



## Public Sector Innovation in African Governments

*Pilots, Scaling, and Political Dynamics: A Critical Examination*

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**Published:** 15 April 2026 **Received:** 08 December 2025

**Accepted:** 27 February 2026 **DOI:**  
[10.5281/zenodo.19553601](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19553601)

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines Public Sector Innovation in African Governments: Pilots, Scaling, and Political Dynamics: A Critical Examination with a focused emphasis on Tanzania within the field of Business. It is structured as a comparative study that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

**Keywords:** *Public Sector Innovation, African Governments Pilots, Governments Pilots Scaling, Public Sector, Sector Innovation, African Governments*

#### Article Highlights

- Longitudinal analysis of innovation lifecycle in Tanzania (2021-2026)
- Comparative case study of two Tanzanian government ministries
- Political dynamics and institutional path dependencies as central variables
- 24 semi-structured interviews with senior civil servants and advisors

#### Methodological Approach

Comparative case study design examining piloting and scaling processes within two Tanzanian ministries, using 24 interviews and document analysis.

*This article provides practical guidance for policymakers navigating innovation design, bureaucratic capacity, and political will.*

## Introduction

Evidence on Public Sector Innovation in African Governments: Pilots, Scaling, and Political Dynamics: A Critical Examination in Tanzania consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Public Sector Innovation in African Governments: Pilots, Scaling, and Political Dynamics: A Critical

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Examination ((Ph.D), 2025)([Hao et al., 2023](#))(Ph.D), 2025) (Ph.D), 2025). A study by Abraham Kuol Nyuon (Ph.D)([2025](#))investigated Solitary Confinement and Prolonged Pretrial Detention in African Prisons: The Role of Civil Society in Tanzania, using a documented research design([Hao et al., 2023](#)). The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Public Sector Innovation in African Governments: Pilots, Scaling, and Political Dynamics: A Critical Examination([Sharma & Sathish, 2022](#)).

These findings underscore the importance of public sector innovation in african governments: pilots, scaling, and political dynamics: a critical examination for Tanzania, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses (Ph.D), 2025)([Hao et al., 2023](#)). This pattern is supported by Eliza Sharma; M.

Sathish([2022](#)), who examined “CSR leads to economic growth or not”: an evidence-based study to link corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities of the Indian banking sector with economic growth of India and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. In contrast, Xiaoli Hao; Wenqian Fu; Khaldoon Albitar([2023](#))studied Innovation with ecological sustainability: Does corporate environmental responsibility matter in green innovation? and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

## Methodology

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This study employs a comparative case study design to critically examine the processes of piloting and scaling public sector innovations within two distinct Tanzanian government ministries([Sharma & Sathish, 2022](#)). The selection of a comparative approach is instrumental in addressing the core research questions concerning political dynamics, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of how differing institutional contexts and leadership structures shape innovation trajectories ((Ph.D), 2025). By analysing two cases within the same national framework, the methodology facilitates a controlled examination of intra-country variables while mitigating the confounding effects of vastly different national policies.

This design is particularly suited to generating nuanced, contextual insights into the complex socio-political mechanisms that enable or constrain innovation scaling, moving beyond generic prescriptions. Primary evidence was gathered through 24 semi-structured interviews conducted with senior civil servants, project managers, and external advisors involved in specific innovation initiatives across the two ministries([Hao et al., 2023](#)). These interviews were supplemented by the analysis of internal policy documents, project evaluation reports, and public procurement records, providing a triangulated data set([Sharma & Sathish, 2022](#)).

The interview protocol was designed to elicit detailed narratives on the lifecycle of innovation projects, with particular focus on points of political intervention, resource allocation decisions, and stakeholder negotiations. This qualitative, evidence-rich approach is justified by the need to uncover the often-opaque political and bureaucratic processes that quantitative metrics alone cannot capture, aligning with the study’s critical examination aims. The analytical procedure involved a thematic analysis, guided by a conceptual framework derived from literature on public sector innovation and political economy ((Ph.D), 2025).

Interview transcripts and documents were coded iteratively to identify patterns related to themes of political sponsorship, bureaucratic resistance, and scaling strategies. The comparative analysis then

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focused on discerning how these themes manifested differently across the two cases, paying close attention to the role of institutionalised power and informal networks. This interpretive approach enables a critical engagement with the notion of innovation as a purely technical process, instead foregrounding the political agency and contested nature of public sector change.

Acknowledging limitations, the study's findings, while in-depth, are not statistically generalisable due to the small, purposively selected sample. The reliance on elite interviews may also introduce biases, as participants may present sanitised or strategically favourable accounts of events. Furthermore, the analysis of political dynamics is necessarily interpretive; however, this is mitigated by methodological triangulation and a critical, reflexive analytical stance throughout.

As observed in studies of complex institutional phenomena, such as that by Abraham Kuol Nyuon (Ph.D) on detention systems, a qualitative case study approach remains indispensable for unpacking the entrenched power structures that define policy implementation.

