

The Good, Bad and Ugly of Administrative Reforms in Africa: Discourse, Policy Controversies and Policy Orientations

John W. Forje,
CARAD Cameroon

Abstract

The article revisits through a policy analysis the on-going debate on the major structuring of administrative reforms so badly needed to move Africa from a backward to a service delivery society. Critically and analytically it delves into policy orientations over the past decades with the attempt to relate them to the advocacy and strategies developed by different networks and policy communities to craft an administrative structure that adequately respond to the needs of the continent. The analysis reveals in particular the crucial contribution of the “Power of Politicisation” of the administrative structure; and shows how it contributes towards underdevelopment and not the sustainable transformation of the continent to ensure quality livelihood of the citizens. Forje argues that administrative reforms in Africa require comprehensive ‘depoliticisation’ and ‘constructive engagement’ with civil society and the private sector. In order to have a system with proper output functions that significantly impacts on the wellbeing of the people as well as moves the continent forward. Politicisation of the administration leads to corruption, poor output services bleeding the continent to death; it prevents other groups or opinions concerned with more intractable social, economic and political issues from engaging successfully in the policy process for meaningfully tailored structural reforms. Good governance and the rule of law are needed for an effective well-functioning administrative set-up.

Keywords: Polices, Political environment, Administrative set-up; Quality well-being, Services delivery, Best practices,

Introduction

As a way of setting a scene for this paper, the author quotes key messages by other scholars and believes that these ideas gives the reader a context to understand the key argument of the paper. As Castree, (2002:360) noted, “Policy is too political – too much power and values – to be simply passed off as a domain of technical judgments and practices”. Meaning that “obtaining the truth about administrative reforms in Africa is an elusive goal and unfortunately it is principally based on perceptions that are flooded with the arsenal of corruption and bad practices. Administration in Africa is not ‘human-focused’ hence the failure. Administrative reforms need a new critical paradigm and shift in mind set for quality services delivery that produces quality livelihood of the citizens” (Forje, CARAD, Bali Nyonga, 2013).

Administration is the output functions of government that impacts positively or negatively on the wellbeing citizens. Proper administration is a major commodity that generates enormous benefits for any society. Bad administration destroys the country. Therefore major positive structural administrative reforms should be considered a great development opportunity to a transition continent like Africa and as the basis for transition from a backward to a service delivery polity.

Politics and governance cannot be value free. No government can function efficiently and effectively without a set of directives that will steer it in the direction which society expects it to move. Although governments have different cultural, political, and administrative environments, they often confront similar ethical challenges, and the responses in their ethics management show common characteristics. A silver lining that runs through is moral and ethics. Ethics involves more than acting in accordance with the law, (Andrews, 1989:210). It pertains to the reality and attitude with which an action is taken. To this Fox and Meyer (1996:45) define ethics as ‘the process by which we clarify right from wrong and act on what we take to be right, i.e. a set or system of moral principles that is generally applied. A country needs a team of dedicated and committed public service servants to ensure the proper transmission or translation of government policies into achievable services meeting the basic needs of the people. Government is judged by its output service rendered by the public service servants. That is why a well-structured, trained and functional public service administration (PSA) is the key to the change, progress, development and sustainability (CPDS) of services delivery in any society.

The focus of the paper is to analytical contextualise the commitment to the public interest as a function of the institutional role of government or public officials and of the ethos of public service that this role entails in delivery quality services to the people. In short, it looks to the government fulfilling its share of the social contract with the people through its output functions translated into services delivery and eventually improving the quality livelihood of the people. What is the ethical behaviour of government towards achieving set goals? Though opinions may differ on what constitutes ethical behaviour, it is usually accepted to conform to social norms and values which include as depicted here in attaining quality living standards for the common good illustrated on Table 1. Ethical Behaviour, Social Norms and Values Leading to Quality Livelihood presenting issues involved. The paper equally hammers on the impartiality of the public service sector. A public service administration void of political party interferences is more likely to delivery better quality services to the population than one ingrained with and unholy marriage between the public service and the ruling political party. Therefore, the paper stresses on some of the basic values and principles governing public institution which should include, (a) accountability; (b) impartiality; (c) development orientation, professionalism and ethics; (d) democratic values and the separation of the public service from party politics. An independent public service requires incentives, rewards, carrots and the stick to make if efficient and effective in providing the needed services required of it.

Table: 1 Ethical Behaviour, Social Norms and Values Leading to Quality Livelihood

	Honesty		
	Humaneness	Leadership	
	Freedom	=====>} Legitimacy	
=====>}	Decency	Responsibility	
Ethical Behaviour	Freedom	Accountability=====>}	
Social Norms and Values	Hope	Commitment	Best way that the interests
=====>}	Fairness	Transparency	& Welfare of Society are
	Justice	Trust	Served, and leading to
	Integrity	Confidence=====>}	Quality Livelihood for ALL
	Reasonableness	Representation	
	Order	=====>} Participation	
	Discipline		
	Political neutrality		

Source: Forje (2014)

The table above provides the foundation for an effective and efficient functional public service that serves the interest of all not only those of the members of ruling political party. An independent public service sector (i.e. free from political party, religious and ethnic interferences), would evade political corruption and provide quality services to citizens. Gildenhuis (1991:47) defines political corruption as ‘government crimes’, identifying three forms of such crimes, namely; (i) election fraud; (ii) official violence, and (iii) institutional misconduct. Most countries on the continent are ridden with these vices. The virtues of a functional government rest on the type of public service construct and the type of public service – civil society – private sector partnerships and its mission-orientation agenda. A decentralised public service contributes to creating efficiency and effectiveness, as well as the depoliticisation of the provision of services with the active involvement or participation of the people with the end result and the manner in which their quality of live is promoted and sustained.

