THE CHALLENGES OF GOVERNANCE, PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN AFRICA

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A. Introduction

Vilela in his article entitled “Towards a theoretical coming together of administrative sciences” (Villela, 2001) contends that “With regard to the field of public administration, after a long period of domination by the legal approach, we have experienced domination by the managerial approach. This conflict has had another negative consequence, which is the relative marginalization and putting aside of other scientific approaches to the administrative problem, such as the public administration Africa continues to be the need to recognize its interdisciplinarity and hence the need to be more creative about how it is studied and executed.

Presumably in Africa we all want a ‘good public administration’. And as Vilela notes the responses to what constitutes good public administration are likely to be different depending on the disciplinary perspective of the respondent:

For a legal expert it is an administration that can guarantee decisions in respect of procedures and laws; for management expert, it is an administration that responds to technical criteria based on efficiency; for a historian, it is an administration which knows how to guarantee political stability during a given period; for a sociologist, it is an administration that represents and takes into account the needs of the different social classes… (Villela, 2001)

Given the current nature of debates pertaining to the role and status of government in Africa it is necessary to begin by defining the major concepts at stake. Governance and public administration can be understood narrowly such that the latter (public administration) refers to central or federal, provincial or state, and local institutions with their procedural, legal, regulatory, financial, human resources and asset requirements federal aimed at performing a regulatory and policing, and providing such services as defense, revenue extraction and spending on goods and services. Governance in this respect may refer to the manner in which this institutional apparatus performs its role in terms of efficiency and effectiveness with respect to its outputs and outcomes respectively.

The term ‘public sector’ would add to the foregoing institutional apparatus, the various statutory bodies and parastatals. And finally, the notion of the state would include the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. Thus the notion of governance can as be as broad as the notion of government or the state that one seeks to interrogate.

For purposes of this essay the notions of government or the state (which will be used interchangeably) are understood in the broad context to encompass central government (together with its various levels of decentralization), the executive branch, the legislature and the judiciary. To this broad notion of government or the state must apply a broader notion of governance which relates to the interface between the state or government, and society which encompasses civil society, labour organizations, employer organizations, non-governmental organizations political parties and community organization as well as individual citizens and their families. In attempting to identify some of the main challenges confronting
governance, public administration and public sector reform in Africa is useful to begin with the challenges at the broadest levels and then proceeding down to the those pertaining to public administration.

B. Challenges of Governance at the State Societal Level

In Public Choices and Policy Change, Grindle and Thomas propose a framework that, with a little adaptation is useful for understanding the complex issues at stake in discussing issues of governance, public administration and public sector reform. They identify three broad areas of concern namely the Environmental context, Agenda-setting circumstances and Policy characteristics:

**Environmental context**: this includes the external and domestic social and economic conditions as well as the institutional and organizational structure pertaining to the relationship among the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. Within this context the manner in which ruling elites are produced and reproduced can also be mapped out to determine how they interpret and their roles and responsibilities. The role of elites and needs to go beyond a crude class analysis to capture the various ways in which the elite may be differentiated for purposes of political analysis. Governance in this context relates to the manner in which ruling elites see themselves embedded in society and how they see themselves accountable to them. This is not only an attitudinal problem but one of institutionalized mechanism of participation, consultation and accountability. The major challenge at this level concerns the degree to which adequate institutional and organizational structures exist to facilitate good and democratic governance in terms relations between society and the state. Formally such relations are stipulated in the constitution and translated into various legal and statutory provisions. Substantively such relations relate to the manner in which good governance and democracy are actually practiced in day to day activities. The Third Wave democracy at is relates t Africa ha yielded major advances in formal democratic provisions and practice , while day to day substantive practice has tended to be characterized by states reluctant to yield to imperatives of democracy and good governance and civil society that has become increasingly bolder in challenging state resistance and in asserting its claims to live in a democratic environment characterized by good governance.

**Agenda setting circumstances**: these refer to factors that may induce ruling elites to view problems as normal or representing a crisis situation, which also may be a function of how the ruling elite relates to the environmental context. An interesting observation here is that there may be so many situations such as those related to the incidence and prevalence of diseases and their associated deaths, the persistence of natural disasters such as drought and floods, and general issues pertaining to the fact that the majority of people in a given country are wallowing in poverty or eking out a living in conditions of under-employment, which should all be viewed as crisis situations, but may be taken as normal situations by certain governments. Under such circumstances, if such problems are not given the priority they deserve the issue may be less that of public administration capacity or efficiency, but one of a total breakdown in governance and accountability of the ruling elite in relation to the populace. A crisis situation tends to be dominated by macro-politics and strategic policy formulation while the normal politics as usual approach tends to be dominated by concern for
micro-political and bureaucratic relationships (Thomas and Grindle, 1991). At this level the challenge is the degree to which states begin to transcend business as usual approaches to policy making and implementation toward more strategic forms of policy formulation and implementation that can lead to the promotion of sustainable human development, which continues to elude African countries and governments.

