father of the science of public administration, though plethora of public administration literature solely gives tribute and credit to Woodrow Wilson through his celebrated magnum opus published in 1887. Von Stein promoted the thinking that public administration is a multidisciplinary science which borrows from pre-established disciplines such as sociology, political science, administrative law and public finance. He insisted the use of theory and evaluation of public administration knowledge scientifically (Basheka, 2012).

In 1887, Wilson a professor of political science at Princeton University, published in the *Political Science Quarterly*

a magnum opus essay titled “The study of administration” pioneering the separation of politics from administration as the strategy for improving efficiency in the government. This erstwhile debate has continued to generate controversy in “rigor” and “relevance” to date.

The above theoretical and practical endeavors in tandem with that of those who might be called the founding fathers of public administration, mostly trained as political scientists led to the cradle of public administration as a field of enquiry under the aegis of political science (Stillman, 1980, cited in Oyadele, 2015).

Public Administration as an academic discipline has evolved through number of stages in chronology which are theoretically driven. This paper borrows Henry (2010) classifications and discusses them albeit in a nutshell.

#### **Stage one: Politics –Administration Dichotomy (1887-1926)**

This stage introduced Woodrow Wilson’s view of separation of politics from administration. Wilson propagated this view at the time when people were fed up with maladministration of various policies, rampant corruption and bureaucratic failures.

#### **Stage two: Principles of Public Administration (1927-1937)**

This stage was characterized with the same vigor of reinforcing wilsonian view of the dichotomy and evolves a rather value free science of management, with the belief that there are principles of administration which are common to all organizations and will work equally to bring out optimum efficiency (Oyadele, 2015).

#### **Stage three: Era of Challenges (1938-1947)**

During this era, the above principles of administration were seriously challenged. This era ushered in the human relations theory which emphasized on the human aspect of an organization as opposed to mechanistic view of administration.

#### **Stage four: Crises of Identity (1948-1970)**

This was during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century when the developing world was coming out of wars and colonization. The phase was characterized by the debate for revisiting the values of public administration. There was the pressure to reinvent the government in the United States, the debate led to the birth of the “New Public Management” (Waldo, 1994; Oyadele, 2015).

#### **Stage five: The Public Policy Perspectives (1971-onwards)**

Before the 1960s, the government was regarded as the central pillar of any society especially in delivery of essential public services (Basheka, 2012). However, by 1960s and 1970S, government were under torrent of attacks due to ineffective, inefficient and mismanagement. Governments resorted to public policy as a sure panacea to address public issues by instituting laws, regulations, policies, actions and decisions pertinent to the problems at hand (Oyadele, 2015). At this stage, the discipline revisited political science basis and management principles to see through the dynamics of the discipline and conduct. Our aim was not to dwell much into detailed discussions of the evolution of the study of public administration discipline. Instead it suffices to pause at this juncture and appreciate that the contributions made so far to the theory and practice of public administration are well known and well documented.

### **3.2 Previous Reviews of Public Administration Research**

There is a debate in the American public administration that lasted for two decades, the kernel of the debate was that public administration research not only fails to contribute to development of body of knowledge, but also fails to adhere to scientific rigor (See McCurdy and Cleary, 1984; Perry and Kraemer, 1986; White, 1991). The debate began with the article by McCurdy and Cleary published in the *Public Administration Review* of January/February, 1984. According to Box (1992:62), the article titled “Why Can’t We resolve the Research Issue in Public Administration?” signaled that all is not well with the state of public administration research. The concern for quality of public administration research was further exacerbated by several authors who joined the debate in the *Public Administration Review*, including among others, Perry and Kraemer (1986); Stallings and Ferris (1986); Houston and Delevan (1990); Hummel (1991) and Cleary (1992).

These authors made a thorough and rigorous analysis of the public administration dissertations and articles to assess the research quality. In 1984, for example McCurdy and Cleary for the first time evaluated the quality of 142 public administration doctoral dissertations written in 1981 by using the following criteria: research purpose, validity, testing of theory, causality, research topic and the impact of the topic. And issued the verdict that the majority of dissertations failed to meet the basic criteria, and therefore concluded that the quality of public administration research was lacking in methodological rigor far behind that of mainstream social sciences research (Box, 1992; Johnson *et al.*, 2009).