Since independence and especially within the past couple of years, numerous researchers, local and international non-governmental organizations have voiced serious concerns about the impact and social disruption of poor administrative setup on the transformation of the continent. And today, despite major efforts to resolve these concerns, the debate about the sustainability of Africa’s administrative setup is still largely unresolved. The continent is entrenched in poor administrative setup, rendering its output services inefficient and ineffective; hence their failure to attract foreign investors. Poor administration inhibits the sector from becoming a channel for a veritable income generation input factor in accelerating the growth of the economy and the overall development of society. Hence, improved quality livelihood is derailed.

A well functional and productive public administration is an income generating sector impacting positively on the development of society. The intention of this paper is not only to participate directly in the debate by adding more information in support of one side or the other, but also to revisit it from a policy analysis perspective. In short, the objective is to identify the different input factors which have contributed to the policy process of change that have framed the development of public administration in Africa over the decades. The focus of the discourse is on policy mechanisms, processes and interactions between key actors (for example, state civil society and private sector) which have and continue to play a major role in the agenda setting and in the definition and adoption of the main policy orientations related to structural administrative reforms in Africa (SARA). As a result, the concept and discourse remains primordial as an active and constructive input role in shaping the policy agenda. A well trained public service is primordial in effecting government policies.

Apparently, the discourse or concept is largely influenced by what Drysek (1997:8) sees as ‘a shared-way of apprehending the world’. Embedded in language it enables those who subscribe to it to interpret bits of information and put them together in coherent stories or accounts. Each discourse rests on assumptions, judgments, and contentions that provide the basic terms of analysis, debates, agreements and disagreements. When applied to the domain of policy process analysis, this concept of discourse reveals itself as a particular powerful tool (Bene, 2005:587). A powerful policy tool has meaning only when a trained functional public service is in place to translate policies into realisable activities that continuously improve the welfare of citizens. Incidentally, there are more trained Africans today than before, but quality services delivery falls far short of what is expected. Political interferences, inertia, greed and other impeding factors expressed in the different tables and contents of this paper accounts for poor output functions of the government.

Conceptual Premises of Departure

The conceptual premises of discourse build on the “*Blame and Reality*” theories. It argues that to position blame on imperialism, slavery and colonialism, (events that are history) blurs the approach to seeking best management practices in addressing the plethora of problems plaguing the continent. Rather, resolving the continent’s debacles should depart from the perspective of the ‘*reality theory*’: what exists, and what should be done to arrest the situation. We do admit that imperialism and colonialism contributed to the underdevelopment of Africa (Rodney, 1972). But this is not the right approach any more to salvaging what should be corrected at this point in time to construct a better tomorrow.

Hanging on the ‘*blame theory*’ only plays into the hands of the oppressors to continue derailing the continent. The blame theory has no room in state construct of the 21st century. Building on the ‘*reality theory*’ shows the determined efforts of the continent to move forward in the right direction, securing, harnessing and enhancing the sovereignty of the people. The two premises of departure lead to different solutions for the public service role in Africa. Africa, like the rest of the world, finds itself at a point where public confidence and trust in the state is in serious doubt. As a result of a variety of shortcomings in the management of public affairs, the state has become the object of widespread distrust. The situation requires both fresh ideas and fresh approaches to the task of managing development.

That is why a break from the ‘*blame theory*’ and a welcome to the ‘*reality theory*’ becomes imperative in addressing the tall order and accepting the challenges which are inevitable if Africa is ever going to find itself on the plus side of the development continuum to a better future. The notion of livelihood has become essential in development approaches. Its influence felt particularly in the 1990s when livelihood emerged as an essentially important factor in relation to environmental concerns and discourse. The sketch attempt to suggest what needs to be critically propped into and to chart a new course from a holistic perception encompassing the visible circles in which people lead their lives is graphically shown in Table 2

Table 2: *The Blame and Reality Theories*

Entrenches the Euro-centric approaches to development; Fan the politics of divide and rule, hatred and ethnic and religious divide, or accelerates the policy of assimilation; Distorts, misdirect our perception to the underlining issues in question; Perpetuates the state of underdevelopment and advances a hidden agenda	
Blame Theory	<p>Challenges the continent to articulate and aggregate alternative processes of change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌚ Imperialism, colonialism to state the least, is history; but Africa must advance; ⌚ Shows Africa’s resolved to confront head on the plight of backwardness and to proo that imperialism, colonialism, slavery etc, was and still is wrong; ⌚ Enhances its independence and sovereignty and ensures ownership of its development; ⌚ Mobilisation of the people through an ideological orientation: Afro-centric – for a New State construct; ⌚ Paying due attention to the female gender contribution to development;
Reality Theory	<p>Challenges the people to look into the past, draw from its cultural, social and indigenous knowledge issues that can be adapted to modern development;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌚ Trends to give its specific pattern of transformation and drawing from best management practices around the world; ⌚ Creates opportunities for seeking alternative and the broadest possible alliance to craft a common coherent approach to finding the best solutions to its under-development plight;

Source: Forje 2014

The discourse on ‘reality’ and ‘blame’ is well illustrated by Gutto (2010:63) extensively quoted in this way; “it is a historical reality that Africa has contributed and conditions to contribute significantly to the wealth of the North, especially Europe and North America. This is in the form of mental and manual labour and natural resources. It is also a fact that the negative impact of transcontinental slave trade and colonial plunder is still being felt in Africa. It is wrong and a historical to say or be told not to blame slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism for much of Africa’s woes. But it is also incorrect to blame everything on slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism. We have failed ourselves by not using our political independence to provide truly patriotic leadership and governance at the national and continental level. We are our worst enemy.