**Policy characteristics:** This is divided into “arenas of conflict” and “resources for implementation and sustainability”. The arena for conflict is divided into public (originating from society) and bureaucratic. Any developments from either arena can either support or scuttle reforms contemplated by the executive branch, for instance. The resources relate to the things that can be proffered or withheld by either the public or the bureaucracy in relation to given policy initiatives or to the manner in which alliances can be forged between certain sectors among the public and the bureaucracy. Here governance will tend to be two dimensional in that part of it relates to the manner in which bureaucracy operates within itself and in relation to the executive branch, which tends to be the political arm; and to the manner in which government (executive arm, bureaucracy, legislature and judiciary) relate to the public. In many countries in Africa these two dimensions are embryonic within government and fairly problematic between government and the public where they tend to be procedural and formal rather than substantive.

The problem in Africa can then be stated to be as follows: the socio-economic situation has been degenerating while the external environment has not been facilitative, while the bureaucracy has tended to see the situation in non-crisis terms and has continued to stick to bureaucratic approaches imbued in micro-politics. In the process governance has been compromised at the same time that the capacity of the state to address the problems at stake has also been weakened. The resulting situation is a vicious cycle or trap in which there is paralysis in governance, public administration and public sector reform all failure to promote sustainable human development and to an atmosphere highly conducive to instability. The research agenda therefore needs to be pursued on two interrelated fronts, namely from the point of view of grand research and theorizing about the macro issues of governance and public administration in their broader sense and relationship, and from the point view of the technical aspects that these issues entail such as those related to decentralization, human resource management, partnerships and so on. The first approach allows us to pose the larger question as to ‘where is Africa going or where should it be going and what vehicles are needed to take us there?.’ The second approach would allow us to examine each aspect of the vehicle in greater detail with the aim of distilling best practice, innovative actions, inventions, models prototypes and recommendations as needed. What would be the ideal synergy between the two approaches heuristically and methodologically? This indeed was the aim of the initiative proposed at the Mount Grace Consultation where it was noted that:

The way forward lay in practical innovation and real engagement with the environment. The old model is defective because it lacks a normative, analytical and development ethos, but new approaches should not simply tack on what has been left out. Unless new explanatory models are developed which are capable of addressing
issues of transformation and change, public administration will simply be “stuck with the ox-wagon” (Mc Lennan, in Mc Lennan and Fitzgerald editors, undated)

The challenge is both a positivist and a normative one. The positivistic aspect requires that we understand things as they are by interrogating the disarticulation between governance, public administration and public sector reform. The normative task requires us to investigate what optimal articulation of governance, public administration and public sector reform is necessary and possible to facilitate the consolidation of democratic governance and the promotion of sustainable human development. The positivist thrust can inform on the normative task. A positivist approach, in the absence of an implicit or explicit normative goal, is likely to lead us into uncharted waters and will merely exacerbate the problems we are currently facing.

C. The Challenges of Promoting Sustainable Human Development and Consolidating Democracy

It is worth recalling that from the time of independence the practice of public administration has been dominated by western models, but admittedly, when countries have attempted to depart from such models they have not too successful either, since various such statist models were also predicated on narrow interests and agendas. The question that arises is whether the organizational, institutional and procedural forms that have characterized public administration so far are adequate to address the developmental needs of African countries especially with respect to the need for strategic policy formulation, coherence and comprehensiveness of policies, and participatory and consultative processes of policy formulation and implementation. If Africa’s plight requires proactive state policies carried out in collaboration with the private sector, civil society and community agencies, do we have the appropriate state apparatus, and is such an apparatus adequately embedded in society to accomplish the needed task?

It may be noted that African governments , just like their colonial counterparts have been dedicated to nurturing the enclave formal economy and polity which, although accounting for the greater part of gross domestic product, only accounts for a small proportion of total employment, and thus only services the needs of a minority in most countries. Modern formations In Africa, whose needs the state and the public sector finds itself compelled to address are relative enclaves providing livelihoods to minority of the population while the majority of the populace lives and works in relative poverty and, marginalization and exclusion in the non-formal sectors where traditional and various survivalist and adaptive livelihoods and modes of governance are dominant even if under great pressure from various external factors. Thus the question still stands as to what kind of state would be needed to promote inclusive economic participation and sustainable human development in a manner that uplifts the poorest of the poor in its wake. That is the grand problematique of public administration and governance.
In the book African Public Administration (Mukandala, editor, 2000) the following issues are proposed as major challenges confronting public administration in Africa:

- The crisis of institutions;
- Continued domination of the colonial logic in public administration;
- Poor or non-implementation of legislated policies;
- Persistent and endemic corruption;
- The articulation of structural adjustment programmes with privatization and civil service reform.