Similar verdict was issued two years later by White (1986) who evaluated 305 dissertations using similar criteria. On top of that White made a case for lack of published dissertations’ findings as a limiting factor in knowledge development of the discipline. Perry and Kraemer (1986), and Stallings and Ferris (1988) diverted the attention to quality of research

produced in the professional peer reviewed scholarly journals by evaluating the research articles published in the *Public Administration Review* (PAR). The two studies concluded that there was methodological deficiency, and most articles focused more on discussing the problems, issues, practices rather than developing or testing theories (Box, 1992).

Houston and Delevan (1990), went an extra mile to examine broader variety of journals, and report new findings that research was underfunded, non-empirical and lacked theoretical orientation, in turn they offered a proposal of employing more rigorous research designs to ameliorate the deficiency (Jonson, *et al.*, 2009). However, some scholars on the other side were optimistic about the state of the discipline. Thayer (1984), for example, strongly disagrees with McCurdy and Cleary's attempt to incline public administration research into a narrowly positivistic quantitative "straightjacket". Similarly, Cleary's (1992) article using dissertations abstracts of 1990 reported the improvement in the quality of research as compared to their initial work.

In Europe, Sanina, *et al.* (2016) examined the latest tendencies in Russian research on public administration from 2010 to 2014, as appeared in Russian academic journals using the criteria of topic of the articles, methodological design, and characteristics of the authors. The study revealed a number of problems in public administration research in Russia. Above all, the study discovered that the subject field of Russian public administration is still at the infancy stage of development borrowing some areas from sociology, political studies, economics and finance. Gauging these findings with the McCurdy and Cleary (1984) criteria, findings obtained so far fails almost all the tests. Moreover, most of the articles were problems-oriented, too narrative with lack of theoretical orientation and empirical back up (Sanina, *et al.*, 2016:13).

In Asia, Xun Wu, *et al.*, (2013), evaluated the public administration research from a sample of 2,877 articles published in six top public administration journals in mainland China and Taiwan between 1998 and 2008. Using the following criteria, authorship of the journal article, areas of public administration research, basic structure of the journal article, type of research (borrowing from Stallings and Ferris, 1990), research methods and use of relevant references, their analysis revealed shortcomings in research approaches and methods; lack of key structural components such as statement of research problem, literature review, research methods, analysis and conclusion in that most articles mainly focused on solving problems and lacked empirical analysis (Xun Wu, *et al.*, 2013:17).

### **3.3 African Reviews of Public Administration Research**

There is the dearth of empirical literature on state of public administration research in Africa (Mabin, 2003, 2004; Cameroon and McLaverty, 2008; Wessels, 2013). To revitalize the discipline foresight and progressive South African scholars convened the Mount Grace Initiative in 1991, which christened the African version of Minnowbrook Conference (Cameroon, 2008). The conference aimed at making transformation and changes of the teaching and research of public administration in South Africa (McLennan and Fitzgerald, 1992, Cameroon, 2008). To date the goals of the Mount Grace Initiative, are still far from being realized (Ibid).

Years later, Hubbell (1992) and Wessels (2006) attempted to empirically analyze public administration research (Cameroon and McLaverty, 2008). Hubbell's qualitative assessment of journals of public administration from 1986-1990, focusing on research topic concluded that most of the articles analyzed fell within functionalist perspectives and lacked critical analysis (ibid). Similarly, Wessels (2006) who studied articles from the journal of public administration from 2000 -2004 informed by the proposed unit standards for the Standards Generation Body for Public Administration and Management for National Qualification Framework (NQF) concluded that majority of the articles were practice oriented with little theory building because while close to 82% articles related to public service management and only four were devoted to public administration theory and research issues (Cameroon and McLaverty, 2008:77). The above relative little focus to the subject matter, theory, and methodology is an obvious symptom of "practice oriented research and theory- less empiricism dieses" (Wessels, 2006).

Moreover, Cameroon and McLaverty (2008) using a database of 383 articles from the *Journal of Public Administration* (JOPA) and *Administratio Publica* (AP) from 1994-2006, using the content analysis methodology and guided by six variables namely: research topic; research purpose; research methodology; research focus; research cumulativeness; and institutional funding concluded that, there has been little theory development in South African Public Administration and lack of development of the knowledge base in the discipline (Cameroon, 2008:91).

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Data Collection**

Data for this study was collected through content analysis of the published articles in the JOPL and the Uongozi, the *Journal of Management and Development Dynamics*. The main advantage of content analysis is that it reduces and simplifies data collected, while at the same time produces results that may then be measured quantitatively (Langos, 2014). Moreover, content analysis enables the researcher to structure qualitative data to attain the research objectives (ibid).