What African states should focus on is how to diffuse the growing forces of “*neo-colonialism*” and outdated cultural values and norms woven in greed that impedes the sustainable transformation from a backward into a modern society. Africa was not part of the hegemonic forces of imperialism and colonialism. But it is part of the inherent construct of neo-colonialism and perpetuated also by the ruling elites of the continent. The issue of

leadership comes to play. What kind of leadership exists on the continent – servant or served leadership style? Good governance remains an essential contributor. Good governance entails democracy which incorporates all sections of society in the decision-making process and the formulation and implementation of policies. The absence of these and other factors impede the construction of a veritable public service sector. How accountable and responsible is the public service as an output function of the government to the people? In reality, these dimensions of accountability and responsibility – the ethical, functional and constituent stakeholders – intertwine and overlap. Therefore it is necessary as we set out early on what could be described as ‘*public service deficit*’ means and how it can be overcome with considerable responses to accelerate the sustainable socio-economic and political transformation of the continent.

Sadly, the continent’s service delivery is declining; yet at the same time, there is an encouraging increase in policy measures to improve the quality output of the public service sector. These two opposing trends should be seen within the context of leadership, governance, democracy and civil society. All boils down to the absence or lack of strong political and administrative institutions, leadership and processes, a trend which is evidently bad for democracy and for the transformation of Africa. The involvement of individuals in social movements is necessary and positive, but it does not replace the need to exercise one’s democratic rights to ensure the emergence of a strong and veritable government. A just and healthy society needs both good government and a strong, vibrant civil society. Society is served best when diversity of opinions is allowed to flourish. Open and constructive discourse on the continent’s public service ensures necessary checks and balances are applied. The late-comer advantage provides opportunities – the ability and technological advances – to address existing problems; to probe scientifically and constructively into the good, bad and ugly of the public service sector. The continent simply needs the will to do so. It has and must cut off the chains of centralised hegemonic approach to development (see for example, Wunsch & Olowu, 1990; Baumgartner & Hogger, 2004; McCarney & Stern, 2003).

The Good, Bad and Ugly

The issue of structuring administrative reforms in Africa hinges on governance. What form of governance system is practiced? The challenging question is simply; Can the Government Govern (Chubb and Peterson 1988)? Effective administrative reforms necessitates effective government requiring that institutions be strong enough to control the efforts of organized entrenched special interests in favour of the broader interests shared but poorly articulated by most members of society. Recent changes in our institutions and in the problems they face raise doubts about the capacity of contemporary African governments and administrative set-up to handle these parochial forces. African parliaments have seemingly become more fragmented; the presidency more politicised, and the bureaucracy more labyrinthine. The bureaucracy which is supposed to serve any government (i.e. any political party or parties that assume the office of governing) has not mastered a variety of problem issues – the budget deficit, services delivery, the trade balance and energy insecurity among many others – that threatens society’s general interests in an economic future as bright as its past. In Cameroon for example, President Paul Biya in his 2013 New Year speech decried the poor performance of the administration:

Our country is peaceful and stable. What then do we lack? I think we need to improve in two key areas: prioritising general interest and coordinating our efforts. Though attached to our communities of origin – which does not prevent us from being fervent patriots whenever national honour is at stake – we are individualistic people, more concerned with personal success than general interest. Our administration remains susceptible to private interest, which is most often in conflict with national interest. Such trends must not be tolerated in a modern state (The Post 2014:5).

In the ‘good, bad and ugly’ of administrative reforms in Africa, the paper argues that the problem is inherently and substantially institutional and discusses the political difficulties requirements overcoming it. In so doing, the paper opens the debate and public discourse necessary for change to have a public administration that responds to the aspirations and desires of the people to better quality living standards. Table 3 Comparative Analysis of PE and BMP Discourses presents an illustration of issues involved

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of PE & BMP Discourses

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Topics	Political Environment	Better Management Practices
1: The Issues	Social disruption and administrative Degradation (poor output functions)	Administrative sustainability and better services delivery (Better output functions)
2. Focus on	The causes of the problem (Question arising)	The solution of the problem (problem solving: honouring the social contract between the states, civil society and private sector)
3. The Conclusion	The cause is political and educational but stays vague on what should be the solution.	The solution is technical and political, looking at best management practices and never raise the political or social issues.
4. Systems to Promote	Extensive political and educational orientation of society on the role their obligations and responsibilities;	Intensive open governance system
5. Perceptions about different Actors		
{a}Who should be supported	{a} The People – especially the marginalised	{a} Civil society & Private sector
{The Good} {a} Who should be blamed for the environment impact	{a} Civil society & the State	{a} Civil society and the State
{The Bad} {b} Who should be blamed for the Mess	{b} Civil society and the State	{b} State, civil society, the private Sector and any one against the sustainable transformation of society.
{The Ugly} {c} Who should be blamed the entire system	{c} Civil society and the state all the stakeholders Failed government, collapsed society	{c} The entire system as it breeds corruption, low productivity, poor quality living standards

Source: Forje (2013)

Note: PE = Political Environment: BMP = Better Management Practice

This brief outline begs the question which is bound to be difficult in presenting a straight jacket answer, but, however, to state the least, in probing our understanding of the society in, which we live and where we place our hopes and aspirations. As the society becomes more pluralistic, cross-cultural, post-modern, and divided by political allegiances, it follows that we may not even be able to agree on the terms of the question. It is an essential part of the continent’s struggle to find the courage, critically examine itself and have the guts to raise fundamental questions and re-open the discourse concerning the sustainable socio-economic transformation of the continent. The question is; what is the nature of the African Public Service and why is it unproductive, but ingrained in corrupt practices and unable to deliver quality services to the people?