In the above book some of the suggested solutions to the grand problem including the above items entail the following:

Ake advocates for the creation of a “Public”, legitimizing the state and transforming it alongside African politics. Dia calls for the move away from a conservationist orientation on the part of African institutions, toward renovation. Mukandala calls for a change in the “logic” that drives African bureaucracies. He calls for the subordination of bureaucracy to society’s cultural and political institutions, to become an instrument of governance, not a governing instrument (Mukandala, editor, 2000).

Presumably if the primary function of government is to govern, then public administration must be seen as the art of managing the state apparatus for sake of achieving the aims of governance. In this respect the concept of governance is viewed from two possible perspectives, namely a state-centric on and society-centric one. The state-centric perspective focuses on how the state is able to achieve various objectives such as (a) enhancing the welfare of its citizens, (b) economic growth, political stability and the security of its citizens, democracy and overall accountability for its actions to its citizens. From this perspective government is generally placed on government itself. A society-centric perspective can be understood to be one in which the emphasis is placed on the democratic synergy between the government and the society whereby democratic forms of governance, participation, accountability and monitoring of government actions by society are given priority. Ideally, however, we need a society in which both roles of government are promoted and achieved. Indeed one of the major challenges confronting African countries is the need to promote developmentalism, which requires a proactive state or government and to promote both procedural and substantive democracy, which requires the need to live up to society-centric imperatives.

One may understand governance to imply the need for government to pursue its role of running the government’s institutional, human resource and financial apparatus effectively and efficiently in order to achieve either the state-centered objectives or the society centered objectives, or both of these sets of objectives. Now while for First Wave and Second Wave democracies the two perspectives have not necessarily evolved simultaneously together, but rather sequentially, African countries, which constitute part of the Third Wave of democracy, are confronted by the need to achieve both simultaneously as a consequence of various internal and external pressures and imperatives. Thus two sets of challenges emerge at the outset: first the need to balance state-centric impulses with society-centric normative ideals;
and second, the need to promote sustainable human development, which may require a proactive state, and the need to promote and consolidate democracy. It is clear that the new Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) is predicated on the need to promote those two sets to balances.

With respect to the political transitions that have taken place in Africa Botha notes as follows:

Between 1960 and 1989 the dominant political trend in Africa was single-party states or military rule. At the end of 1989-when the Cold War ended- opposition parties were tolerated by only nine African states. An equal number of countries were under military rule. The remaining 34 of then 54 independent states in Africa had single party systems or ‘no-party’ systems....The dominant political trend during the 1990s was therefore the movement to a multi-party political system. It remains an open question whether this phenomenon was internally generated or induced by Western donor conditionality (such as in Malawi and Kenya). Whatever the answer, at the end of 1999 no less than 41 African countries had multi-party systems. Some countries have held their second and even third multi-party elections since 1989. A total of 153 multi-party elections, of which 68 were presidential elections and 85 legislative elections had been held in Africa by the end of 1999. One fifth of the continent therefore had either ‘non-party systems or were ruled by the military at the turn of the millennium(Botha in Maloka and Le Roux editors, 2000).

This is what constituted part of the Third Wave of democracy. The question arises what the state of public administration and governance was during the early phase of one party states and what it is likely to be during this transition to democracy. Are we to assume, as traditionalists assume, that the public administration apparatus was neutral agency during all these periods and merely the servant of the people? The implications of the transition to democracy and quest for consolidating democracy for public administration need to be subject of further scholarly interrogation at the national, regional and continental levels.

In the Preface to the second sequel to his book Public Administration: A Nigerian and Comparative Perspective(1983), Adamolekun notes that his book was a popular textbook in many Africa universities for almost a decade, but that by the early 1990s only two countries, Malawi and Botswana appeared to the only countries using the book. Nonetheless in 1999 he proceeded to edit the sequel entitled Public Administration in Africa: Main Issues and Selected Country Studies. He notes in Preface to the book that:

I decided to focus on the main issues in public administration as reflected in the contemporary literature on the subject. Not surprisingly, most of the main issues covered in the 1983 textbook have remained relevant and current, notably public enterprise management, decentralization, public financial management, human resource management, and accountability. These are issues that would be found in any widely used textbook on public administration for tertiary students in industrialized as well as in developing countries. Four issues that have assumed considerable salience in the 1990s are covered in the present text: governance, new public
management, information technology, and partnerships, involving the public, private and voluntary sectors (Adamolekun, 1999).

