Public administration in Africa and global complexity: Opportunities and constraints in the pursuit of the SDGs
Structure of the paper

It examines the major global complexity faced by Africa and then discuss the dilemma of African Public Administration

- It argues that the major problem of the failure of Africa is its inherited colonial Public Administration which was designed not to serve the interest of the African people.

- It also argues that the growing differences between the changing nature of development problems and the principles of development administration, as defined by international assistance agencies and developing countries has failed to address the major problems of poverty and development

- Despite of all this, the paper argues that Africa has the greatest opportunity now to emerge out of poverty and under development by seriously pursue the implementation of SDGs

- Recommendations and Conclusion
The Structure of the Presentation

1. The major global complexity faced by African Public Administration
2. Dilemma of the Inherited Colonial Public Administration
3. Opportunities and constraints for public administration in pursuit of the SDGs
4. Recommendations
5. Conclusion
1. The major global complexity faced by African Public Administration

- World Bank defines the **governance** as the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is executed, including the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced. *(Governance and Development (World Bank 1992b))*

- Issues pertaining to government are becoming more complex in nature

- The standard operating procedures of governance are undergoing a radical change in the face of fundamental social, economic and political challenges posed by a rapidly changing world.

- Some of the drivers of this changing landscape are as follows;

  ✓ **Globalization**: represents the increasing integration of economics, communications, and culture across national boundaries;
    
    • Directly and indirectly affecting, the governance structures, processes and culture in every country.
    
    • Actual power and decision making are shifting from local to global level;
    
    • Global state and non-state actors are increasingly penetrating those domains which were normally exclusively reserved for the domestic state machinery.
Changing State Role:

- The role of the state/government are undergoing a paradigm shift in response to realignment in the comparative power structure in the societies.
- Confident private sector and assertive civil society are forcing government to give them more space in policy making and implementation
- Civil society demand efficiency of quality service delivery and accountability

Demographic Transition:

- Almost every developing country is passing through the most crucial phase of its demographic transition in which rate of child births is gradually falling but due to rapidly falling death rates, its population is growing at unsustainable rate

Democratic Development:

- Brought fundamental changes in the attitudes and behaviour of the citizens all over the world.
- These changes in turn transform social life and political institutions, bringing mass participation in politics in the long run.
• As a result people are now demanding greater say in public affairs, an open government, transparency in public dealing, and an accountable and responsible executive

✔ Economic Growth

• The result of peculiar socio-economic conditions in the region;
• Many nations continue to suffer from badly performing economies,
• High foreign debt, declining resources and social infrastructures, alarming population growth,
• Increased dependency and degradation of the environment
• African industrial development has been stalled since the 1970s. Only one in five workers in Africa has a job in the wage economy
• The lives of most Africans are marred by poverty, hunger, poor education, ill health, and violence
• Every year more Africans live in urban slums.
• Imminent changes to the architecture of global trade will disadvantage African countries.
Technology:

- Its rapid speed, widening coverage and deepening impact poses threats as well as offer tremendous opportunities for the modern public servants;
- Offers limitless opportunities to improve their service delivery. It enables them to reach to the millions in far less time than traditional methods;
- On the demand side, public is forcing them to not only demolish their walls of secrecy but also to quicken the pace of decision making and adopt it as a tool of service delivery
- The major problem for Africa on technology is we are consumers of technology not inventors
- Africa continues to depend on the North for its own local information
- Unreliable telecommunication infrastructures with high tariffs and non-favourable traffic
- Technology presents both immense opportunities and challenges, it’s up to all of us to work together to ensure that it benefits everyone.
- The disadvantages of the increased atomization of technology will profoundly affect people’s lives negatively as many types of jobs will disappear
• Africa is behind in keeping up with the changing pace of technology; we have not completely graduated from the 2nd industrial revolution and we are not even half way to the 3rd industrial revolution
• Now the world is talking about the fourth industrial revolution which we are not even prepared for.
What does the 4\textsuperscript{th} Industrial Revolution bring

- The Fourth Industrial Revolution has the potential to raise global income levels and improve the quality of life for populations around the world.
- Technological innovation will lead to a supply-side miracle, with long-term gains in efficiency and productivity.
- Transportation and communication costs will drop,
- Logistics and global supply chains will become more effective, and
- The cost of trade will diminish, all of which will open new markets and drive economic growth.
- It’s not all good news, the revolution could lead to greater inequality, “particularly in its potential to disrupt labor markets.”
- Furthermore, the job market may become increasingly segregated into “low-skill/low-pay” and “high-skill/high-pay” roles, which could escalate social tension.
- Many types of jobs will disappear.
Activism:

Four types of activism are putting pressures, directly as well as indirectly, on civil servants for quality service delivery in every country. To government leaders more pressure on accountability, human rights and good governance.

