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# Sustainable Public Procurement: The Public Procurement Versus Private Purchasing

**Adjenim Boateng Adjei**

**Abstract**

The procurement volume and value of public sector organisations is similar to or even greater than many private counterparts. Although the boundaries between public and private are blurred, due to developments such as externalization, outsourcing, and public-private partnerships, public procurement is still considered very distinct from its counterpart in the private sector. For example, public procurement is expected to meet higher standards of transparency, integrity, accountability, and exemplary behaviour, as well as having to deal with many different and often conflicting goals. Political goals and the political responsibility of politicians also place demands on public procurement not found in private purchasing. Furthermore, public procurement faces more stakeholders, such as citizens, management, unions, and taxpayers, with differing objectives that need to be taken into account compared with private organisations. This paper discusses the organisational change framework used to examine the implementation of SPP in the Ghanaian national government. However, first, I provide some information about public procurement, the public procurement process, and SPP. Subsequently, I will explain why sustainable procurement should be viewed as an organisational change issue. I will discuss the issues to be examined when studying organisational change and, then, apply them to sustainable procurement. The paper concludes with the concepts examined in the four empirical chapters.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Public Procurement, Public Procurement, Private Purchasing

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Public procurement refers to the acquisition of goods and services by government or public sector organisations (Uyarra & Flanagan, 2010). The terms procurement and purchasing often are used interchangeably. However, purchasing often signifies the process of acquisition in manufacturing; while procurement is a term that is used mainly in the public sector (Arlbjørn & Freytag, 2012). As our research examines the process of acquisition in the public sector, we use the term procurement.

The procurement volume and value of public sector organisations is similar to or even greater than many private counterparts (Arlbjørn & Freytag, 2012). Although the boundaries between public and private are blurred, due to developments such as externalization, outsourcing, and public-private partnerships, public procurement is still considered very distinct from its counterpart in the private sector (Harland et al., 2013; Thai, 2001). For example, public procurement is expected to meet higher standards of transparency, integrity, accountability, and exemplary behaviour, as well as having to deal with many different and often conflicting goals (Telgen, Harland, & Knight, 2007). Political goals and the political responsibility of politicians also place demands on public procurement not found in private purchasing (Murray, 2009; Tel-gen et al., 2007). Furthermore, public procurement faces more stakeholders, such as citizens, management, unions, and taxpayers, with differing objectives that need to be taken into account (Telgen et al., 2007) compared with private organisations.

However, perhaps more importantly, public procurement is constrained by rules and regulations that do not apply to private purchasing (Harland et al., 2013). These are laid down in numerous national and international regulatory frameworks, such as the pluri-lateral Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA) of the World Trade Organisation, primary and secondary legislation of the European Union and specific titles in the United States code (Harland et al., 2013). These rules and regulations enforce the high demands regarding, for example, transparency and integrity. Since public procurers have to comply with rules and regulations, whereas their private counterparts do not (Harland et al., 2013), public procurement is different and more complex than private purchasing.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Public Procurement Process

Despite the differences between public procurement and private purchasing, the phases of acquiring goods and services are similar (Caldwell & Bakker, 2008). For example, the process starts with a need for something in both public and private sectors (Caldwell & Bakker, 2008). The general procurement process has been portrayed rather differently between the various scholars and practitioners (Monczka, Handfield, Giunipero, & Patterson, 2009; PIANOO, 2 April, 2013) but the most commonly used model for public procurement is based on Van Weele's approach (Caldwell & Bakker, 2008). Although this approach is not designed specifically for public procurement, it is applicable nevertheless. Van Weele's approach is and consists of six distinct activities: specification; supplier selection; contracting; ordering; expediting; and, follow-up and evaluation, and the management of the relationship between the customer and supplier (Van Weele, 2005: 13).