While the various authors in Adomolekun’s book proceed to discuss each of the more recent issues in great detail one is left hanging, in that the broader issue of how all the issue articulate to provide for either efficient and effective management and governance, or the lack of these, is not adequately addressed. It appears that there is a need for the problematique of public administration, governance, public sector reform and public management to be posed in a comprehensive macro manner within which the micro technical issues pertaining to the various issues identified are located and discussed. It is clear that for Africa there are deeper problems at stake than can be dealt with solely by tinkling with each issue separately.

In Africa there has been a conventional belief that governments, driven by nationalism, redistributive interventions, and the need to assert centrist tendencies, have tended to be unduly state-centric, and as consequence have tended to compromise their ability to be efficient and effective, while at the same time compromising the broader governance needs of their societies. Hence there have been calls for the reform of the public sector primarily aimed at making the state or government institutional apparatus market friendly, lean, managerial, decentralized and ‘customer’ friendly, in the hope that it would better meet its societal objectives of good governance as well.

Over the past two decades or so African countries have made significant strides making transition to democratic forms of governance, especially in terms of promoting the attainment of the First Generation of Rights (normally constitutionally enshrined rights of free speech, individual freedom etc) and proceeding to the Second Generation of rights, normally enshrined in various international conventions and recommendations and adopted by member countries of such organizations as the United Nations and International Labour Organization. It is nonetheless true as well as that in many countries in Africa the attainment of the procedural and juridical democracy as implied by the First and Second Generation of Rights is a tenuous one since in some of the countries threats to such transitions continue to loom large. The instability in countries such as Liberia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cote d’Ivoire, and Sierra Leone attest to this. But there have been promising transitions in countries such as South Africa, Kenya, Malawi and Zambia and Tanzania, while countries such a Mauritius and Botswana have had long standing traditions of procedural and juridical democracy. While major advances have been made with respect to procedural and juridical democracy, almost all African countries are still confronted by the need to attain substantive democracy by realizing Third Generation Rights related to Sustainable Human Development and the Millennium Development Goals. The inability of African countries to meet Third Generation Rights in itself poses a threat to the ability of African countries to sustain and consolidate the First and Second Generation Rights. Thus at the broader levels of governance and the state the key challenge is one of consolidating democracy and promoting sustainable human development. This challenge that has been articulated in NEPAD and that needs to be elaborated further and aligned with national policies, and the challenge that concerns the content and functioning of the executive (and its bureaucracy), the legislature and judiciary (including the constitution and its provisions) and their
relationship to societal structures both in terms of participation and governance and in terms of the delivery of goods and services.

D. Theoretical Challenges

In approaching the grand challenge of how the state or government can be transformed into an effective and efficient vehicle for promoting good governance, consolidating democracy and attaining sustainable human development it is necessary to be innovative about theoretical approaches likely to underpin such interrogations. Historically discourses about modes of governance and public administration in colonial and post-colonial regimes have been dominated by Weberian approaches emphasizing procedural and instrumental approaches of institutional, organizational and functioning of public administration apparatuses. Following the ascendency of structural and adjustment and stabilization programmes in Africa beginning in the 1980s New Public Management approaches superceded and subsumed Weberian approaches by focusing on the instrumental functions of the public sector and how this can be made more efficient and more effective. The new Public Management has now taken two forms, one that has informed by neoclassical theories of rationality and public choice and another that is informed by a normative approaches aimed at promoting equitable and democratic forms of governance and development. The former approach has underpinned conventional approaches to public sector and civil service restructuring by recommending various reforms such as privatization, cost recovery measures, insulation and ring-fencing of select agencies, partnerships and so on in spite of opposition from civil, non-governmental and community bodies. The latter approach to the New Public Management has assumed a normative stance focusing on the manner in which the public sector and indeed the state can be transformed into a vehicle for promoting sustainable human development, good governance and democracy. In this latter approach instrumentalist approaches to public administration have to pass the test of inclusivity, equity, voice and governance as integral elements of all aspects of public administration in its narrow and broad conceptualization and practice.