In this context, a total of 80 articles were used for analysis including 49 from JOPL and 31 from the *Uongozi* journal. The following five variables were invoked to examine the relevance of articles' contribution to the field: research topic; research purpose; research methodology; research focus; and institutional support (funding). The choice of these variables was motivated by their reliability as they have been widely used (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984; Adams and White, 1994; Perry and Kramer, 1986; Hubbell, 1992; Box, 1992; Wessels, 2005, 2006, Cameroon and McLaverty; 2008; Wu, *et al.*, 2013; Sanina, *et al.*, 2016).

#### **4.2 Variable 1: Research Topic**

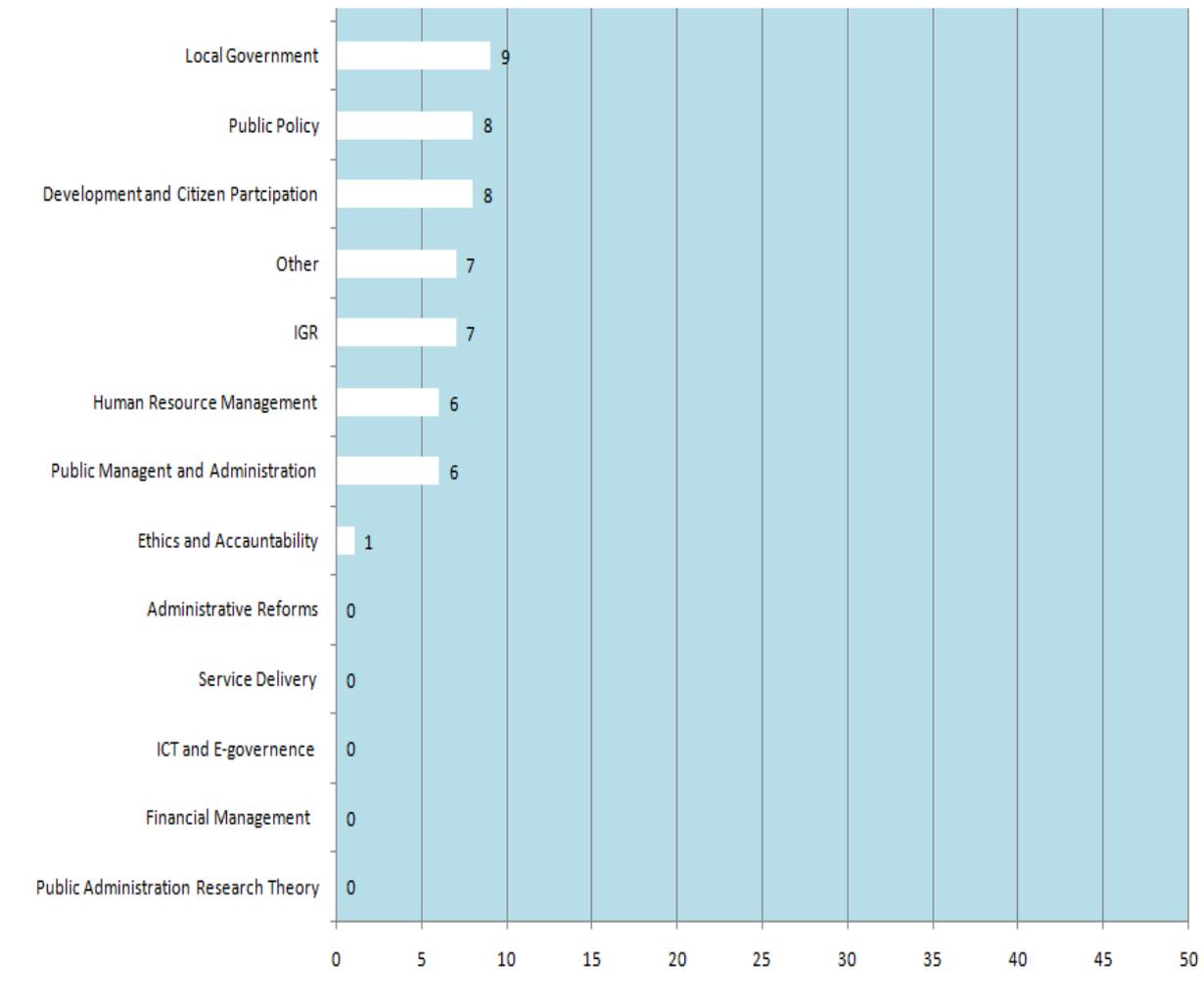
The author agrees with other researchers on the use of research topic central to the field because at an international level this criterion was used by Perry and Kraemer (1986), Stallings and Ferris (1988), Hubbel, 1992; Wessels, 2006 and Cameroon and McLaverty (2008). It is argued that this criterion should be applied first so as to establish whether an article contribute to theory generation. The author is aware of the problem of mutual exclusiveness of this variable (Perry and Kraemer, 1986), in that the same articles can be placed in number of categories. This was controlled by allocating the articles on the basis of their primary niche during the coding process (Cameroon and McLaverty, 2008). In order to operationalize this variable this study borrows Cameroon and McLaverty (2008) categorization of research topic including indicators outlined in Table 1 below per research topic.