Media:

An aggressive media is demanding transparency and openness in the government dealings.

Civil Society:

A vibrant civil society is demanding for effective service delivery at affordable rates irrespective of the costs of providing these services.

Judiciary:

An increasingly assertive judiciary is mainly interested in accountability.

Politicians

A highly charged political elite which is under pressure from their respective constituencies to perform, is demanding more role in policy implementation and demanding more accountability.

All these actors are shaping and changing the operations and dynamics within the Public Administration and put the public servants under tremendous pressures to improve their performance.
2. Dilemma of the Inherited Colonial Public Administration

Contemporary African Public Administration is the result of a colonial imposed system

- African states inherited a highly centralized state system (based on the philosophy of us and them)
- Highly authoritarian based political culture
- Its administration believed in a bureaucratic system of control and not intended to be a school of democracy
- State was used as instrument of exploitation and gaining access to control of state resources
- Their system of governing was undemocratic and authoritarian in nature
- Their administration system was based on the principle of top-down approach forcefully imposed from above
- The system failed to take into account the interest as well as realities of African people
- We inherited a political system which was undemocratic but highly autocratic in nature
- It made decisions on behalf of the indigenous population without taking into account their ideas or consulting them
- Inheriting from this monopolized system, African political parties become a top-down organizational structure and therefore tend to be autocratic
"I have travelled across the length and breath of Africa and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such caliber, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage and therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Africans think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation”.

Lord Macaulay’s address to the British Parliament on 2nd February 1835
3. Challenges faced by the current African Public Administration

To radically transform the current African Public Administration system in order to respond to its people’s needs such as:

- High unemployment rates
- Lack of institutional capacity to provide effective public services (e.g., healthcare and education) or public goods (e.g., electricity and transportation infrastructure, food security, housing)
- Corruption and insecurity hinder improvements in many countries.
- Ensuring access to improved drinking water and sanitation facilities

Deal with factors that hinder business interest in the continent such as:

- Infrastructure
- Boost market size
- Skilled labour force
- Economic diversification and value chain
- Access to inputs
- Regulatory and legal environments
- Political instability and security
4. Opportunities and constraints for public administration in pursuit of the SDGs

4.1 Opportunity to build better and more effective public administration

✓ Current political conditions may be more favorable for the carrying out of reforms
✓ There is an opportunity for public administration to reassess and reassert itself as the guarantor of law and order in all sectors (including the economic and financial sectors), political stability, peace and security and a decent standard of living for the majority of people through adequate social protection and equitable public service delivery.
4.2. Opportunity to enhance attractiveness of public service and effectiveness of public administration

- This is an opportunity for university faculties, management development institutes and public sector human resources agencies, such as ministries responsible for public administration and public service commissions, to review recruitment processes and to highlight the usefulness of public service to the people.

- If public administration is to become a more effective agent for development, the best people must be attracted to public service.
4.3. **Opportunity to focus on current and, in particular, future needs**

- Emphasis must now be placed on building the capacity of public administration to foresee, prevent and manage, economic, financial and other crises.

- Emphasis must also be placed on preparing public servants who are capable of managing tomorrow today.

- Public administration capacities must be strengthened through enhanced data-gathering and statistical systems, in many cases linked to monitoring systems.

- The capacity of public servants must also be enhanced so that they can adequately assess early warnings about possible crises, make a decision and act upon them in a timely manner.

- The needs that must be addressed by public administration must be assessed not only in terms of today, but also, and in particular, in terms of many years with a view to prepare for any crisis.
4.4. Opportunity for creating new public administration institutions and new ways of working

The twenty-first-century challenges cannot be met with a twentieth-century bureaucracy.