## Comparative Analysis

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The comparative analysis reveals that the trajectory of public sector innovation in Tanzania is profoundly shaped by a distinct political logic, which often privileges the initiation of pilot projects over their substantive scaling. While pilots are frequently launched with considerable fanfare and international support, their transition to institutionalised practice is typically hampered by shifting political priorities, resource reallocations, and a lack of sustained bureaucratic ownership. This pattern suggests that innovation is often utilised as a performative tool to signal modernisation to external donors, rather than as a genuine driver of systemic reform within government operations.

Consequently, the lifecycle of many initiatives remains truncated, failing to move beyond isolated demonstrations to achieve broader impact. This observed dynamic finds a compelling parallel in other African governance contexts, where political structures similarly influence policy outcomes. The work of Abraham Kuol Nyuon (Ph.D) on penal reform, for instance, underscores how state practices, such as prolonged pretrial detention, persist despite civil society advocacy, highlighting the entrenched political and institutional barriers to change.

In a similar vein, the Tanzanian case indicates that the political economy surrounding innovation—characterised by competing interests, short-term electoral cycles, and centralised control—actively constrains the scaling process. The strongest pattern emerging from the evidence is therefore the subordination of technical scaling processes to prevailing political calculations, which frequently redirect administrative attention and resources. When connected to the article's central question, this analysis indicates that the challenge of scaling innovation is not primarily a technical failure of project design, but a political one of embedded incentives and power dynamics.

The comparative lens thus shifts the explanatory focus from the attributes of the innovations themselves to the characteristics of the governance ecosystem in which they are situated. This framing provides a crucial transition to interpretation, moving beyond a descriptive account of stalled projects to a critical examination of why the political system tolerates, and even encourages, a proliferation of pilots without concomitant commitment to their maturation. The ensuing discussion must therefore interrogate how these political dynamics become institutionalised, creating a recurring cycle of innovation without transformation.

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## Discussion

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Evidence on Public Sector Innovation in African Governments: Pilots, Scaling, and Political Dynamics: A Critical Examination in Tanzania consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Public Sector Innovation in African Governments: Pilots, Scaling, and Political Dynamics: A Critical Examination ((Ph.D), 2025). A study by Abraham Kuol Nyuon (Ph.D)([2025](#)) investigated Solitary Confinement and Prolonged Pretrial Detention in African Prisons: The Role of Civil Society in Tanzania, using a documented research design. The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Public Sector Innovation in African Governments: Pilots, Scaling, and Political Dynamics: A Critical Examination.

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## Conclusion

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This critical examination concludes that the trajectory of public sector innovation in Tanzania, and by extension in comparable African contexts, is fundamentally shaped by a complex interplay between pilot project design and the prevailing political dynamics that govern scaling. The findings indicate that while pilot initiatives frequently demonstrate technical success and localised benefits, their transition to institutionalised practice is often thwarted by a misalignment with political incentives, resource reallocation conflicts, and the absence of sustained patronage from key political elites.

Consequently, innovation frequently remains atomised, failing to achieve the systemic transformation implied by policy rhetoric, a stagnation that echoes concerns in related governance literature regarding the implementation gap between policy aspiration and institutional reality (Abraham Kuol Nyuon (Ph.D), 2025). The primary contribution of this study lies in its integrated framework, which moves beyond a technocratic evaluation of innovation tools to foreground political economy as the decisive factor in scaling. It demonstrates that the conventional ‘pilot-to-policy’ pathway is an insufficient model, arguing instead for an explicit ‘political management’ strategy throughout the innovation lifecycle.

This necessitates that innovators and reform advocates engage not only with administrative processes but also with the calculus of political reward, coalition-building, and the management of disruptive change within bureaucratic and political hierarchies. The most pressing practical implication for Tanzanian policymakers is that the design of any pilot must, from its inception, incorporate a credible political strategy for scale. This involves mapping and engaging potential political sponsors,

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framing the innovation in terms of its contribution to overarching governmental priorities, and designing phased roll-outs that build winning coalitions of support.

Pilots should be conceived not as isolated technical proofs-of-concept but as deliberate exercises in building political and administrative constituencies for change, thereby mitigating the risk of atrophy post-demonstration. A critical next step for research would be a longitudinal, comparative analysis of innovation attempts that successfully navigated these political dynamics versus those that faltered, to further refine the components of an effective political management strategy. Future work must continue to critically interrogate how adaptive governance structures can be cultivated within existing political frameworks to sustain innovation beyond electoral cycles and individual leadership.

Ultimately, realising the promise of public sector innovation in Africa demands a scholarly and practical shift from a focus on what works in isolation to a deeper understanding of how to make it last within the continent's distinctive political landscapes.

## Contributions

This study makes a dual contribution to the literature on public sector innovation in developing economies. Empirically, it provides a granular, longitudinal analysis of the innovation lifecycle—from pilot to attempted scale—within the Tanzanian context between 2021 and 2026, a period marked by significant political shifts.

Theoretically, it advances a critical framework that explicitly integrates political dynamics and institutional path dependencies as central variables, challenging techno-centric models of scaling. These insights offer practical guidance for policymakers and development practitioners navigating the complex interplay of innovation design, bureaucratic capacity, and political will.

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