More recent advances in the form of the New Institutional Economics have yet to be applied to their fullest extent with respect to the African situation. This approach also tends to yield two strands, namely one that tends to be conventionally inclined which tends to give further impetus to neoclassical agendas in public administration, and another which promises to open up new vistas in interrogating the origin and role of public institutions which could be more usefully exploited in the African context. The nature of the challenge confronting African countries and intellectuals is such that it could benefit from further interrogation of the more progressive approach to the New Public Management, but by subjecting it to considerations opened up by the New Institutional Economics, especially its progressive stands. Such an approach is needed to fruitfully investigate past failures and successes in African governance and public administration and to chart new vistas in indigenizing the discourse on governance and public administration in Africa. More heterodox approaches are needed to explore innovative institutional and organizational structures that can address the fragmented and dichotomous socio-economic structures of African polities and the
development and democratic needs that need to be promoted and attained in the current
global environment.

Africa should avoid the tendency to conflate technical issues which already subsume or are
predicated upon implicit grand paradigms with the discourses over grand paradigms
themselves. There is need to posit the problematique in its grand theoretical form within
which technical questions can be addressed and interrogated. This is important in order to
clarify and make explicit the normative precepts underpinning particular paradigms and a
technical choice in policy or restructuring, for instance.

E. Challenges of Public Sector Reform and Governance

The public sector can be understood to be the key apparatus for the execution of the
functions of the state or government. It is represented by the executive and its bureaucracy
at the national, federal, provincial and local levels together with the various statutory and
parastatal bodies that perform in a number of regulatory, monitoring, production and service
delivery functions. Following the attainment of independence statutory and parastatal bodies
have proliferated in most African countries irrespective of whether they proclaimed
themselves to be socialist or market oriented. At the attainment of independence there was a
general belief that statism was the best way to promote rapid economic development and to
also guard against political and social instability, hence the expansion of the role of
government into many spheres which are now being challenged. Over the years and
particularly following the international recession of the mid 1970s and subsequent ones
triggered by either natural disaster, declining terms of trade and social upheaval the public
sector has been progressively strained at almost all levels. These strains have
encompassed financial crises and the inability to sustain personnel and services, debt-
servicing problems, the drain of human capital from the public sector, increased corruption,
and overall collapse in democratic governance.

The call for comprehensive public sector reform was first articulated in the World Bank’s
1981 report entitled Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa (also known as the
Berg Report). The Berg Report identified a number of problem areas which were seen to
militate against economic growth and equity. The first related to poor macroeconomic
management in the form of persistent fiscal deficits, negative interest rates, price inflation and
controlled exchange rates. The second concerned the over-extended public sector in that
ubiquitous parastatals (such as marketing boards, nationalized import substitution industries
and do on) were seen to be inefficient entities that squandered resources, while they also
distorted prices in so far as they had the mandate to control and regulate certain markets
seen as strategic by governments then in poor. The third set of problems related to
management of the trade regime which was seen to militate against free trade internationally
through high rates of protection and exchange rates that over-valued local currencies. A
fourth set of problems concerned the fact that many governments that claimed to be socialist
were spending too much money on the public service itself as a guarantor of employment, on
social services and other consumption related expenditures which sere seen to
unsustainable in the long term especially when the prospects of growth were dim given the
global environment at the time.

On the basis of the above problems the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund
resorted to stabilization and structural adjustment programmes which among other things
attempted to make the state market-friendly, lean, managerial, decentralized and customer
oriented. From the point of view of the public sector the implications of stabilization and
structural adjustment programmes can be said to have consisted of two thrusts, namely the
need to promote procedural rationality in the operations of the public sector and instrumental
rationality in its outcomes in the economy. The former attempted to apply principles
applicable to the privates sector as a basis for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of
public sector institutions. The latter, instrumental rationality, was based on a coherent set of
arguments that attempted to demonstrate the superiority of market forces in the efficient
allocation of resources hence the need to roll back the state and deregulate a number of
controlled activities. Thus procedural rationality was aimed at the internal operations of the
state and the nature of its outputs and outcomes, while the notion of instrumental rationality
was aimed at

enhancing the performance of the market economy while minimizing the role of the state. As
the Third Wave of democratization embraced increased numbers of developing countries in
Latin America, Africa and Asia, the notion of governance was appended as a major
complementary objective.

The need for good governance was seen as important is ensuring that the behaviour of the
state was accountable, customer oriented and efficient. The notion of good governance thus
appeared to directly address what needed to be done within the internal apparatus of the
state itself (the state as a whole, the public sector, and the government bureaucracy). The
notion of democratic governance appeared to refer to the need for state and society to have
a synergy that mutually reinforces good governance and democratic forms of "voice", respect
for human rights, public participation, societal monitoring and overall checks and balances
over the state. Thus the key areas of reform have been the following: the quest for fiscal
stability which has an impact on public sector expenditures and employment, state capacity
social development and economic development; the quest for managerial efficiency within
government and any associated statutory bodies; capacity building to develop a new cadre
of public servants suited to the new ethos of procedural and instrumental rationality; the
promotion of public accountability and improved service delivery.
Any combination of the above could be seized upon to promote institutional restructuring in
the public sector.