Therefore the new public administration institutions need to address these questions:

a) Given that public administration needs to be modernized continuously, how can the context of the present crisis serve to accelerate change?

b) In which areas are innovations in public administration most needed?

c) What are the most attractive opportunities presented by the crisis to this end?
4.5. Enhanced procurement systems

✓ To address corruption among officials within public administration, or regulatory capture by industries or firms that benefit from outdated procurement or public contracting rules create obstacles to reform.

✓ The current crisis presents more favorable conditions for Governments to engage citizens in support of regulatory reforms in the area of public sector procurement.

✓ The reform may discuss the following questions:

  a) How have Governments in different countries proceeded to modernize their public sector procurement regulations?

  b) What are the best practices in the area of citizen involvement with reference to monitoring public sector procurement?

  c) How can information and communications technology tools be utilized by Governments to increase the transparency and efficiency of government procurement?
4.6. More efficient public administration systems, in particular fiscal management regimes

✓ Sometimes governments face constraints in exchanging existing internal structures and procedures for new, more efficient ones.

✓ This is often met with resistance from certain sector of the bureaucracy in the fear that cuts in public employment will result from such administrative modernization.

✓ Governments can gain support from wider groups of the population to go ahead in modernizing specific areas of public administration so as to:

(a) Reduce the supply costs of public services and make them more affordable for citizens;

(b) Restructure inefficient State-owned enterprises and introduce new technologies so as to increase the productivity of the public sector and favor green growth;

(c) Enhance public sector governance, in particular with a view to attaining a more integrated and coordinated public sector.

(d) Decrease waiting times for individuals or firms in obtaining certain public sector services,
4.7. Redirecting public expenditure and investment towards long-term development priorities

The following strategies are important to consider:

a) Building more or better infrastructure for energy generation in ways that result in lower carbon emissions and contribute to mitigating global climate change and achieving more sustainable development;

b) Constructing infrastructure to serve the marginalized or poor in rural or urban areas in sectors such as water and sanitation and housing, reducing the deprivation of such groups and alleviating to some extent their poor living conditions;

c) Expanding education and health services, as well as employment training,

d) Providing funding for technological research and development, or for technical and administrative modernization
I argue that the process of setting Sustainable Development Goals should take these key aspects into consideration.

- **First, it should**
  - Embrace an integrated social-ecological system perspective and acknowledge the key dynamics that such systems entail, including the role of ecosystems in sustaining human wellbeing, multiple cross-scale interactions, and uncertain thresholds.

- **Second, the process needs**
  - To address trade-offs between the ambition of goals and the feasibility in reaching them, recognizing biophysical, social, and political constraints.

- **Third, the goal-setting exercise and the management of goal implementation need to be**
  - Guided by existing knowledge about the principles, dynamics, and constraints of social change processes at all scales, from the individual to the global.

- **Create a good conducive political climate within the country**
  - Each nation requires to create a good political climate where all political parties and civil society groups and private sector have a role and voice in shaping the success of the sustainable development goals, the need for consensus and unity of purpose to improve the livelihood of people.
Requires a strong, visionary and committed leadership

- We need leaders that are capable to perceive the future in precise and accurate way,
- who can increase their motivation and sense of responsibility to get to the possible and desirable future of a nation.
- A leader that has the ability to look into the future while aligning the nation with that vision, and able to make the citizens inspire to get the desired goals concerning that future.
- A leader who leads with a clarity of thought, humility and acts as a unifying symbol for the nation.
- A leader that can provide both strategic thinking on and practical approach to how the nation will implement the SDGs by 2030.
- A leader who is a moral symbol of his /her society and when he/she speaks, speaks with moral authority that encompasses the role of society and encourages them to believe and act in a unified moral good.
- A leader who is a symbol of consensus of his/her nation
- Leaders that champion legacy rather than self-prosperity.
Requires a strong, dynamic, apolitical and impartial civil society organisations

- We require a civil society with an unwavering commitment to integrity and high ethical standards in dispensing its duties;
- A civil society which has its reputation for probity and impartiality in the eyes of the nation it serves;
- A civil society that seek to unify the nation and political parties rather than sowing seeds of division and hostility among them;
- A civil society that is truly committed to the transformation of its society and protectors of justice, human security, peace and good governance;
- A civil society that is knowledgeable on advocacy, conflict management and conflict resolutions mechanisms.
- A civil society that regulate the conduct of citizens so that they act as a collective in accordance to the “moral will” keeping the common good in mind.
- We need a civil society that does not represent particularistic but normative ends and general interests that affects peoples’ lives.
- We need a strong civil society organisations that are able to engage effectively with government and its citizens on the sustainable development goals, fostering transparency and accountability, and deepening knowledge, so as to strengthen the legitimacy and sustainability of the on-going processes.
A committed, effective, efficient and corrupt free Public Sector