The capacity of a society to function with differences in terms of traditions, cultures, religions and values is therefore the key to the viability of the public service and the output functions determines the type of contract between the state and the people. How does society coordinate its diversities and similarities to provide best services to the people? As a result

of divided political allegiances, and because of centralised ethnic hegemonic rule, the politicisation of the public service makes it fail in meeting the social contract between state and people. The output function of the public civil is what makes the good, bad and ugly of the government (Hall, 1995). Thus the output functions of government or state bureaucracy rests on:

- a governance system which is limited, accountable and operates under the rule of law; an array of free, voluntary associations {a society embedded} with political, economic, social and cultural; moral and ethical values);
- a sphere of public debate; including a critical and objective media industry. an innovative, creative, productive private sector; as well as a progressive vibrant civil society;
- a market economy that does not exploit the poor but helps in improving that has the interest of the people while making its profit; (perhaps we coined the term, capitalism with a human face and heart)
- the role, functions and impartiality of the administrators in rendering services to the people, irrespective of societal status, religion, ethnic affiliation and so on;

The good with the African public service is that it has since independence cloned out directives for improving the sector in meeting the needs and aspirations of the people. Though a number of countries have made strides in that the direction; the sector is heavily infested with the viruses of unproductively, red tapes, and corruption. The All Africa Public Sector Innovation Awards (AAPSIA) is a move to promote and encourage best practices in public sector innovation and service delivery. So also the African Public Service Charter among other documents produced by national governments and the African Union on the topic. This is the good side of the public service for enhanced and sustainable service delivery geared towards improved and sustainable quality livelihood for all the people. The unnecessary politicisation of the public service breeding social and ethnic divide within society, and paving the way for a number of ills, chaos and instability. The bad and ugly sides include the unbolting rate of corruption that fans poor services delivery. The bad of the good is the failure of African states to implement agreed conventions and decisions adopted that should uplift the quality living standards of the people.

Inertia has gripped the sector with the corruption virus so entrenched in the system that puts serious doubts, and challenges the people about their ability to govern. It is even questionable whether or not Africans are different species of human creation. What makes Africa remain a perpetual state of exploitation, social, economic and political backwardness? Is this due to hereditary determinism, i.e., due to the genes of the people? Answers to some of these and other related question can be sought from the following statement: “in a government where democracy is allowed to work, one of the principles that are normally entrenched is a feedback system, a discussion between those who formulate policy and those who must perceive, accept or reject policy. There must be a system of education, political education, and this does not necessarily go with literacy” (Biko, 1996:128). Importantly, we are wrong in thinking that because the government is democratically elected, therefore there is democracy. Democracy is about the relationship between the politicians and their constituencies. Good

administration and leadership goes to the heart of the people in making them thinking and behaving democratically for their own good and that of society. The challenge is how to build a culture in which those in power genuinely listen to the voices of the people, and thereby avert controversies that bleeds the country into civil strife. The government has to find administrative ways –and not ad hoc or the occasional *imbizo* to structure the collective intelligence and potentials of the people into its decision processes. Policies must be articulated and aggregated in such a way that the worse in society today is made better tomorrow. That is the essence of a ‘good’ government, which unfortunately, is lacking in Africa as of now.

Apparently, the human genome project shows that the genes in humankind have proven beyond reasonable doubt the ‘race’ is a fallacy that has no basis in science. In other words, our backwardness in Africa is not due to the fact that our genes are different from the genes of people who live in the western world; we are just human-beings. What is certain is that nature and nurture affect human-beings and backwardness and progress depend on how humans deal with the two factors. Seen within this context, “nature is about how we face the hills and valleys, rain and sunshine, the dry and rainy seasons, winter, spring, autumn and summer. Nurture refers to how the environment in which we grow up allows us to face and dominate these natural forces to advance society. The domain to nurture are freedom and liberty, democracy and the rule of law, education and the discipline that free citizens, who are symbolic of the hen that lays the ‘golden egg’ of development (Asonganyi, 2010:3). Owona (2012:9) opines that decentralization is a method of organization of the administrative arm of the government in which the State creates decentralized public entities and grants them jurisdiction and resources while preserving the supervisory and monitoring power. It is a means of developing democracy and specifically local democracy, closer to the citizens. People’s active participation is also a gateway to improving the welfare of citizens.

Decentralisation comes with an institutionalization of administrative and financial control. But decentralization in Cameroon has not enhanced efficiency and effective service delivery, neither has the process reduced the corruption virus. Decentralisation in Cameroon means concentration of power for a selected few. The reason why the Head of State bemoaned society by noting that: “though attached to our communities of origin – which does not prevent us from being fervent patriots whenever national honour is at stake – we are an individualistic people, more concerned with personal success than general interest. Our administration remains susceptible to private interest, which is most often in conflict with national interest. Such trends must not be tolerated in a modern state” (Biya, 2014:47).