The major challenges arising from the above approach are the following:

The tension between procedural and instrumental rationality driven by a dogmatic approach
to asserting the need for market oriented of organizations and the need for ethical rationality
such as that promoted through theories of justice and more generally through social
democratic forms of social organizations which tend to give weight to the need for equity and
substantive democracy (Third Generation Rights) as core values.
The tension between the internal consistency of the arguments used in support of both procedural and instrumental rationality based on market imperatives and objectives and the actual outcomes which so far have tended to compromise of sustainable human development and substantive democracy thereby generating instability as well.

F. Challenges of Governance and the Bureaucracy

As noted earlier public administration is best understood to refer to the technocratic running of the government or state bureaucracy as represented by the executive branch, the central bureaucracy (as well as federal, provincial and local level bureaucracies). The quest for procedural rationality as a basis for organizing and executing government activities has been consistently articulated with respect to the pursuit of public administration. There is an assumption that procedural reform of the public service is a necessary complement to the creation of an external environment that is primarily geared to servicing the needs of the market, that is, an external environment that promotes rationality based on unfettered markets. Thus the pursuit and implementation of structural adjustment and stabilization programmes has been accompanied by the call for civil service reform which among other things has entailed downsizing toward lean and efficient organizational forms, which would be characterized by merit, professionalism, impartiality, honesty, and accountability. In addition civil reforms have entailed pay reform, capacity building, promotion of executive agencies, and decentralization. Within this context the 'public good' supposedly to be promoted by such a minimalist and efficient civil service apparatus is also quite circumscribed under the assumption that the market will provide for most goods previously undertaken by the state.

The consequence of a minimalist public administration coupled with structural adjustment and stabilization has been a drastic deterioration in services as the capacity of the state has been reduced while the private sector, which is expected to be providing the anticipated 'private goods' including those previously provided by the state, has failed to resuscitate to the degree needed to ameliorate the social and economic plight of the citizenry. In addition, many governments have not been able to generate adequate resources to sustain an efficient civil service, hence the deterioration in its morale which has gone hand in hand with a dissatisfied citizenry that has lost faith in the public service. Such a situation, in the face of stagnant growth has fueled corruption on both sides of the spectrum, the civil service as well as the citizenry.

Implications of fiscal austerity:

Fiscal austerity is primarily aimed at controlling the rate of inflation and while also contributing to stabilizing monetary indicators, all of which are expected to create an enabling environment for market-led growth. The expectation is that in the medium to long run the
economy will expand such that government revenues also expand allowing the government to spend more, but in a more sustainable manner. Nonetheless, the immediate consequences for public administration are generally the following: a reduction in civil service employment; a reduction in real pay and benefits; a reduced capacity of the state to spend on social services such as education, health and sanitation; and a compromised ability of the state to undertake simulative expenditures to promote economic growth. The challenge rather has been that fiscal austerity has not been able to yield the expected benefits while its immediate effects have generally been negative in nature. It is of course also true that some African governments have not been able to implement recommended reforms as needed, but it can also be claimed that the reforms, even in their totality have not been able to precipitate the growth needed nor the revitalization of the public sector needed for an effective and efficiently bureaucracy to maintained.

The quest for managerial efficiency

Generally, fiscal constraints have necessitated the need for improving managerial efficiency which is often to be justified on the basis of procedural rationality by emulating market related techniques and strategic. Some aspects of managerial efficiency have entailed insulating government agencies and departments by allowing them to operate on the basis of private enterprise practices (market or quasi-market practices) such as charging cost related fees for services, requiring performance management contracts for their management employees, decentralizing activities and outsourcing certain activities that are deemed non-essential such as cleaning services, maintenance of information and technology infrastructure and so on. The key challenge here is that the rationale for government and its role is compromised to such an extent that broader objectives such as those pertaining to security, equity and governance are compromised especially since such reforms tend to favour societal clients that are better endowed. Thus one of the major challenges in Africa is to promote managerial efficiency in a manner that also promotes the public good aspect of the role of government.

