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**PRELIMINARY SYNOPSIS OF OECD SYMPOSIUM
GOVERNMENT OF THE FUTURE: GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE**

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**PRELIMINARY SYNOPSIS OF OECD SYMPOSIUM:
GOVERNMENT OF THE FUTURE: GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE**

OVERVIEW

1. The OECD Symposium, "Government of the Future: Getting from Here to There" was held on 14-15 September 1999. For the Symposium, PUMA brought together 80 high-level reformers from OECD countries to look at the future shape of government reform.
2. There is not one correct approach to reform. Reform efforts in the 29 OECD countries range from fundamental review of the role of government to small, incremental changes in public processes. The Symposium sought to look at some of the new challenges governments face and to provoke countries to re-examine the goals and strategies of reform to achieve stronger links between reform activities and outcomes.
3. In order to stimulate frank discussion, PUMA used 9 country case studies and presentations by both academics and practitioners who have been working on public reform. These documents are currently available on PUMA's website (<http://www.oecd.org/puma/>).
4. PUMA is currently preparing a publication based on the Symposium findings. The following is a draft presentation of some of the preliminary themes identified from the Symposium:

WHY PUBLIC MANAGEMENT REFORM?

Government needs to keep up with society

5. The purpose of reform is to make government more *responsive* to society's needs. People want government that does more and costs less. Much of current public reform is an effort to meet society's needs by providing *better, faster and more services* from government.
6. But does the public just want more of the same services? The public's needs are rapidly changing as societies become more diverse, complex and fragmented. Technological advances and more knowledgeable citizenry create new opportunities and expectations. The pace of change is faster than ever so that governments cannot rely on one fixed set of solutions, but instead must learn to listen to ever-changing demands and innovate to find solutions. As old industries and social trends fade and new ones take their place, governments need to be ready to take on *new roles* in response to *changing needs*.

Government's role is changing under new pressures

7. As society changes, government's role in society is also changing. People are relating to government in different ways. Government has become just one player among many seeking to represent

and serve the public. The *loss of the government monopoly* on services means that the public sector faces greater *competition*.

8. Government is also exposed to a much greater array of outside forces. Greater *economic interdependence*, the *opening up of societies* and the growing importance of *international structures and agreements* mean that the outside forces impacting society are more complex, multi-source and multi-dimensional than ever before. These changes strike at the very heart of the identity of the nation-state, and governments must adapt their reform efforts to this changing world. In order to understand and serve the public, national governments must act as better mediators, co-ordinators, policy-makers, and regulators, *in concert with other centres of power*, including international and sub-national levels of government, the media, industry and non-profit groups.

Government needs to re-build trust

9. But in the face of a changing society, government seems to keep doing things the same old way. The belief that government is out of touch with people's needs has decreased the public's trust in government. In order to keep up with expectations, government must take a pro-active approach to problem solving by anticipating the public's desires and making changes in how it does business in order to meet those desires. Government needs to re-earn the public's trust by providing more choice, democracy and transparency. Government also needs to work with the political sphere to reappraise the types of services it provides and how it provides them.

10. Finally, government needs to communicate its messages to citizens. An increasingly fragmented and diverse society means that government must find new ways to connect with citizens. Government must make the most of opportunities to communicate one-on-one with its constituents through new technologies and new forums of communication (Internet, cable television, etc.) and to create a new connection with the public that fits its changing role.

HOW TO DO PUBLIC MANAGEMENT REFORM

Determine a reform agenda that meets citizen's needs

11. Determining the shape of reform depends on government's ability to anticipate the public's needs. Currently, most public reform is not developed in anticipation of needs, but rather in response to crises that arise when those needs are unmet (as well as in response to unforeseeable developments). The challenge to government is to move away from opportunistic reform towards more *strategic reform*. Strategic reform involves developing a *clear vision*, building a *constituency*, planning *tactics* to achieve *outcomes* and *communicating* the vision and anticipated outcomes to *stakeholders* and the public at large.

12. A common vision serves to unify political leaders, senior officials, front-line workers and the general public. It also provides a guideline for choosing goals, for developing strategies to achieve those goals, and for measuring results. In order to articulate a common vision, government must consult with stakeholders and bring together their many, varied visions.