To a large extent, the Political Environment (PE) and the Best Management Practice (BMP) raises the discourse in relation to ‘who should be supported and helped and who has to be blamed for the environmental impact is directly related to the question of which system to promote. The political environment builds mostly on appointees based on political linings as against the best management practices that build on expertise. As a result of the political patronage it fans corruption and inertia. Indeed, corruption is common often involving collusion between industry, elites and government officials. The judiciary, the law enforcement officers are all part of what could be seen as ‘*a systematic and well institutionalized racketing or mafia structure*’. The entire government structure is corrupt to the extent that the Cameroon Head of State, for example, could not hide his feelings on the issue. The situation has on a number of occasions caught the attention of Transparency International Corruption Index with Cameroon being classified as the most corrupt nation in the world. This is the bad and ugly of the public

service sector in the country.

Mattei (2011:303) writing on corruption in Cameroon observes: “Concerning the fight against corruption Paul Biya never hides that it is a fundamental axis of his policy, even if the eternal sceptics call it a *‘bluff’*. The ministers, businessmen and traffickers whatever their social level, who had to appear in court for their actions over the last few years, would understandably not agree. Paul Biya never denied the problem, and he can be praised for fighting it openly without any misplaced shame. He stressed, however, that it is not a specific vice of Cameroon, but a global issue. At promoting this idea, specialised bodies have been set up an Accounts Chamber, a National Anti-Corruption Commission, and a National Agency of Financial Investigations to monitor the loss of funds.” Decentralisation of power and administrative related activities is a current administrative tall order in Cameroon for example. This by all means, will bring good governance closer to the people. But unless it inculcates the sacred ingredients of Madisonian Democracy i.e. the protection of indigenous minorities, civil administration in the country will continue to wallow in a political conundrum. The Cameroonian capacity for putting up with a poor standard of living is legendary. Political leadership is partly accountable for this state of affair.

The *‘good, bad, and ugly’* of the African public service is largely due to the making of the people. First we must avoid the ‘blame theory’ attributing the woes of the continent on slavery, imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism’ Second what are we doing to show that these acts or events have and continue to render the continent to be where it is? The issue in question is to focus on the ‘reality theory’ as the way to addressing the plight of the continent. Third unless and until Africa embarks on this avenue of discourse, the continent will make no head way in providing quality livelihood to the people (Forje, 2009; Balogun & Mutahaba, 1989; ECA1992). The general picture of the African bureaucracy is that it is not disciplined but controlled by the political party establishment, unlike in East Asia where the bureaucracy which is largely disciplined by the political system and it is largely the political forces driving the modernisation bandwagon of East Asia. The modernizing bureaucracy and the process of institution building are just as much an expression of social changes as the cause of modernization. One has to see this from the perspectives of Mumford’s (1967) “Myth of the Machine” – the bureaucracy as a machine made by men instead of iron parts; the process of gradual and cumulative rationalisation making the great traditions of Western thinking combing different dimensions, for example division of labour, the gradual replacement of manual labour with special purpose machinery, centralisation and concentration of capital, to make the large mass producing corporation the nucleus of our civilisation.

Given that the public service sector is to serve the people, then civil society has a critical role to play in the output of the public service as well. Within this context, civil society continues to retain high levels trust in the eyes of the public. A vibrant civil society is seen as the way to restore trust in social institutions by promoting active citizen involvement. The presence of poor public service output is the absence of democracy and the rule of law. We must understand that:

Where there is visionary servant leadership and,
Where there is a proactive civil society there is hope

Where truth is respected, there is justice.
 Where there is justice, there is peace.
 Where there is peace, there is human freedom.
 Where there is human freedom,
 There is prosperity and happiness,
 Where is equity sharing in prosperity and sustained quality livelihood? (See Mashamaite, 2009)

Deepening the democratic and good governance process is promoting and enhancing government output functions and meeting the social contract with the society. In Africa the political side of modernization has, in fact, been even more devastating than its economic side. In many countries, constitutions have been revised to give the military excessive power over the legislature, the bureaucracy and the judiciary. In some cases a very powerful executive is created who more or less claims the state as a personal property, and it is at his good will that donates monies for the construction of a road, school, and other infrastructures and services. In general the political situation in Africa has not been conducive to the growth and sustenance of human or institutional capacity building (Dia, 1993; Forje, 2009). The civilizing mission of the colonial enterprise was mainly concerned with pacifying the natives for purposes of facilitating exploitation of natural resources. The pacification of citizens in a country like Cameroon breeds the notion of lobbying for appointment; lobbying for promotion, promoting the Southwest / Northwest (Anglophone) divide, and the drafting of hypocritical motions of support to political party hierarchy for recognition.

The administrative system was of a skeletal type, only large enough for the purposes of extracting revenues and ensuring orderly governance. When the African countries achieved independence, the emphasis largely remained on the control of political and governmental processes. The inherited public administration was used for execution of power, but had little or no tradition of judicial checks and balances which political leadership then exploited for its own good. The infiltration of party politics into the administration derailed the useful purpose the civil service plays in promoting the quality livelihood of citizens. The administration which is to serve which ever political party that assumes office has been converted into the external bureau of the governing political party in dishing out goodies and rewards to faithful party members and punishing opposition areas of society.

This could be seen as the ugly side of the administrative set-up. The problem of insufficient institutional capacity is not only one of lacking administrative capacities, but more so one of lacking authority for the regulatory framework including the civil service. Patrimonial and personal rule prevail and are allowed to permeate the civil service from within, making it both inefficient and ineffective and an arena for rent-seeking behaviour and outright corruption.