The first step in the procurement process is determining the procurement requirements. This can be a functional specification describing the functions the good or service should have, for example, to provide light at desks. Or a technical specification describing the technical properties and characteristics of the product (Van Weele, 2005), for example, a black, adjustable desk lamp, with a LED lamp that provides 70 lumens of light. "Determining the specifications is an important phase in the procurement process, as it is harder to justify the awarding of a contract when it is difficult to write the specifications" (Caldwell & Bakker, 2008). However, it is difficult to improve specifications as EU legislation forbids early engagement with potential suppliers to ensure accountability and competition (Caldwell & Bakker, 2008).

The supplier selection phase begins after the need is determined, using two types of criteria: qualifying criteria and award criteria. Qualifying criteria contain the minimum requirements to be considered at all. The award or winning criteria contain additional offers by which the supplier can make his offering stand out and increase their chances of being awarded the contract (Caldwell & Bakker, 2008). In the case of sustainable procurement, it can be either qualifying criteria (if the coffee cups cannot be recycled, the offer will not be considered), or award criteria (if the coffee cups can be recycled the offer will be regarded higher than offers without recyclable coffee cups). Qualifying and award criteria do not exclude each other; certain aspects can be made into qualifying criteria, while others are award criteria. In addition, not all the award criteria need to be weighted the same. The weights of the different aspects (e.g. price, quality) are awarded based on specific context of the product or service being procured. In certain situations, speed is more important than costs, and the criteria for speed will outweigh the cost criteria. This supplier selection phase is influenced also by national and international rules, regulations, and legislation. For example, the procurers have to check whether the contract has a value above a threshold level set by EU procurement rules that then requires the contract to be advertised in the supplement to the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) before being notified elsewhere. This extends the potential supply market to include the entire European Union (Van Weele, 2005). In addition, the procurer should check also whether other national or international rules apply and that may have specific requirements, which, subsequently, will be incorporated into the procurement.

Contracts are awarded in the third phase, either to the bidder with the lowest price, or to the bidder offering the most value for money (Van Weele, 2005). The contract draws up several items including inter alia: price arrangement (e.g. fixed price plus incentive fee, or an agreement with price-adjustment); terms of payment; penalty clauses; warranty conditions; insurance; safety regulations; terms of delivery; and, contracting out to third parties (Van Weele, 2005). The ordering phase begins once contracts are awarded. When goods or services are ordered without having followed these two previous steps this practice is called 'maverick buying'. Maverick buying diminishes not only the efficiency of procurement, but also the possibilities of using procurement as a tool to reach desired outcomes in society, such as sustainable procurement (Caldwell & Bakker, 2008). Many public organisations are switching currently to e-procurement to make the ordering process more efficient and transparent and limit possibilities for maverick buying (Caldwell & Bakker, 2008).

Once the product or service is ordered, the last step of expediting and evaluation begins. As public procurement becomes more focused on value, rather than price, the evaluation phase also becomes increasingly complex. It can be filled with tensions between operational, strategic or policy requirements since different stakeholders might hold very different opinions on which performance is more important (cost performance vs. value performance), and what should be done to improve performance (Caldwell & Bakker, 2008). For example, when procuring coffee machines, the buyer might be very satisfied with the price of the delivered product, while the users find the coffee distasteful and politicians are disgruntled that the coffee is not fair-trade. Hence, the procurement process is not a straightforward or easy process and where including sustainability criteria add complexity to an already complex situation.

## **2.2 Sustainable Public Procurement in other Countries**

Worldwide, governments are taking sustainability increasingly into account when procuring goods and services (Varnas, Balfors, & Faith-Ell, 2009: 1215). The Netherlands joined this global procurement 'revolution' in

2005 and since then has emerged as a top performer in Europe (Renda et al., 2012). Sustainable procurement refers to “the acquisition of goods and services in a way that ensures that there is the least impact on society and the environment throughout the full life cycle of the product” (Meehan & Bryde, 2011). Green public procurement; environmentally responsible public procurement; green purchasing; and, eco-pro-curement are other terms used to describe the same phenomenon or policy. We use the more general term ‘sustainable procurement’ in our research as it matches most closely with the Ghanaian name of the policy, ‘Duurzaam Inkopen’.