13. The task of consultation is not an easy one. Government needs to gain support for reform from other centres of power -- especially political leaders -- and to work with them to identify a public agenda out of diverse interests. It also needs to educate its citizens about the stakes of reform. The public is interested in the results of reform, not necessarily in the process. Gaining public support for reform means

not only choosing an agenda that the public cares about, but also earning the public's trust that government actions will lead to positive results.

Communicate to Build Constituencies for Reform

14. Communication is the means by which government helps stakeholders feel ownership in the reform process. In order to gain the public's trust, government must communicate the *need for reform*, the *process of reform*, and *reform successes*. Communicating this message is the responsibility of both government officials and political leaders.

15. Communicating the *need for reform* involves transmitting the *values* and *goals* that underlie the reform vision and *identifying* and addressing the public's *fears*. A compelling statement of values creates an emotional connection with the public by reflecting its own desires, and helps government workers overcome bureaucratic self-interest in order to change behaviour. Communicating the *process of reform* helps government workers understand their role in reform and maintain the cohesion of reform efforts. It also provides a *timeline* for achieving results. Communicating *reform successes* serves to build public confidence and to maintain the momentum of reform efforts by bolstering political and public support.

16. The key to successful communication is to use *simple, everyday language* that focuses on *results* in the form of improved *service outcomes*. Government should avoid reform "buzzwords" or jargon that lack both content and meaning for the public and confuse the relationship between actions and outcomes. The reform message must be honest, pointing out the potential costs and inconveniences of reform, and should not overpromise outcomes.

Create a change culture by changing behaviour

17. Reform should seek long-term change in government's behaviour by *changing organisational culture*. *Incentives* need to be built into reform efforts so that government workers are rewarded for actions and outcomes that are consistent with reform goals. Government must foster *co-operation* rather than co-ordination by reducing the segmentation of tasks and putting the emphasis on *global performance*.

18. Governments are evolving away from purely hierarchical systems towards a more "*webbed*" *model* in response to demands for service and greater responsiveness. Reform efforts need to keep in mind that structural changes are geared at changing bureaucratic behaviour and are not ends in and of themselves. Structural changes should foster *leadership, innovation, flexibility* and *accountability* for results.

19. Each country has a different institutional model for providing the capacity to drive reform. The more decentralised the system, the more important it is to have both formal and informal channels of communication in order to maintain *cohesion* in the reform process.

20. Finally, governments can avoid reform fatigue by gaining stakeholder buy-in, rewarding innovative and responsive behaviour and communicating successful outcomes. Instead of continuous reform, governments need to evolve organisations that can *adapt to change*.

Stay the path by fostering champions of reform

21. Leaders within government are key to bridging the gap between the development and the implementation of reform, and OECD countries have used leaders at many different levels of government

as drivers of reform. The public sector presents unique challenges for leadership. Changing missions and hazy vision confuse expectations for reform and for leaders. Public scrutiny and risk adverse organisations limit leaders' freedom. They are asked to continue reform during changes in the political environment.

22. On the other hand, public sector reform is allowing new, more flexible leaders to emerge. Organisations need to focus explicitly on *leadership development* by identifying and training leaders. Government needs to provide *incentives* for leadership by *encouraging innovation and rewarding successes* and by giving potential leaders the opportunity to *develop leadership skills* on the job. Leaders should be held accountable for outcomes, but also be allowed to make mistakes.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

23. As society continues to change rapidly, the solutions of the past are no longer sufficient. Not only is there no "one-size-fits-all" solution across countries, but countries must also learn to use reform to create institutions that can constantly adapt to changes in their own societies and to changing outside forces. The Symposium raised many important reform questions. These questions are useful both for practitioners to consider when engaging in reform and for further research and reflection on how to better meet coming challenges through public reform.

Learn to be more responsive:

- How can government be more pro-active by anticipating citizen demands?
- How can government re-examine it's own role in addition to improving public management and service delivery?
- How can government improve co-ordination and consultation with other centres of power?
- How can government better gain citizens' trust by allowing choice and demonstrating results?