Experience with the public service in Africa points in the direction of (a) performance has been disappointing; (b) political patronage and ethnic dichotomy rather than service delivery have guided policy decisions; (c) accountability, transparency and responsibility have been weak or non-existent; (d) the absence of the rule of law; and (e) the politicisation and ethnicisation of the public service all of which are disastrous to the transformation of the continent. Despite the poor performance in the past, some countries are striving towards best

practices for instance, Botswana, South Africa, Ghana, Mauritius, Kenya, and Rwanda though there is still a distance to cover in respect of (i) development from within; (ii) localization of transparency, accountability and responsibility (TAR); and (iii) institutional viability. Most African countries are challenged to copy the best practises of other countries and improve on their out functions of public service to deliver quality services to the people. African bureaucracy must strive to being people-friendly and individuals should follow the words of President John F Kennedy; ‘ask not what your country can do for you but you can do for the country’.

(i) **Development from within;** Development from within has to originate from an Afro-centric perspective and should enhance the social and political space for the citizens whether in the public, private or voluntary sector to be constructively engaged. As such, it has the potential of making a major contribution toward more democratic and effective governance. At the core of bureaucratic (and political) transparency, accountability and responsibility is the need for rigorous system of financial management. The absence of balancing forces in the society enables the bureaucracy to establish itself as a superstructure that was to play the role as the vehicle of economic growth and modernization. But to achieve this requires the assuming the characteristics of Weber’s bureaucratic ideal type; to do things efficiently according to explicit, objective standards rather than to personal or other obligations and loyalties. It is this kind of public service that is in short supply in Africa and the one that is the target for the present ambition to encourage institution building in Africa.

(ii) **Localisation** of transparency, accountability and responsibility; Turning to transparency, accountability and responsibility (TAR), Africa has been grossly dependent (Euro-centric) approach on Western countries for their transitional process. When development related actives are not localized and owned by the people, service delivery will equally stray in the wrong direction. Localising development (Afro-centric) encourages the people to take seriously and impose conditionality’s on each other as opposed to waiting for outsiders who eventually will hijack the process. This is what is happening with the output functions of the public services which serve special interest as a result of its politicisation nature. The absence of transparency, accountability, ad responsibility shows the rising destructive frustration of the population compared to the rising expectation of the people on the eve of independence. Since existing political and economic conditionality’s fail to produce the expected improvement in quality living standards, as earlier noted, frustration and difficulties of dispensing foreign control of the development path of the continent will multiply. The best way for Africa to mitigate these problems is to adopt an Afro-centric approach and to rise to the occasion and demonstrate their capability of take responsibility of their development path and owning it. These equally exhibit the imperativeness for democratic, accountable and responsive governance to better handle development management issues in a responsible fashion on their own development. Samuel (1991) notes that there are in essence two ways to promote transparency, accountability and responsibility in the production of goods and services delivery; exit and voice.

(iii) **Institutional viability.** In respect of institutional viability, is encouraged by the democratic governance in place. African needs strong and viable institutions, not strong dictatorial leaders who are totally detached from the realities of their environment. Building the human capacity of the continent is essential and must be given top priority. The working environment of

civil servants should be improved to curb the rate of corruption, low productivity, inertia and other malaise that affects the output functions of the public service. The structural adjustment programme seriously and negatively impacted on the continent's public service sector. Against the background of on-going public sector contraction, it is especially important that the civil service be provided with incentives to restore viability and productivity. It should be noted that the public service sector in African countries has been the villain of development management for too long. With the economy picking up, it is time for the public service to prove itself. A good public service sector has all the ingredients and ability to facilitate a turnaround in quality services delivery in a cost-effective manner and to accelerate the transformation process.

Turning around the situation becomes an attractive avenue with a strong pulling effect for foreign investors. It creates room for justification for foreign aid. Presently, starting from the premises that the principal shortcomings in Africa today is not shortage of technical and managerial personnel but viable institutions, which also call for expensive training programmes to achieve better resources utilization by encouraging competition among public and private institutions in society. Low salary can be seen as a factor of bad and ugly of the civil service. With low salaries within the public sector qualified staff cannot be retained and so the quality of the services produced tends to deteriorate. This also contributes to the 'brain drain' phenomena, which is a consequence of the meagre pay and poor career prospects thereby undermining the administrative capacity of the continent. The implication for this behaviour leads to less and less time spent on their primary responsibilities as civil servants to the detriment of the general standard of performance of the civil service as noted by (Jaycox, 1993:23); "it is demoralised; it is underpaid, it is boated". Therefore the civil service is running often on a kind of informal or private taxation."

The public service needs to rededicate them to the belief that progress is possible in Africa. Having strong and independent institutions provides good chances of receiving external assistance and open to learning from best practices from other countries. The necessary training and capacity-building interventions will have to be given to public functionaries to ensure that skills are used optimally in the process of creating a capable developmental state as well as being proactive in dealing with the numerous challenges facing modern government. It goes without saying that an uninformed society cannot be democratic; an ignorant electorate cannot be effective. The role of a critical and objective media as an institution of educating, informing and entertaining society is vital in building a veritable public service sector. Of course, one cannot rule out the fact that the media are active political actors. But as active political actors, their role is to be objective, constructive, informative and impartial in their reporting. Effective interpretation and reporting means effective and timely delivery of services and improved welfare. It is also argued here that the state has a major role in promoting an 'information society'. Information technology should be used to re-engineer and support all government processes in order to meet all strategic and operational requirements of the public service.