A motion in the Ghanaian House of Representatives led to the development of a policy programme on sustainable procurement. This set a goal of achieving 100% sustain-able procurement by the end of 2010. The Ghanaian government developed this national initiative to stimulate the market for sustainable goods and services by giving a good example (Kamerstukken II, 2004-2005, 29800-xI-103). All other Ghanaian public or-ganisations committed themselves also to sustainable procurement to be achieved by 2015. Municipalities aimed to achieve 75% sustainable procurement by 2010, whilst water-boards and provinces aimed for a target of 50% by 2010. Universities and other higher educational facilities aimed for at least 50% sustainable procurement by 2012 (Rijksoverheid, b 2011). Every couple of years the progress is monitored and reported to the Ghanaian House of Representatives.

Ecological criteria have been developed for more than 70 different product categories, ranging from audio-visual equipment to integration programs and heavy motor vehicles (PIANO, 2014). The criteria documents are available publicly on a government website and state the ecological thresholds that the supplier has to include. For example, office furniture needs to have a lifespan of at least five years and no dangerous substances may be used in the production of paper (PIANO, 2014). Some goods or services have few or no sustainable alternatives available or expected (e.g. medical equipment). Thus, ecological criteria have not been developed for all products and services that the government acquires. Public procurers are required to apply all the relevant ecological criteria when procuring goods and services and, if all relevant ecological criteria are met, the goal of 100% sustainable procurement is achieved. The criteria documents are updated every couple of years to ensure the criteria remain efficient, accurate, and innovative.

This compulsory implementation of the ecological criteria under the policy programme on sustainable procurement is matched by a voluntary part. The Ghanaian House of Rep-presentative wanted the public procurers to go further than the mere implementation of the ecological criteria and include more sustainability in their projects whenever possible. Public procurers could include, for example, additional sustainable award criteria that are not part of the required ecological procurement criteria. Although the policy programme on sustainable procurement is considered, in general, a success, it has been the subject of discussion (Melissen & Reinders, 2012). A study commissioned by the Ghanaian Advisory Board on Administrative Burdens (ACTAL) con-cluded that overlap and a lack of vision created red tape and noted that the criteria documents have become mere checklists which appeared to hinder sustainable inno-vations, rather than stimulate them (ACTAL, 2011). As a result, the policy programme has been reviewed and slightly adapted in 2012 to shift the focus of the policy a little away from the inclusion of criteria.

The initial focus of SPP in The Netherlands was on the environmental aspect of sustain-ability. However, in 2011, two policies dealing with the social aspects of sustainability and procurement were added. A policy dealing with social conditions (e.g. child labour, fair wages and working conditions) to make production more socially responsible, together with a policy dealing with the involvement of people with a distance to the labour market (e.g. handicapped or long-term unemployed people) in the execution of large orders (> €250.000), were implemented. These two policies were developed completely independent from the policy regarding sustainable (ecological) procurement and have a separate implementation process. Therefore, they are not included in this PhD research. However, they do add another layer of complexity to the procurement process, as they require procurers to take even more values into account whilst procuring goods and services.

### **2.3 Sustainable Procurement as organisational Change**

Pressures from government, customers, and various stakeholders can trigger organi-sations to incorporate sustainability issues into their procurement (Nawrocka, 2008; Perez-Sanchez et al., 2003; Seuring & Müller, 2008; Sharfman et al., 1997). However, these pressures will be successful only if both the individual organisations and the supply chain as a total entity possess or develop the necessary internal resources to implement it (Bowen et al. 2001). As stated earlier, at the macro level organisational change is considered to be a comprehensive process where people define goals or a direction that is more desirable than the current state of affairs. The Ghanaian House of Representatives determined the required goal of 100% sustainable procurement in 2010 to be more desirable than the previous optional approaches to achieving sustainability. To help implement sustainable procurement at the micro level a policy programme was thus developed and ecological criteria were developed. The transformation from regular procurement towards sustainable procurement might seem a minor change, especially when compared to organisational changes, such as mergers and reorganisations. However, this change requires organisational routines to

be adjusted at both the macro and micro level with regard to the resources, competences, and capabilities of the staff, as well as the organisation (Gold, Seuring, & Beske, 2010: 230). It implies that sustainability has to become an integral part of the organisation; otherwise a truly sustainable organisation will not emerge (Keizer & Blom, 2007: 15). For example, a public procurer might find sustainable procurement important, but if his supervisors or financial department do not agree, it will be much more difficult to procure sustainably.