Focus the reform agenda around a common vision:

- How can government better determine society's needs through new ways of consultation?
- How can government better reconcile competing stakeholder interests to develop a common vision?
- How can government increase political support for reform?

Improve connection with citizens:

- How can government build a better case for reform through communication?
- How can government better educate the public about reform?
- How can government make the most of new forums of communication?

Create a change culture and foster leadership for reform:

- How can government better integrate incentives to innovate into the public service?
- How can government better manage towards global outcomes?
- How can government ensure that structural changes are consistent with reform values?
- How can government improve internal co-operation?
- How can government better advance reform values by fostering leadership?

Attachment

I. Why Public Management Reform?

- A. Government needs to keep up with society. Not vice versa.
 - 1) Societies are more diverse, complex, & fragmented.
 - 2) Economic pressures reduce resources while increasing demands.
 - 3) Media and education drive perceptions of government quality, accountability, trust.
 - 4) Technological advances create new opportunities and expectations.
 - 5) Simply providing more of the same services is not enough.

- B. Government has to learn new roles.
 - 1) Government no longer has a monopoly on services: innovate or perish.
 - 2) Government needs to compete to provide services.
 - 3) Government needs to co-ordinate policymaking among different players.
 - 4) Government needs to regulate services that it no longer provides.
 - 5) Government needs to co-ordinate with sub-national and extra-national organisations.
 - 6) Collapse of ideology creates opportunities for reform, but eliminates stock answers.

- C. Re-establish trust in government.
 - 1) Take a pro-active approach to meeting the public's needs.
 - 2) Introduce choice as a way to build trust.
 - 3) Provide greater democracy and transparency.
 - 4) Communicate reform values.
 - 5) Lost opportunity becomes a liability.

II. How to do Public Management Reform

- A. Determine a reform agenda that meets citizens' needs
 - 1) Crises offer opportunities for reform, but strategic reform brings lasting change.
 - a) Develop a clear vision of reform.
 - b) Build a constituency.
 - c) Choose goals.
 - d) Plan tactics to achieve outcomes.
 - 2) Subsidiarity: set the agenda from the bottom up.
 - 3) Does government just listen or does it influence public opinion?
 - 4) Educate the public about preventative reform.
 - 5) Gain political commitment.

- B. Communicate to build constituencies for reform
 - 1) Communicate to help stakeholders feel ownership in the reform process.
 - a) Communication as a tool for change.
 - b) Communicate up, down, and all around.
 - c) Secure commitment from politicians.
 - d) Help public servants weather change.

- e) Catch the public's attention.
- 2) Learn the language of reform to connect with citizens.
 - a) Communication, not propaganda.
 - b) Connect on an emotion level.
 - c) No more buzzwords.
 - d) Which comes first: words or action?
 - e) Don't overpromise.
- C. Create a change culture by changing behaviour
 - 1) Build incentives into reform: make it worthwhile to take risks.
 - 2) Change incentives for bureaucracies. (co-operation instead of co-ordination)
 - 3) Aim towards comprehensive reform.
 - 4) Be ready to seize opportunities.
 - 5) Develop capacity for reform.
 - 6) Make sure one hand knows what the other is doing.
- D. Work to avoid reform fatigue.
 - 1) How do you keep agencies from backsliding?
 - 2) Create ownership of reform: feedback and consultation.
 - 3) Transmit reform values.
 - 4) Learn from the past. (past reforms, evaluation)
 - 5) Instead of continuous reform, make change part of "business as usual".
- E. Stay the path by fostering champions of reform.
 - 1) Bridge the gap between developing and implementing reform.
 - 2) Change agents transmit reform values and strategies.
 - 3) Commit to identifying and developing future leaders.
 - 4) Encourage mentoring, training, and mobility.
 - 5) Learn by doing.
 - 6) Build on the ethos of public service. (Value emotional intelligence and emphasise values.)
 - 7) Don't confuse technical or management skills with leadership.
 - 8) Better feedback makes better leaders.

III. Where Do We Go From Here?

- A. Learn to be more responsive
- B. Focus the reform agenda around a common vision
- C. Improve connection with citizens
- D. Create a change culture and foster leadership for reform