**Table 1: Research topic categorization**

	<b>Research topic</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
1	Public administration research and theory	Public administration research Administrative theory Bureaucratic theory Organizational theory Research methodology
2	Administrative reform	Reorganization Transformation of the public service
3	Public management and administration	Generic public management Planning Organizing Controlling Leadership African political leadership Performance management
3	Public policy	Policy analysis Policy cycle Policy formulation Policy implementation Sectoral policies, housing, health
4	Ethics and accountability	Ethical questions Codes of conduct Anti-corruption strategies Transparency policies Accountability
5	Development and citizen participation	Public participation Public involvement Community development Environmental development
6	Human resource management	Labor relations Personnel management Wage-related issues Recruitment and selection Tenure Discipline
7	Financial management	Financial management Budgeting Auditing
8	Intergovernmental relations	Cooperative governance More than one sphere of government
9	Information and communication technology (ICT) and E-governance	ICT in the public sector E-governance
10	Service delivery	Improved service delivery Customer care Cost sharing
11	Local government	Decentralization by devolution Boundaries New structures Reallocation of service delivery responsibilities
12	Others	Globalization Informal economy International relations Federalism in other countries

Source: Cameroon and McLaverty (2008)

## 5. RESEARCH RESULTS



**Figure 1: Distribution of articles by primary subject matter in JOPL (N= 49)**

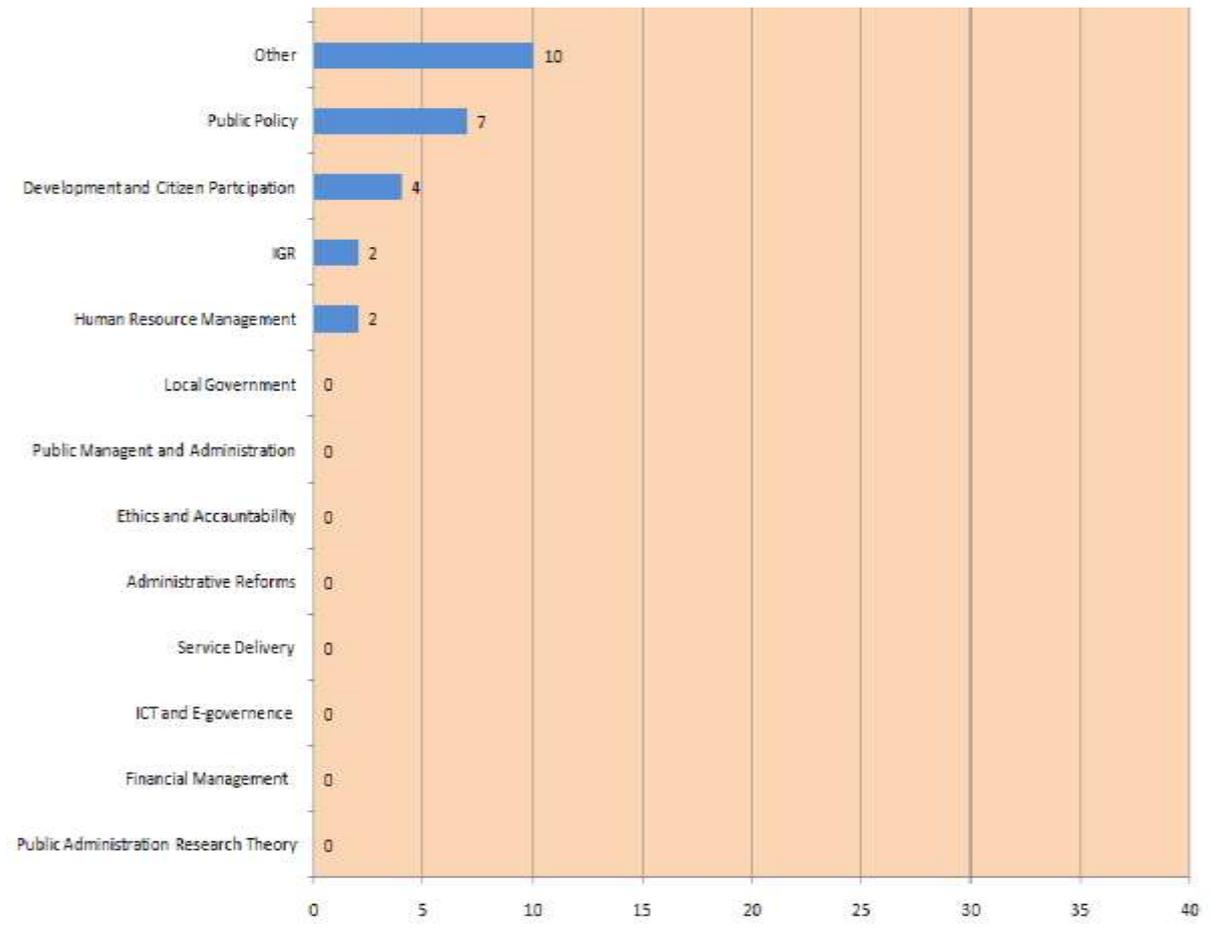


Figure 2: Distribution of articles by primary subject matter in the *Uongozi* (N= 31)

### 5.1 Findings versus Variable 1: Research Topic

The above findings indicate that there has been a wider coverage of topics in public administration. This can be explained by the fact that the subject matter has been evenly covered in the JOPL and the *Uongozi* journal. Despite the variation by and large both journals mostly closely share the following topics: public policy and other miscellaneous topics that are beyond the public administration mainstream. In this study, public policy scored 16% (JOPL) and 23% (*Uongozi*). This indicates that public policy and other miscellaneous topics were more researched. The above findings can be associated with scope of the journal especially the *Uongozi* journal which is dedicated to management issues and broader issues of development dynamics. This gives the authors flexibility to venture into other current development issues.