All organisational activities, including the procurement of goods and services, are based on routines (Levitt & March, 1988: 320). Organisational routines are “rules that allow people to select elements of a repertoire in order to construct sequences of behaviour that make sense to others in the organisation” (Feldman & Pentland, 2003: 623). Organisational routines consist of sequences of routine behaviour. Introducing change questions existing routines (and thus behaviour) and leads to new practices (new behaviour) which, if it becomes embedded in the organisation, forms a new organisational routine (Becker et al., 2005; Jones, 2003). The procurement process is a special type of decision-making process and is full of organisational routines. The decisions of procurers, who work in dedicated project teams, determine whether or not the full potential of sustainable procurement is applied in the procurement projects (Günther & Scheibe, 2006). Although corporate leaders and employees have begun to recognise their role in contributing to sustainability (Lozano, 2012), previous procurement policies have made public procurers develop risk-averse behaviour and less prone to engage in risky innovative projects (Rolfstam, 2012), such as sustainable procurement.

Studies conducted in EU countries for example show how purchasers within the public authorities regard the legislation as complicated and, therefore, choose to play it safe in order to avoid situations where bidders involved in a tendering process might appeal a contract (Knutsson & Thomasson, 2014; Schapper, Malta, & Gilbert, 2006). Thus, public procurers are required to change their existing procurement behaviour to fulfil the potential of sustainable procurement and to reach a higher degree of sustainable procurement in their project. To influence behaviour and routine change requires an understanding of what makes people willing to change their behaviour and organisational routines. Therefore, it is relevant to investigate what and how factors and actors influence the implementation of SPP in procurement projects. In the next section we discuss the issues related to the implementation of organisational change in the public sector and subsequently apply them to the implementation of SPP.

## **2.4 Change Management Issues**

Change management literature identified five issues that play an important role in the management of organisational change: content; context; process; outcome; and, leadership (Kuipers et al., 2014). Factors belonging to these should be examined when studying a change as they all highlight a different aspect of organisational change and can help identify the specific characteristics of an organisational change that influence its successfulness (Kuipers et al., 2014). We use these issues as a framework for examining the role of organisational factors and actors in the implementation of SPP. However, a complete model of change should address not only macro-level forces, such as content, process, and contextual factors, but also micro-level factors, such as characteristics of the individual employees (Walker, Armenakis, & Bernerth, 2007). Therefore, we added an individual level to the framework that we expected also plays a role in the implementation of SPP.

### **2.4.1 Content**

Content issues refer to changes being implemented that are specific to each organisation (Walker et al., 2007). The content of change refers to what changes in an organisation (Van der Voet, 2014) and includes the organisation's strategies, structures and systems (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). They are primarily factors that underlie the organization's long-term relationship to its environment and define its overall character, mission, and direction (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Studies show that, when there is a fit between the content of the change and the organisation's strategic vision, employee commitment to the change increases (Noble & Mokwa, 1999; Parish, Cadwallader, & Busch, 2008). In the case of sustainable procurement, the more congruent the policy on SPP is with the overall strategic vision of the organisation, the more public procurers will be committed to implement SPP.

### **2.4.2 Process**

The process of change refers to how organisational change comes about (Van der Voet, 2014). Therefore, process issues refer to the actions taken during the introduction and implementation of the proposed change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Walker et al. 2007). Process issues can refer to the actions taken by change agents during the introduction and implementation of the proposed change (Walker et al., 2007) such as: actions regarding participation and involvement in the change; communication about the change; and the perceived fairness of the change process (Choi, 2011). In the case of sustainable procurement, the public procurement process is a special decision-making process where the decisions of procurers and project teams determine if the full potential of sustainable

procurement is used (Günther & Scheibe, 2006). Key actors should be encouraged to enact new behaviour to optimise SPP (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999).