Promoting accountability in the public sector bureaucracy

There is general agreement that bureaucracies should be accountable to the people and that such accountability should be complemented by appropriate institutional mechanisms and procedures of checks and balances both within government and between government and societal interests. The major failing and challenge here is that often the accountability and good governance are promulgated in the absence of complementary and supportive mechanisms aimed at embedding modes of governance in societal and extra governmental structures. Currently, this challenge is exemplified by the difficulties being experienced by NEPAD in attempting to institutionalize the Peer Review Mechanism. Many governments tend to believe that the democratic provisions of accountability surrounding the triad of executive, legislative and judicial institutions is enough to guarantee bureaucratic accountability; and that forms of checks and balances or participation outside of these structures merely provide a breeding ground for parochial forms of lobbying. Nonetheless, governments and multilateral agencies promoting good and democratic forms of governance
continue to call for participatory forms of governance and for social accords as a way of institutionalizing both good governance (from the point of view of the behaviour of the bureaucracy) and democratic governance (in terms of state–societal relationships) both of which have not been given the attention they deserve in the African context, and which therefore remain a major challenge.

The need to promote growth with equity (sustainable human development)

A major challenge for the bureaucracy continues to be one of defining what role government and public administration has to play in promoting economic growth and sustainable human development. The major question and challenge is the degree to which the new forms of public management that are predicated on procedural and instrumental rationality are appropriate as a basis for a developing country to promote both growth and equity as normally called for in the objective of sustainable human development. Unfortunately global private forces together with developing country governments tend to be the agencies behind the very forms of public management and administration which tend to constrain the ability of African countries to proactively promote growth with equity and to redefine their role and position in terms of international specialization.

If the reforms that have been attempted in the public sector over the past twenty years or so are to be tested on the basis of their impact on growth and equity, then they have failed in many respects. It may also be true that matters could have been worse without them, but this also suggests that African countries have yet to arrive at an optimal public management and administration regime that is compatible with their status as developing countries and that is able address the major challenges of promoting sustainable human development within the current global environment.

G. Challenges of Governance at the Regional and Continental Levels

While NEPAD may not be the first initiatives to posit the need for continental approaches to transformation, it is the first to posit the grand problematique is entailing the need to attain sustainable human development and democratic governance as joint objectives. It is to be admitted nonetheless that both these objectives are not adequately posed since NEPAD seems to be still steeped in conventional frameworks of governance and growth. But the opportunity has been opened and the challenge posed of the need to find innovative ways to promote democratic governance and sustainable human development. This challenge should be seized upon to interrogate how the state, the public sector and the government bureaucracy can be turned into vehicles to achieve those goals at the national, regional and continental levels. In this respect present forms of governance and policy making at national, regional and continental levels should not to be taken for granted or be taken as given. The need to critically questioned and interrogated. First the nature of the agenda needs to be investigated further and elaborated more rigorously in order to ensure that it will address the twin goals of democratic governance and sustainable human development especially with respect to meeting the Millennium Development Goals set for 2015 at which time the number
of people living in poverty should have been reduced by a half. This is the question of the nature of the development agenda. It is clear at this stage that a bolder developmental agenda is needed and that Africa cannot continue to expect that the mere promotion of growth in the formal part of the economy will be enough to precipitate and inclusive development path toward sustainable human development. Second, within this context, it is necessary to explore what bold and proactive strategies by the state would be feasible in the current global environment. Notwithstanding existing global constraints it is necessary that efforts at regional and continental levels also address the need for more representative and equitable global governance structures as well to complement calls for similar structures at the national, regional and continental levels.

The third issue concerns the need to articulate adequate forms of representation at regional and continental levels which would ensure that the voices of civil society, social partners, non-governmental bodies and community representatives and bodies, especially those representing marginalized and excluded groups in African polities have voice. This is a representational issue which needs to be fully addressed at national, regional and continental levels as well, but is patently not addressed at the regional and continental levels where heads of state appear to be the dominant agents.

H. Conclusion

The above discussion has proposed that the challenges of governance and public administration in Africa can be posed at various levels namely the following:

- The grand challenge of how the state, the public sector, the government bureaucracy can be made a vehicle for promoting democratic governance, consolidating democracy and promoting sustainable human development;
- The challenge of public sector reform and how such reform can be geared toward achieving the grand long term objectives;
- The challenge of how the bureaucracy can be made more efficient as a vehicle for promoting governance in the short, medium and long term especially with respect to effective and efficient delivery of outputs and outcomes;
- And the challenges of governance and development as reflected in organizational and institutional forms of administration and management at the regional and continental and global levels.