Other research themes covered in the JOPL includes: local government (18%); development and citizen participation (16%); intergovernmental relations (14%); human resource management (12%); public management and administration (12%); and ethics and accountability (2%). In the *Uongozi* journal the following sub-categories were covered: development and citizen participation (13%); intergovernmental relations (6%); and human resource management (6%). Comparatively JOPL covered more topics in the mainstream than the *Uongozi* journal.

In conclusion, public administration research and theory was not covered by both journals (0%) JOPL and (0%) the *Uongozi* journal, yet this is the most important yardstick in measuring public administration knowledge development.

### 5.2 Findings versus Variable 2: Research Purpose

This variable was equally used before by Stallings and Ferris (1986), Wessels (2006) and Cameroon and McLaverty (2008). The variable answers the question, ‘what was the purpose of the study or research?’ This study follows Wessels (2006) categorization which argues that common purposes in social sciences include (a) explore (b) describe (c) explain (d) describe, explain and empower (e) understand (e) reflect on.

**Table 2: Distribution of articles according to research purpose in JOPL and *Uongozi* (N=80)**

Variable		JOPL(N=49)		<i>Uongozi</i> (N=31)		Total (N=80)
Research Purpose		Number	%	Number	%	%
a	To explore	20	41%	17	55%	46.25%
b	To describe	6	12%	2	6%	10%
	To explain	10	20%	6	19%	20%
d	To empower	–	–	–	–	–
e	To understand	8	16%	5	16%	16.25%
f	To reflect	4	8%	2	6%	7.5%

Table 2 above, presents the research intention of the articles published in both journals. The findings obtained indicate a close to half (41%) of the articles published in JOPL and (55%) in the *Uongozi* journal were exploratory researches. However, there were some exceptions, for example while (12%) of the articles aimed at making description, (20%) intended to make explanation, (16%) intended to demonstrate understanding and (8%) intended to make reflection in the JOPL, whereas in the *Uongozi* journal (6%) of articles were descriptive, (19%) explanatory, (16%) demonstrated understanding and (6%) were reflective. In general, the most popular research purpose in both journals appears to be exploration. This indicates that most researches in the two journals were largely formative delving on conceptualization of researchable problems suggesting domination of descriptive and normative researches.

