

Review of: "Procurement Planning & the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC)"

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The paper aims to illustrate the impact of modifications in the procurement planning practice on procurement outcomes at the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC). In what follows, I shall first briefly describe the relevance of the research question and then why the authors did not keep their promises.

Procurement processes normally comprise a variety of heterogeneous activities, each one playing an important role in achieving the buyer's or the procuring entity's goal(s). Following the procurement timeline, among the earliest activities, procurement planning stands out as a crucial one. In the [OECD Principles for Integrity in Public Procurement](#), it reads:

“Procurement planning and related expenditures are key to reflecting a long-term and strategic view of government needs. Governments should

link public procurement with public financial management systems to foster transparency and accountability as well as improve value for money. Oversight institutions such as internal control and internal audit bodies, supreme audit institutions, or parliamentary committees should monitor the management of public funds to verify that needs are adequately estimated and public funds are used according to the purpose intended.” (p. 27)

Although the OECD principle applies to the government as a whole, it is not difficult to adapt it to ~~any~~ ^{any} procuring entity. Procurement planning relates both to public finance management and to market engagement. Indeed, procurement planning informs the “relevant” market(s) about how much a procuring entity is likely to spend in a given period of time as well as the nature of the procuring entity's needs. This will have, in turn, an impact on participation patterns, the degree of competition, and eventually, on value for money. Evaluating the appropriateness of the choices made at each stage of the just-described process is a way of assessing, albeit partially, the goodness of procurement strategies.

This is not exactly the route undertaken by the authors for the following reasons:

1. Procurement planning at the RBC has been extensively criticised. The authors merely hint at one report and one newspaper article without providing any detail. The reader is then left wondering where the problems come from.
2. The definition of procurement planning seems to be an all-inclusive one, comprising also crucial elements of the tender design (e.g., the evaluation of financial and non-financial bid dimensions). Since there does not exist a universally precise definition of “procurement planning,” I believe the authors are entitled to use whatever definition suits their goal. The problem is that the more dimensions are squeezed into the box of procurement planning, the more

challenging it is to spot what is responsible for what, namely which specific element is likely to have an impact on the final outcome.

3. The worries stated in the previous point seem to be pointless, though. Performance evaluation is carried out by asking personnel about cost and quality dimensions. **Basically, the interviewees expressed their personal opinions on matters that would rather require a much more objective analysis.** Objective analysis simply means comparing measurable variables before and after a policy is implemented. One need not do extremely sophisticated things. It would suffice to consider a simple good (e.g., gloves or masks) or service (e.g., bed sheets cleaning and sanitation). However, some **measurable KPIs** do need to be provided.