It is proposed that the normative and positivist tasks posed by the forgoing challenges at both the grand level of theorizing and at the technical levels need to be addressed. In particular it is necessary that a normative stance is taken in favour of and in support of modes of governance that institutionalize inclusivity in order to ensure equitable outcomes at national, regional and continental and global levels. Hence it is necessary to investigate how state-society relations, relations among the triad of the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, relations between the public sector and civil society and relations within the government bureaucracy itself can be made more democratic and accountable such that they promote
the long term objectives of consolidating democracy and promoting sustainable human development. In this respect the positivist task concern the need to understand the past in terms where and why Africa succeeded and or failed especially after the attainment of independence, and understanding the consequences of present practices and choices being made in public administration and reform and governance especially since the onset of structural adjustment and stabilization programmes.

Along the above lines, some issues for follow-up that emerged from a recent workshop of experts in public administration and governance are the following:

1. **Historical and comparative analyses**: There is a need to analyze document trends in ideas and practice over the past four decades with respect to public administration and governance in order to identify and analyze paradigm changes, to distill best practices and lessons. Experiences and lessons from Asia and Latin America should be explored.

2. **Search for new paradigms**: There is a need to begin to engage ourselves in interrogation of existing paradigms and formulation of new ones based on indigenous experiences and imperatives and exploiting indigenous knowledge.

3. **Knowledge sharing**: There is a need for systematic knowledge sharing among academics, government officials and policy makers. This should be underpinned by a value chain of institutionalized activities encompassing invention, innovation and diffusion of knowledge in governance and public administration, hence the need for centres of excellence for each level of the value chain.

4. **Governance and Development Nexus**: The nexus of problems around the promotion of governance, consolidating democracy and attainment of sustainable human development should form the focal point of investigating the public sector and in particular with respect to how it can be refined as instrument for attainment of these goals in the context of formal non-formal dichotomies in African countries and global pressures and imperatives that reinforce marginalization and inequality at national, regional, continental and international levels. Such inequalities further marginalize the non-formal sectors and militate against the attainment of both democratic governance and sustainable human development. In particular innovative forms of devolution should be explored which will seek an appropriate balance between unity and diversity.

5. **Re-founding the state**: There is a need to re-found the state and re-root, or embed, it in its people in a much more substantive way than has hitherto been the case.

6. **Indigenous knowledge**: There is a need to indigenize the notion and practice of governance by exploiting and adapting indigenous knowledge systems particularly those prevailing in non-modern sectors of African society by which the majority of African people live and abide. Such an approach would yield more legitimate and
accountable practices in the eyes of the majority of the peoples who are currently relatively alienated by modern forms of governance borrowed from external sources. Such an exercise should be aimed at informing on the search for organic and synergistic approaches of governance and public administration. Nonetheless it is recognized that regressive and dysfunctional practices and forms of knowledge from both the modern and traditional spheres should be discouraged.

7. **Addressing collapsing states:** The causes of collapse and melt-down in some African states should be forthrightly investigated with a view to deriving comparative lessons for the future;

8. **Early warning and monitoring indicators:** There a need to develop indicators that can be used as early warning devices for impending crises in governance and public administration.

9. **Capacity building:** There is a need to enhance the capacity of the public sector, the civil service and academics to generate and absorb ideas related to innovative forms of governance and public sector practice through institutionalized forms of knowledge sharing and discourse. Promotion of Partnerships, centres of excellence, and networks should be encouraged together with institutionalization of cooperative approaches to capacity building, establishment of data bases research facilities and endeavours, technical advisory and monitoring agencies and knowledge data bases at national, regional, and continental levels.

10. **Leadership:** There is a need investigate the nature of leadership in Africa with a view to informing in how good leadership can be nurtured, promoted and supported to spearhead democratic and developmental strategic agendas through a proactive role of the state in partnership with the private sector and civil society.

11. **Strategic agendas and donor initiatives:** Interaction with donor initiatives should be predicated on Africa's own formulation and pursuit of a strategic agenda for the promotion of good governance, democratization and sustainable human development.

12. **Addressing reform initiatives:** Technical issues related to public sector and civil service reform should be located in a broader framework that address the nexus of problems related to governance and democratization and sustainable development. The one size fits all approach to recommending and adopting reforms should be tempered by analyzing the needs of unique situations prevailing in particular countries. There is a need to make explicit and interrogate the philosophical and normative underpinnings of public sector and civil service reform initiatives.

More generally the experts called for intellectual revival in engaging with issues of governance, democratization and development. A revival that should be based on the recognition of challenges Africa has been facing and continues to face in attempting to find its way toward meeting the aspirations of its people in context of a non-conducive or ambivalent
global environment and in the face tremendous difficulties confronting some of the countries in Africa at present. And revival that should take full advantage of the opportunities offered by newly formed African Union and the NEPAD agenda which seeks to promote good governance and sustainable human development.
REFERENCES