### 5.3 Findings versus Variable 3: Research Methodology

The purpose of an article can only be achieved by using a valid and rigorous research design of the research process (Wessels, 2006). Hence this variable reflects the general plan or the blueprint of an enquiry used in public administration research as it answers the question: ‘what methodologies are employed to conduct public administration research?’ (Cameroon and McLaverty, 2008). This study concurs with Babie and Mouton’s (2001) classification of the research design, and therefore invoked “empirical and non-empirical” lenses to evaluate articles appraised placing great emphasis on the use of primary data, existing and non-empirical ones (Wessels, 2006).

**Table 3: Distribution of articles according to research method in JOPL and the *Uongozi* (N=80)**

S/N	Variable	JOPL (N=49)		<i>Uongozi</i> (N=31)			Total (N=80) 100%
		#	%	Research Design	#	%	%
a	Empirical: Primary data	23	47%	Empirical: Primary data	19	61%	52.5% (N=42 out of 80)
b	Empirical: Existing data	23	47%	Empirical: Existing data	8	26%	38.75% (N=31 out of 80)
c	Non-Empirical	6	12%	Non-Empirical	4	13%	12.5% (N=10 out of 80)

Table 3 above indicates that 47% of articles published in JOPL and 61% of articles published in the *Uongozi* journal were based on empirical research designs using primary data, and 47% of articles published in JOPL and 26% of articles published in the *Uongozi* journal were also empirical researches based on existing data. Moreover, 12% of articles published in JOPL and 13% of articles published in the *Uongozi* journal were non-empirical. The above findings indicate that significant numbers of articles published in both journals (73 out of 80 articles representing 91.25%) were based on empirical data using primary data and this is why the majority of articles were descriptive researches. Besides that, 6 non-empirical articles which represented 12.5% aimed at demonstrating reflection and theoretical reviews.

### 5.4 Findings versus Variable 4: Research Focus

This variable measure the impact of a study on which the article is based (Perry and Kraemer, 1986; Cameroon and McLaverty, 2008). In order to operationalize this variable, this study was guided by the following questions which were posed by McCurdy and Cleary (1984); White (1986) and Wessels (2006):

- Does the study strengthen or weaken existing theory?
- Does it test the hypothesis or develop a model?
- Does it determine the causal relationships?
- Does it improve the practical relevance of research?
- Does it develop new questions or create new experience (s)?

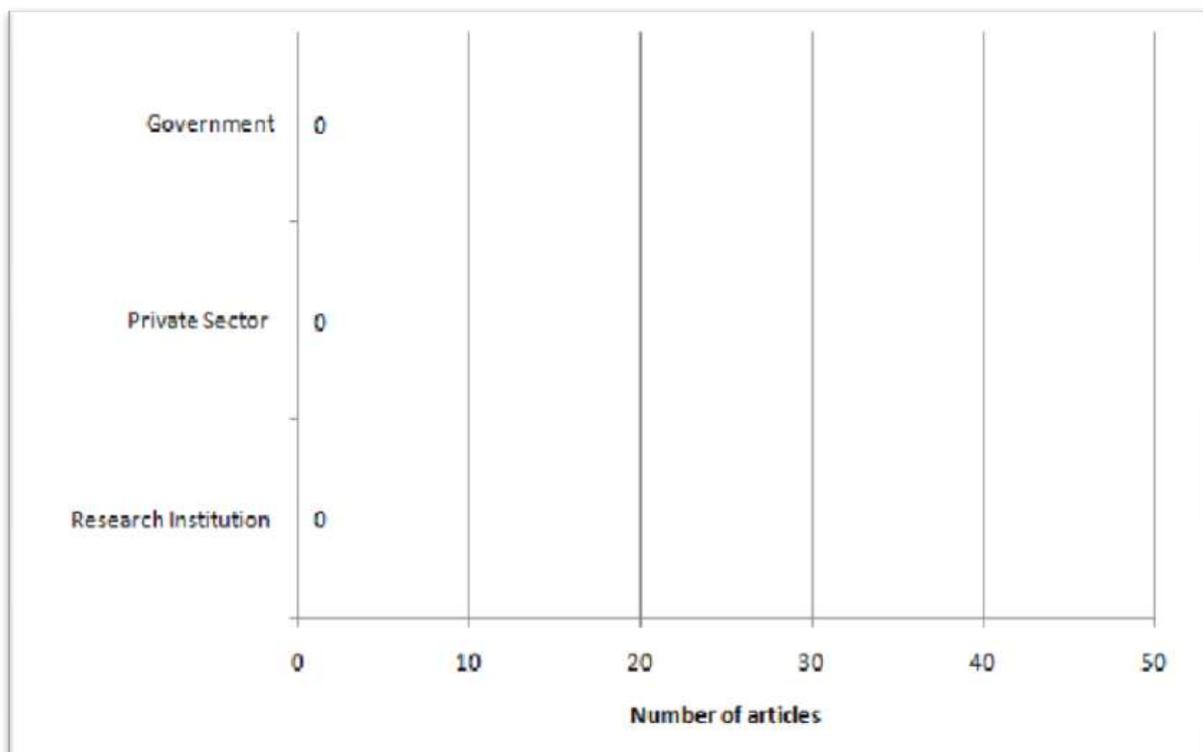
**Table 4: Distribution of articles according to research focus in JOPL (N=49) and *Uongozi* (N=31)**