Organisational change literature awards this encouraging role to change agents, as they can increase employees' readiness for change by influencing their beliefs, intentions and, ultimately, their behaviour (Armenakis et al., 1993). Change agents operate in an organisational change process typically consisting of several phases that take considerable amounts of time to unfold (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). A change agent is 'an internal or external individual or team responsible for initiating, sponsoring, directing, managing or implementing a specific change initiative, project or complete change programme' (Caldwell, 2003: 139-140). Any actor, at any level in an organisation, can become a change agent (De Caluwe & Vermaak, 2003). Organisational change literature suggests many possible actions for change agents including: to envision, initiate, sponsor, adapt or carry forward change; to build support, direct, manage, listen, reflect, cooperate, refine, lead, train or educate; or to provide advice, expertise or process skills (Caldwell, 2003; Kendra & Taplin, 2004). Recent sustainability studies highlight the importance of change agents as potential catalysts of sustainability initiatives (Dunphy, Benn, & Griffiths, 2007; Van der Heijden, Cramer, & Driessen, 2012). However, no study as yet has examined empirically the role of change agents in the implementation of sustainable procurement. Therefore, the role of change agents in the implementation of SPP was examined in the second empirical study of our research.

However, not only the actions by change agents are shaping the process towards more sustainable procurement and, thus influencing, actors to implement SPP. Procedures also influence this process. For example, think of the development of environmental criteria documents. Studies have demonstrated that the perceived fairness of such procedures and policies are related strongly to employees' positive attitudes, values, and supportive behaviour towards the organisation and change (Colquitt, 2001; Foster, 2010). Thus, procedures can shape the reaction of employees to a change and, thereby, influence the implementation process of that change. In the case of sustainable procurement this means that the more that procurers perceive the procedures (e.g. the development of the environmental criteria) used to implement sustainable procurement are just, the more they are favourable towards implementing them. The procedures used and perceived justness is regarded as a process factor likely to influence the implementation of sustainable procurement. The role of procedural justice in the implementation of SPP was examined in the fourth empirical study.

#### **2.4.3 Context**

Context issues are related to the organisation's internal and external environments (Kuipers et al., 2014). Scholars have emphasised the impact of situational variables on the successfulness of a change (Choi, 2011). Thus, contextual issues refer to pre-existing forces in the organisation's external or internal environment, such as technological advances; levels of professionalism; organisational slack; leadership; and history of change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Walker et al., 2007), that have been found to influence the change. This may be because, for example, they reduce employee commitment to change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Choi, 2011). Unfortunately, for organisations it is very difficult to change external context issues (Walker et al., 2007). So, in our research we focus on internal contextual factors that organisations can influence more easily.

In the case of the change towards more SPP how the publicness of the organisation is an important contextual factor. As stated earlier, public procurement is considered to be vastly different from private purchasing due to distinct internal, external, contextual, and process demands that exist in the public sector, but that are absent in the private sector (Telgen et al., 2007). Public procurement is subject to public review and, as a result, requires complete transparency (Walker & Brammer, 2009). This need for transparency is enforced via national and international rules, regulations, laws, and procedures, such as the EU Public Procurement Law. This results in public procurement being highly formalised. However, formalization, or the degree to which organisational activities are manifested in written documents regarding procedures, job descriptions, regulations and policy manuals (Hall, 1996; Van der Voet, 2014), can result in negative effects known as red tape (Bozeman & Scott, 1996; Van der Voet, 2014). Red tape is defined as 'rules, regulations and procedures that remain in force and entail a compliance burden, but do not serve the legitimate purposes the rules were intended to serve' (Bozeman, 1993).