The Role of the Media

Given that tense competition exist between the bureaucracy and the media as to which should be classified as the fourth estate of government, the influence of power and reaching a broader sector of society, there seem to be a 'backward loop' to the situation with a better understanding

of the complexity of the public service sector to service delivery. The situation can in fact be revisited by trying to explain the ‘rise and fall’ of service delivery and in particular by trying to identify the factors which have so far contributed to poor service delivery and the extent to which the society is informed on the state of art. Question of power are indisputably important. The media reaches a wide public and can make or unmake the activities of the public service. The public service sector has the power to enact policy measures that curtail the role of the media. The inherent power structure of the two bodies has a greater capacity to change the agenda and decisions of government.

Given that the media in Cameroon is under the strict control of the government, the output functions of the state may be seen within the perspectives as having ‘ups and downs’ or the ‘rise and fall’ of the public service. Under the pressure from the media and public opinion, the government was forced to start probing into its output functions especially on the issue of corruption. There is also the ‘good, bad, and ugly of the media enterprise – being a whistle blower, poor reporting and corruption among others. The creation of anti-corruption committees in ministries to fight the pandemic; legislatures on corruption and educating the public on the ills this injects into the society. At this point, government is seen to be ‘*doing something*’, ‘*solving problems*’ and ‘*making decisions*’ (Forje 2014; Owona, 2012). It is hoped the doing something, solving problems and making decision, should be geared towards preparing for the future and ensuring sustainable quality services delivery to all.

For now and in the case of Cameroon, three syndromes contribute to poor services delivery, namely; (a) the appointment syndrome; (b) the promotion syndrome; and (c) the motion of support syndrome. These three intertwined factors breed corruption, inertia, low productivity; in short, these are avenues for an inefficient and ineffective bureaucratic setup leading to poor services delivery. The country is plagued with the corruption saga which is now endemic. The National Commission of Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF) in its human rights situation in Cameroon for 2012 observes among major challenges facing the country, is the increase in corruption. According to the report launched on 19 December 2013, “corruption has increased and has assumed a greater magnitude, despite Government efforts towards curbing the ill. Despite the recent establishment of the Special criminal Court as well as prosecutions against certain individuals within the Government, the phenomenon of corruption has remained on the increase and even assuming a greater magnitude (Lukong, 2013:6).

Information and communication technologies have raised greater awareness on the output functions of government. To a large extent the crucial role of science and scientific knowledge and the strategic use of specific language and arguments to express these – have played in shaping the policy concerns and debates on service delivery. This underscores the crucial contribution of the ‘power of expertise’, highlighting crucial contributions by various sectors of the economy to the advancement of the continent. The future of the continent belongs to the people who see possibilities before they become obvious. The continent has enormous possibilities for growth, development and sustainable wellbeing. As such, there are no dreams too large, no innovation unimaginable and no frontiers beyond the reach of the people. All what is required, is determination, commitment, political will and good leadership to overcome odds.

Conclusion

Where to from Here?

Although development in Africa remains strongly anchored to the principle of Euro-centricism, external agencies can contribute significantly to fostering good governance as input to public service delivery. Let me re-emphasise also that Africa should negate an Afro-centric approach to development. Without better governance and the proper and constructive engagement of all the stakeholders, government output functions can be derailed. The public service sector like good governance is a fragile plant that needs sustained nourishing. It requires fundamental changes in mentality and social expectations that will change only gradually. But the pace of change is likely to be strongly influenced by economic circumstances, visionary leadership and a vibrant civil society.

That the African public service sector is corrupt, unproductive and strongly politicized cannot be denied. Change is required. Knowing that changing procedures, mentality and practices within already established institutions is not an easy task requires serious changes in mind set across the board to see development from another angle. To implement an Afro-centric development model, one must first recognize that serious mind set change is necessary. Far reaching reforms are needed to make the public service functional and responsive to service delivery and in meeting the essential needs of the people. The appeal to the public service sector is to draw some lessons from Shaw (1901:1): *“the worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them; that’s the essence of inhumanity.”* Today, state output services or the social contract between the state and people is measured largely on the output functions of the civil service. It is on the decent with a landing that could be disastrous. There is need to find common ground and a call to action against poor services delivery by the public service. Africa needs a public service sector that is innovative and enhancing sustainable quality service delivery. The contagious disease of corruption, low productivity, inertia that has gripped the continent is slowing the onward march to quality livelihood of the people. This slow progress should send significant signals to leaders. In short, it calls for genuine servant leadership to effect positive change for the common good.

The point of departure of this paper is the apparent need for the depoliticisation of the public service, making it a veritable instrument in meeting the social contract between the state and the people and creating an enabling environment for the bureaucratic set-up for the deliverance of services to the people. The good, bad and ugly of the public service depends on the services rendered to society. First, it is imperative that the human capital of the service be developed ensuring that moral, ethical values and discipline prevails. Second, the working conditions of the workers are improved to curb the degree of inertia, low productivity, inefficiency, corruption and other malpractices that render the sector a liability to the state. Third, good governance, the rule of law must prevail to ensure checks and balances in the system.

Apparently, the challenge is looking ahead while acting now for proper public service sector to delivery. In order to confront the problem we have to understand the situation in all its complexity, taking on board how it demands a paradigm shift in the way of the structuring and

functioning of the public service and drawing examples from best practices around the world. Only when we embrace the idea of the ‘reality’ theory will Africa be in a position to achieve and implement the solutions Africa is searching for. A radical change in attitude, behaviour and conduct (ABC) is imperative. The paper strongly argues for an Afro-centric approach to addressing the continent’s debacles, backed by visionary leadership and the strong resolve to own its development path provides the best way forward.