Variables		JOPL (N=49)		<i>Uongozi</i> (N=31)			Total (N=80) 100%
Research Focus		Number	%	Research Focus	Number	%	%
a	Strengthen/weaken theory	1	2%	Strengthen/weaken theory	–	–	1.25%
b	Test hypothesis/model	7	14%	Test hypothesis/model	7	23%	17.5%
c	Causal relationships	1	2%	Causal relationships	2	6%	3.75%
d	Practical relevance	28	57%	Practical relevance	16	52%	55%
e	New questions and experience (s)	12	24%	New questions and experience (s)	6	19%	22.5%

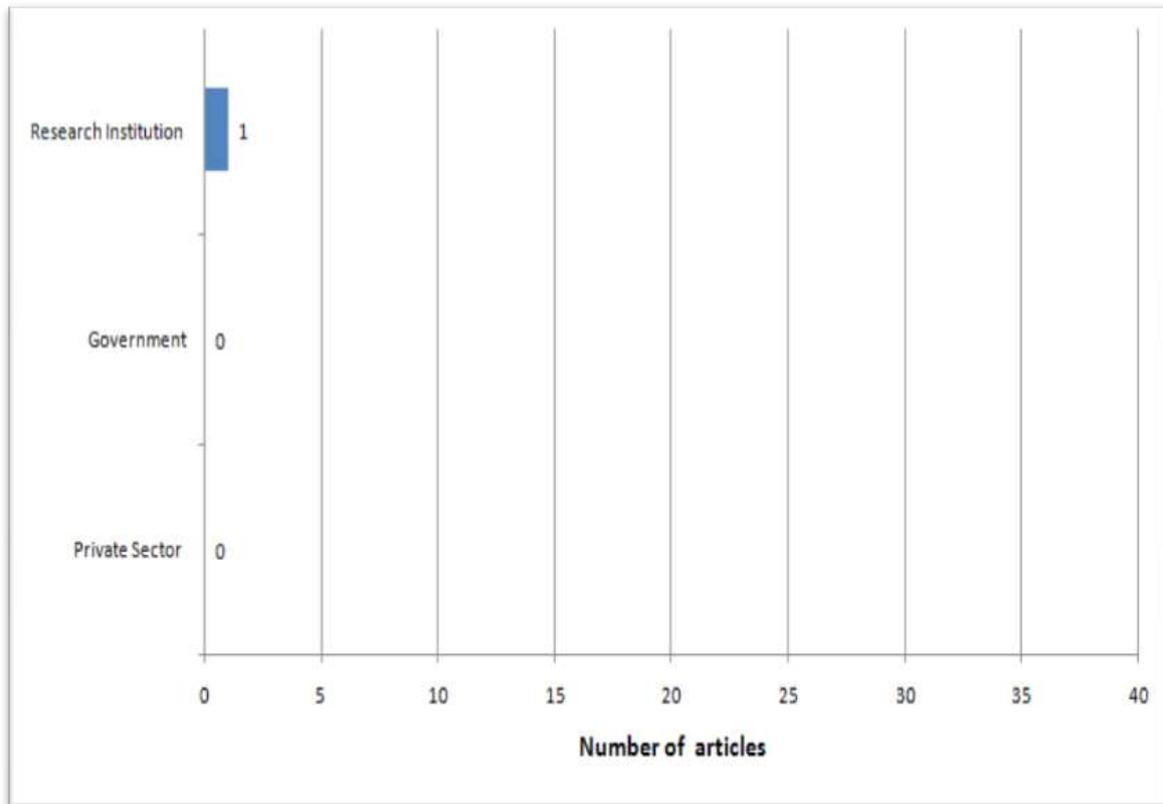
Table 4 above, indicates that significant number of published articles 57% in JOPL and 52% in the *Uongozi* journal had practical relevance. 24% in JOPL and 19% in the *Uongozi* journal proposed new research questions demanding further researches and 14% of articles published in JOPL and 23% of articles published in the *Uongozi* journal used established models to test hypothesis put forward. Besides that, 2% of articles published in JOPL and 23% of articles published in the *Uongozi* journal were outputs of causal researches showing cause-effect results or confirming causal relationships. Out of all 80 articles only 2% of articles published in JOPL intended to improve existing theories. In the main, the findings obtained indicate that the majority of articles were practical problem-solving oriented.