Formalization only results in red tape when the observed rules do not further the objective of the organisation and resources are wasted (Bozeman & Feeney, 2011). Red tape has always been an issue for public procurement. As early as 1919, a scholar wrote about red tape hampering procurers in bidding, delivering goods and paying bills (Thomas, 1919). Since then, this issue has not lessened (Thai, 2001). There is little empirical evidence relating red tape to change. Thus, our argument is based on broader literature about organisational change, employee motivation, and commitment. Red tape has been found to play a negative role on employee satisfaction in public organisations (Giauque et al., 2012; Pandey & Scott, 2002) and is related negatively to the implementation of IT innovations (Moon & Bretschneider, 2002). High degrees of red tape can delay and interrupt decisions to implement innovations and,

thereby, influence the mind-set that binds the procurers to the action deemed necessary for the successful implementation of sustainable procurement. We examine the role of red tape as a contextual factor in the implementation of sustainable procurement in chapter 7.

#### **2.4.4 Outcome**

Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) raise criterion variables that refer to the outcomes of change. The outcomes of change are conceptualised in very different ways by different authors (Kuipers et al., 2014). For example, the attitudes, behaviour and experiences of those involved with the change, as well as objective outputs of the change, are mentioned as outcome criteria of the change (Kuipers et al., 2014). In the case of the implementation of SPP, we identified the following three outcome criteria: commitment to implement sustainable procurement; sustainable procurement behaviour; and, the degree of sustainable procurement in procurement projects.

##### **Outcome: Commitment to Change**

Commitment to change is the first outcome criterion in our research. Commitment to change often is found to be one of the most important aspects in explaining employees' behaviour and desirable work outcomes in general (Choi, 2011; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). In the field of sustainable procurement, specifically, commitment is considered to be an important factor in determining the degree of sustainable procurement and, where an organisation is placed on the continuum from innovator to laggard (Erdmenger, 2003; Hojmosse & Adrien-Kirby, 2012; Michelsen & de Boer, 2009). Commitment was conceptualised originally in terms of organisational commitment or 'the relative strength of an individual's linkage to the organisation' (Mowdays, Steers & Porter, 1979: 226 in: Choi, 2011). More recently, Meyer and Herscovitch (2002) build on their general theory of workplace commitment (2001) and proposed a model about commitment to change. They (2002) define commitment to change as 'a force (mind-set) that binds an individual to a course of action deemed necessary for the successful implementation of a change initiative'.

They discern three types of commitment each fuelled by a different force. First, there is a desire to provide support for the change based on a belief in its inherent benefits (affective commitment). Second, a recognition that there are costs associated with failure to provide support for the change (continuance commitment) and, third, a sense of obligation to provide support for the change, e.g. due to peer pressure (normative commitment)' (Meyer et al., 2002: 475). In the case of sustainable procurement, commitment to change is a force that binds a procurer or project team to a course of action deemed necessary for the successful implementation of sustainable procurement in procurement projects. This "force" can be fuelled by a desire to support sustainable procurement based on a belief in the benefits of sustainable procurement (affective commitment); a recognition that not procuring in a sustainable manner will be penalised (continuance commitment); or, by peer pressure (normative).

Employees do not have to be committed to the change from the start, commitment to change can occur after mandated or coerced involvement with the change (McLaughlin, 1990). Thus, if public procurers are required to implement sustainable procurement in their work, they could become committed in the process. Therefore, we examine in the first, third and fourth study the role of (all three types of) commitment to change in the implementation of sustainable procurement, as well as their relationship with the other outcome criteria.

##### **Outcome: Sustainable Procurement Behaviour**

The second outcome criterion is sustainable procurement behaviour. Sustainable procurement behaviour embodies the "actions by the procurer to incorporate (environmental) sustainable procurement in the procurement process". For example, finding additional information about sustainable procurement or stimulating suppliers to develop sustainable solutions. Sustainable procurement behaviour is not routine behaviour. It requires procurers to change their regular procurement behaviour. However, previous policies have made procurers risk averse and less likely to engage in risky innovative projects (Rolfstam, 2012), such as sustainable procurement. For example, to avoid potential legal conflicts, public procurers tend to favour past practices (Palmujoki, Parikka-Alhola, & Ekroos, 2010). Thus, public procurers have to change their procurement behaviour to be able to engage in sustainable procurement.