The bureaucracy is a technology which society uses. Bureaucracy is operationalised into the three well-known types of production systems or service delivery systems – unit, mass and process production or service delivery. Later contingency theories, Mintzberg (1979) for example show that technology or bureaucracy in this respect is an important contingency factor, but only as one alongside environment, organisation age and size, fashion etc. There has to be interplay between technology and organisation (just like the need for interplay between the state and civil society) for fulfilling the social contract between the government and people to ensure sustainable quality living standards for the masses. But still management and its design decisions is regarded as a key to the understanding of the structuring and functioning – including innovativeness – of organisations. “But, how come then that in some sectors of our economy, state action often seems to lack consistency and clarity? Why is it that in many cases, decision-making delays still constitute a bottleneck in project implementation? Why can’t any region of our country achieve a public investment budget execution rate of over 50 percent? Lastly, one can rightfully question the usefulness of certain project monitoring committees which are unable to take any decisions (Biya 2014: op cit)? This is what makes the good, bad and ugly of the bureaucratic system.

However, much remains to be done to transform the public service from the ugly and bad side to the good side for it to become a good provider of quality services to the people. It requires an integrated long-term approach towards capacity building and institutional development. Government has to rethink the politics of depoliticisation of the bureaucracy, making the sector to serve which ever political party that assumes office. The good of the public service is to steer clear of party politics, adopt strict collective and moral-ethical discipline and be a service sector to the people and ensure the sustainability of the quality livelihood of the people. Africa is failing which is a sign of the continent not doing anything very creative, innovative and productive to accelerate the process of change for the overall good of the people. The people are challenged to cultivate a new mind set, attitude, behaviour and character (ABC) for the sustainable construction of the continent. The redeeming feature of underdevelopment is that it puts a nation to the test. Africa is challenged to make underdevelopment history and to ensure functional administrative and social systems that ensure the sustainable welfare of citizens.

It is clear that the continent is facing serious ‘crisis, deficiency in leadership being one as well as weak institutions that combined in contributing to poor services delivery and living standards, seen in this regard, a healthy civic infrastructure, backed by shared visions, values and goals and backed by trust provides the way forward for the continent. These are some of the issues the paper attempts to address.

Recommendations

From the issues presented, the following are some of the recommended remedial measures that can help address the on-going plight of poor public services delivery in Africa. It is hoped the measures and modalities identified in the paper requires a willingness on the part of government, civil society and friends of the continent to make necessary adjustments in their approaches and operations. In the interest of Africa's future, the ardent belief is that what is proposed is a simple request and achievable if only the resolve for change in mindset and the urgency to progress exist. The first step must be taken by Africans to address their calamities. The cost of not acting now is sacrilege.

For these reasons, the plea is for all stakeholders to embrace the recommendations, modify where necessary and move beyond it for quality service delivery and sustainable living standards for the people. If the African civil services are to guide and manage the public policy process effectively, the listed recommendations provide some key measures and directions for sustaining linkages among public administration and management practices in support of the continent's development process:-

- Human capacity building should be given top priority in the building a viable, productive, innovative and creative public service sector that delivers;
- Enhance public interface with government with a view to further the contribution of national experts and 'think tanks' in the process of crafting, implementation, and evaluation of national policies, strategies, programmes and projects;
- Governments reassessment of legislature, policies and regulations that are supportive of entrepreneurial activities but protecting the public realm from being exploited by dubious actors;
- Beyond strengthening the human resources component, institutional capacity building is crucial in the process;
- Beyond strengthening the human resources component, institutional capacity building should be crucial in the process;
- Expand the job market by encouraging more private-related activities and reducing dependence on the public service as the sole employer of human capital;
- The government should promote the development and utilization of science and technology that draws heavily from indigenous knowledge, ideas and resources;
- Collaborative engagement – state-civil society-private sector participation should be encouraged;
- Strengthen institutions of civil society that play the role of watchdog or whistle blower on public institutions;
- The government should improve efficiency, transparency and accountability of the public sector and business through mass education as well as encouraging networking among the various stake-holders;
- The government should establish viable and effective networks and communication structures and channels to exchange information, disseminate innovations and success stories on entrepreneurial and voluntary initiatives;
- The government should ensure better and more effective deployment of public resources,

as well as develop and strengthen national capital with a view to enhancing the capacity for domestic funding of development initiatives;

- The government should encourage regional economic integration as well as facilitate the establishment of multi-country business ventures at sub-regional and regional levels;
- The government should enforce the rule of law and good governance will ensure quality service delivery to the people.

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The author: John W. Forje is Prof Archie Mafeje Fellow of the Africa Institute of South Africa, Founder and Research Director of the Centre for Action-Oriented Research on African Development; author of many books and books, for example, *The Challenges of Administrative Political and Developmental renewal in Africa, Emerging Issues*; Vol. 1 and Vol. 2 *Essays on rethinking Government and Reorganisation*, Nova Science Publishers Inc, New York.. Forthcoming publications include, *Emerging Perspectives on Capacity Building and Quality Services Delivery in Africa* (editor); *Constructing or Whithering African Unity: Implementing an Action Plan for the Realisation of 'Africa Must Unite'*. Contact Address; Post Box 85, Bali-Nyonga, Bali-Sub Division, Mezam, North West Region. Cameroon Republic