**5.5 Findings versus Variable 5: Institutional Support**

Public administration research is the product of norms and institutionalized incentives (Perry and Kraemer, 1986). Existing literature points to the dearth of institutional support and funding in public administration research (Cameroon and McLaverty, 2008). For this reason, this variable answer the question on the frequency of funding for public administration researches.



**Figure 3: Distribution of articles by institutional support in JOPL (N=49)**



**Figure 4: Distribution of articles by institutional support in *Uongozi* (N=31)**

The above findings reveal that out of all 80 articles, only 3.2% of articles published in the *Uongozi* journal received institutional support. Despite this little institutional support number of articles recommended for further researches accounted for 24% in JOPL and 19% in the *Uongozi* journal an indication of the need for more funding for undertaking more empirical researches.

## 6. DISCUSSIONS

From triangulation of the findings obtained from appraisal of five analytical variables: research topic; research purpose; research methodology; research focus; and institutional support one can confidently conclude that despite having topical public administration articles in both journals there has been very little theory development in the discipline of Tanzania public administration. These findings confirm findings obtained by studies conducted in South Africa by Cameroon and McLaverty (2008), Hubbel (1992) and Wessels (2006).

Specific analysis of the same variables attests to this conclusion, most articles were largely formative delving for conceptualization of researchable problems indicating the dominance of descriptive researches. Most of the articles with descriptive purposes employed research designs based on both primary and secondary data. 32% of the articles published in both journals aimed at understanding the meanings (or interpretive). Thus, the latter were largely non-empirical, reflective and theoretical.

Also, the significant number of 44 out of 80 articles representing 55% were practically oriented which limits theory development and testing. 14 out of 80 articles representing 17.5% of all articles in the study were aimed at testing the theory or models and 3 out of 80 articles representing 3.75% intended to confirm the causal relationships. It is pathetic to note that only 1 out of 80 articles representing 1.25% of all articles published by the JOPL aimed at improving the theories.

Sadly, it was also discouraging to learn that there was very little institutional support as only 3.2% articles published in the *Uongozi* journal received funding. This illustrates the dearth of government and other stakeholders' support to public administration research. Yet, 43% of the articles appraised in the study called for the need for further researches in their conclusions.

## 7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The author has attempted to assess public administration research in Tanzanian context and has concluded that there has been very little theory development in the discipline in Tanzania public administration researches. Given the above

findings this article holds that the earlier conclusions drawn by McCurdy and Cleary (1984); Stalling (1994); White (1994); Huston and Delevan (1994) and Cameroon and McLaverty (2008), Hubbell (1992) and Wessels (2006) in the United States of America and South Africa are also valid in Tanzanian context. Several reasons can explain prevalence of the above situation.

First and foremost, the discipline itself still lacks common theoretical framework or paradigm which is acceptable globally. As Thornhill (2006) aptly put the discipline is still an eclectic science and borrows theories and concepts from other disciplines such as political science, psychology, sociology and business management.

Second, the Public Sector Reform Programmes (PSRP) in Tanzania created a niche for lucrative and juicy consulting assignments which diverted the attention of published public administration scholars from academic research to management consultancies. Third, continual siphoning of senior scholars from the universities and research institutions to join the civil service (Ministries) has escalated the problem of lack of theory development in public administration researches.

Unless the following interventions are undertaken, a lodestar to the promised land of public administration theory will be fogged.

First, funding for public administration research should be improved. Second, Universities, public administration schools and departments should introduce research methodology mentorship programmes to equip the junior researchers with relevant research skills and competencies, this can also be done through strategic alliances with other institutions within Tanzania and from abroad where the junior researchers could spend their sabbatical leaves at other well established public administration institutions. Third, public administration journals could be instrumental in resurrecting the discipline by raising the standard of scholarship through rigorous peer-reviews of articles they publish.

## 8. REFERENCES

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