##### **Outcome: Degree of Sustainable Procurement**

The first, and perhaps most obvious, outcome variable to be examined when we study the change towards more SPP is the degree of SPP. We conceptualised this as the degree in which the procurer uses: A) the compulsory ecological criteria; and/or, B) voluntary additional ecological criteria in their procurement projects. The inclusion of both compulsory and voluntary ecological criteria in their procurement project results in the highest degree of SPP. This conceptualization is based largely on the Ghanaian policy on sustainable procurement. This policy contains

requirements that have to be applied when procuring goods and services and aspirations for public procurers voluntarily to go beyond those basic requirements and include more sustainability in their procurement projects.

Procurement projects typically take a very long time to finish. Between the moment of determining the award and selection criteria and the actual delivery of the goods, services, or road works project, can be several years. In addition, procurers often are not responsible for the latter part of the project. Within the timeframe of our research it was impossible to examine if the most sustainable offer was indeed selected and delivered. Therefore, we examined the degree of sustainable procurement of the award and selection criteria, as this was the aspect that the policy on SPP focuses on.

#### **2.4.5 Leadership**

Leadership has gained increasing attention in the change management literature (Kuipers et al., 2014) and is considered one of the key drivers of organisational change implementation (Herold, Fedor, Caldwell, & Liu, 2008; Higgs & Rowland, 2005; Van der Voet, 2014). Traditional change management literature often points to the pivotal role that top management support play in the implementation of organisational change (e.g., Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Kotter, 1995; McNulty & Ferlie, 2004). Within the procurement and sustainable procurement literature, a similar role is given to top management support (Hoejmose & Adrien-Kirby, 2012). For example, a study by Brammer and Walker (2011) found leadership and management support to be critical in the implementation of sustainable procurement. If managers are supportive and incorporate sustainable procurement in their strategies or goal setting, project teams indeed will procure sustainably (Brammer & Walker, 2011).

Ageron et al. (2011) came to a similar conclusion seeing top management support as necessary and a key driver for successful sustainable supply chain management. This importance could be (partly) explained by the fact that top managers facilitate, ensure, and deploy organisational resources to meet the goals of the organisation and individual departments (Hoejmose & Adrien-Kirby, 2012). In the public sector, top management support not only requires support from the political top, but also from top-level civil servants (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006). We examine the role of top management support in the implementation of SPP specifically in our research.

In addition to top management support, the organisational change literature also points to the importance of the leadership style for the successfulness of a change. Transformational leadership is the most frequently studied antecedent of employee commitment to change (Herold et al., 2008; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996). Transformational leaders can communicate a vision and bring employees together to achieve a change goal. Because they have the trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect of their followers and they become motivated to do more than they are originally asked to do (Podsakoff et al., 1996; Yukl, 1999).

Thus, transformational leadership is often found to positively influence commitment to change (Herold et al., 2008; Michaelis, Stegmaier, & Sonntag, 2010). Although the role of top or senior managers is highlighted often for the initiation of a change, direct supervisors also have an important role during the implementation of change (Van der Voet, 2014). For example, studies show that employees prefer to receive delicate information related to their job from their direct supervisors (Allen, Jimmieson, Bordia, & Irmer, 2007) who can try to raise awareness for the organisational change, explain what is required of employees and attempt to identify and remove potential resistance to change (Van der Voet, 2014).

In our third study (chapter 6) we examine whether a transformational leadership style of the direct supervisor influences the implementation of sustainable procurement.

#### **2.4.6 Individual**

All individuals within organisations have dispositional and personality characteristics. These individual differences may influence their reactions to the change during organisational change efforts (Choi, 2011; Walker et al., 2007). In the case of sustainable procurement, the literature points to two important individual characteristics that could be influencing the implementation of sustainable procurement: knowledge about sustainable procurement and the environment, and ecological sustainability attitude.