- We need a public sector that is transformed, at heart, mind, soul, attitude, highly ethical, patriotic, sense of duty to serve diligently,
- who are corrupt free and driven by the concept of people centeredness in their endeavours.
- A well skilled and capacitated human resource base
- A public sector that is driven by the principles of **Integrity and impartiality**; that accepts and value its duty to provide advice which is objective, independent, apolitical and impartial and committed to honest, fair and respectful engagement with the community.
- A public sector which is the centre of **promoting the public good** by valuing and seeking to achieve excellence in service delivery.
- The public sector which is mindful of its commitment and duty to uphold the **system of government and the laws of the State**, and to accept and value its obligation to operate within the framework of Ministerial responsibility to government, the Parliament and the community.
- A public sector that is committed to the principles of **Accountability and transparency** and recognises that public trust in public office requires high standards of public administration, and operates within a framework of mutual obligation and shared responsibility between public sector entities.
- A public sector that constitute a sharp instrument of the State with the public interest, ethics, integrity, discipline, expertise, professionalism, accountability, effectiveness, speed, accuracy, respect for rules, regulations, procedures and rule of law.
- An instrument whose role is to foresee, prevent, or at worst manage any crisis or threat that confronts the people.
- The public sector that sees itself as the backbone of the government in implementing any strategy for economic growth of a nation and are committed to respond with vigour to the SDGs.
A strong and Compassionate Private Sector with a human face

- Its businesses’ approach and attitude must be transformed and be driven by sustainable human developmental needs.
- To manifest this, it can no longer simply focus on its narrow interests and its bottom-line profit making.
- Business must take a deep interest in the development of the society in which it operates.
- They too must sign up to make the National Development Plans and SDG’s a reality. This will be in line with the spirit of the Corporate Social Responsibility that many already adhere to.
- Businesses must recognize that the more they contribute to the development of the communities in which they operate, is good for business too, because the more peoples’ standard of living increases it also translates in increased purchasing power.
- This needs to be scaled up from the community to national level. Those operating in the Private sector must therefore likewise sign a charter in order to ensure that this is a coordinated endeavour in order to reap the full benefits.

Combining these aspects will increase the chances of establishing and achieving effective Sustainable Development Goals
The major determinants of success of the SDGs in Africa are;

- The poor existing infrastructure, socio-economic, cultural, political instability,
- Corruption, poor governance, increasing number of unemployed youth,
- Badly performing economies, high foreign debt, declining resources and alarming population growth,
- Increased dependency, degradation of the environment, lack of strong institutions both public and private;
- Lack of financial muscles to fund research and innovation; lack of industrial technology and HIV/AIDS

However, the SDG agenda needs not only to pay attention to implementing the substantive goals (SDGs 1–16) in integrated ways,

- But also to ensuring that the means of implementation in Goal 17 and the other goals are themselves an integrated undertaking.

The defining challenge of our era is to accelerate development that is economically sound, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable.

The Sustainable Development Goals embody nothing less and represent the best possible opportunity of all the complexities of economic development that we face today.
Conclusion

- The looming challenges in Africa are wide and deep and will require;
  - Innovative responses that are embedded in partnerships and
  - Rooted in our shared values of justice, fairness, equity and solidarity. (The UBUNTU concept I am human because of others)

- The time is now to ensure that Africa is not left behind in achieving the SDGs and the beneficiaries of this will be Africans and the people of the world at large.

- The measure of our success in implementing the sustainable development goals in Africa will be the attainment of the components of the 17 goals by 2030.

- It can be done, provided the key factors important for successful implementation of SDGs,
  - High level of political support, ownership by the countries,
  - Institutional and human, capacity development,
  - Inclusive of development process, mutual accountability, and
  - Policy reform are established and sustained.

- The success of the sustainable development goals in Africa will hinge on a credible means of implementation.

- This is Africa's time, this our moment its now or never.

- Africa Let us put our values in action, let us believe in ourselves and in our youth and children; these our dream future.