Sustainable procurement is a difficult and often contested concept. Practitioners and scholars frequently mention access to knowledge as a potential driver of or barrier to sustainable procurement (Bowen et al., 2001; Meehan & Bryde, 2011; Walker & Brammer, 2009). For example, 80% of (both public and private) purchasers lack a clear understanding of the term sustainable (Snell, 2006). Lacking an understanding of what sustainable procurement is and what it can do, makes it difficult for procurers to see its potential, such as the potential to realise economic benefits (Bowen et al., 2001). Studies in the more general field of ecological behaviour show that knowledge directly influences the behaviour of people. For example, one study showed that consumers tended to stay away from situations where they have too little knowledge to act as a framework for their behaviour (Kaplan, 1992). In another study, hotel

employ-ees were more willing to implement green practices in their hotels when they were knowledgeable and showed more ecological behaviour (Chan, Hon, Chan, & Okumus, 2014).

In the case of sustainable procurement, a lack of knowledge means that the procurers have to interpret information based on their existing knowledge and old routines, which are no longer appropriate to the situation, causing them to make safe and traditional choices (Meehan and Bryde, 2011) and not use the full potential of sustainable procurement. The several studies mentioned above point to knowledge as an important barrier or driver of sustainable procurement. Yet, no study so far has shown how it is impacting on the implementation of sustainable procurement. Sustainability is a subject which people have very different personal attitudes towards. Various studies show that people actively select and believe information that matches their personal values (value congruence). For example, a public procurer who loves nature and tries to be very environmentally friendly in his personal life might be more committed to implementing sustainable procurement than a procurer who ignores nature and the environment and does nothing environmentally friendly at home.

#### 2.4.7 Factors and/or Actors?

Previously, we discussed several factors that influence the change towards sustain-able procurement behaviour. We identified important factors for each issue of change that were expected to play a role and which we would assess in one or more of the empirical studies. It becomes apparent that it was not just organisational factors that are important in the implementation of sustainable procurement (e.g. red tape and fit with vision), but that actors are important also, as the factors studied (change agents, top management support and transformational leadership) all refer to actions carried out by actors (e.g. specific individuals) who are expected to play a role in implementing sustainable procurement. However, change agents or managers are not alone in this as public procurers themselves are perhaps the most important actors. Their commitment and behaviour are, according to the literature, two important outcome criteria for the implementation of sustainable procurement. Thus, it is not possible to examine the role of factors in the implementation of SPP without also looking at the role of actors. We look at both the extent and role of organisational factors and actors in the implementation of SPP in this research.

### 3.0 CONCLUSION

Procurement in the public sector is vastly different from private purchasing as a result of its own very specific demands. One key distinction is the notion that public procurement is used as a policy tool to reach desired outcomes in society. The Ghanaian national government wants to stimulate the market for sustainable goods and services and act as a role model. However, they add complexity by implementing sustainable procurement to an already complex procurement process. Implementing sustainable procurement requires organisational routines with regard to the resources, competences, and capabilities of the staff as well as the organisation to be changed (Gold et al., 2010: 230).

Therefore, the implementation of sustainable procurement should be viewed as an organisational change. Six different issues should be examined when studying a change: process; content; context; leadership; and, outcome and individual level issues (Kuipers et al., 2014). In implementing sustainable procurement both factors and actors play a role in enacting this change. Based on the literature from both sustainable procurement and change management the most prominent factors for the implementation of SPP are identified for each issue: change agents and procedural justice (process); red tape (context); fit with vision (content); top management support; transformational leadership (leadership); commitment to change; sustainable procurement behaviour; and, degree of sustainable procurement (outcome).

Many factors are inherently tied to actors (e.g. change agents, transformational leadership, top management support) or involve behaviour, attitudes, or commitment to change of actors. Thus, it is also necessary to examine the role of actors in these five change issues to gain a full insight into the implementation of sustainable procurement. Adding individual level factors to the research (knowledge and ecological sustainability attitude) allows us to examine whether personal characteristics and issues also play a role in the implementation of sustainable procurement.

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