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## **Cultural Change, the Hybrid Administrative System and Public Sector Reforms in Africa: The Case of Anti-corruption Measures in Malawi**

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### **Abstract**

A decade ago, this author noted that the hybrid administrative system had created a huge dilemma for management training in Africa, in that there was a discrepancy between what was taught and what was happening because of wholesale importation of western theories into an alien culture. This article is an extension of this perception, to explain the dismal outcomes of public sector reforms in Africa. The absence of an indigenous entrepreneurial class, and human and material resources have 'forced' the state at independence to become a major actor in socio-economic development. However, new brands of reforms that call for new public management techniques have questioned the size and role of the state in Africa. Consequently, public sector reforms aimed at modernizing public sector bureaucracy to improve the quality of life of the citizens have become fashionable. Despite tremendous efforts and resources, many countries have not come close to their goals of developing and transforming their societies to the same standard as developed countries. How do we explain the failure of public sector management reforms in achieving their intended objectives in most of Africa? Focusing on Malawi's reform efforts to crackdown on corruption, this article explores the view that it is the hybrid administrative system that is an additional explanation for the challenges confronting some reforms. While we have been successful in importing management structures, rules and procedures through reforms, we are yet to succeed in transforming the cultural aspects which make these reforms work. The article recommends a shift in individual and organizational values,

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attitudes, beliefs and practices at the bureaucratic and political levels. The central argument of the article is that positive outcomes in public sector reforms in Africa will be achieved through public sector culture transformation.

## Résumé

Il y'a une décennie, cet auteur a noté que le système administratif hybride avait créé un énorme dilemme pour la formation en gestion en Afrique en ce sens qu'il y avait un écart entre ce qui était enseigné et ce qui se passait du fait de l'importation à outrance de théories occidentales dans une culture étrangère. Cet article élargit cette perception pour expliquer les conséquences désastreuses de réformes du secteur public en Afrique. L'absence d'une classe d'entrepreneurs locaux, et de ressources humaines et matérielles a " forcé " l'Etat depuis les indépendances à devenir un acteur majeur dans le développement socio-économique. Cependant, de nouveaux types de réformes qui font appel à de nouvelles techniques de gestion publique ont remis en question la taille et le rôle de l'Etat en Afrique. Par conséquent, les réformes du secteur public visant à moderniser la bureaucratie du secteur public pour améliorer la qualité de vie des citoyens sont à la mode. Malgré des efforts et des ressources considérables, de nombreux pays sont loin d'atteindre leurs objectifs de développement et de transformation de leurs sociétés afin de les hisser au même niveau que les pays développés. Comment pouvons-nous expliquer le fait que les réformes de gestion du secteur public n'ont pas atteint les objectifs qui leur sont assignés dans la plupart des pays africains? En mettant l'accent sur les efforts de réforme du Malawi pour lutter contre la corruption, cet article passe en revue le point de vue selon lequel c'est le système administratif hybride qui est l'autre explication des difficultés que rencontrent certaines réformes. Même si nous avons pu importer avec succès des structures de gestion, des règles et des procédures à travers des réformes, nous n'avons pas encore réussi à transformer les aspects culturels qui font fonctionner ces réformes. Cet article recommande un changement des valeurs, attitudes, croyances et pratiques individuelles et organisationnelles aux niveaux politique et bureaucratique. L'argument central de cet article est que la réussite des réformes du secteur public en Afrique passe nécessairement par la transformation de la culture du secteur public.

## Introduction

Public sector reforms in most of Africa have not achieved their goals of developing and transforming their societies (Ayeni 2002). This article tries to shed light on the role of the hybrid administrative system in explaining the dismal outcomes of some of the public sector reforms in Africa. By failing to transform the values and beliefs that make such reforms successful, a great discrepancy emerges between promise and performance. The first part lays down the historical and conceptual basis for public sector reforms in Africa. The second part examines the case study of Malawi to illustrate the dismal failure of reforms aimed at cracking down on corruption. This is not to suggest that all reforms are failing, but rather to demonstrate how failure to transform culture is a huge blow to value-laden reforms. The third part clarifies the hybrid administrative system and its effect on reform measures. The last part provides a way forward.

## Conceptual and Historical Context for Public Sector Reforms in Africa

The public services (ministries, parastatals and extra ministerial departments) have always been the tool available to African governments for the implementation of developmental goals and a pivot for the growth of African economies. Public sector reforms need to be understood as a modernization of what was formerly called administrative reform. The latter is defined by the UN(1983) as 'specially designed efforts to induce fundamental changes in public administration systems through system-wide reforms or at least through measures for the improvement of one or more of its key elements such as administrative structures, personnel and processes'. The content of the reform can be ideological, socio-psychological, technical and institutional (Hanekom et al. 2001). According to Turner and Hulme (1997), administrative reform strategies include restructuring, participation, human resource issues, accountability and the public-private mix. Public sector reforms have been undertaken in different countries worldwide for improving service delivery, enhancing productivity, accommodating political demands, meeting the requirements of economic development, bringing the government closer to the people's needs and aspirations, and strengthening overall good governance.

Beginning in the 1980s, both developed and developing countries embarked on public sector management reforms to rationalise the role and institutional character of the state. The public sector has been under pressure to adopt private sector orientations in order to enhance its effectiveness and efficiency – value for money, better quality services,

increased productivity and faster delivery (Turner and Hulme 1997). The earlier reforms aimed at shaping a public administration that could lead to national development as opposed to colonial public bureaucracy which was based on law and order. The World Bank and other donors in Africa have been concerned with finding alternative ways of organizing and managing the public services and redefining the role of the state to give more prominence to markets and competitions and to the private and voluntary sectors.

Public administration in contemporary Africa operates in a turbulent economic and political environment and has to continue to strengthen its capacity in various directions. Formulation and implementation of public policies and development plans require enhanced capacity (Sharma and Mahlauli 1993). Increasing pressures for democratization, decentralization and public participation in governance creates new demands. The growing private sector and privatized public service delivery need effective monitoring mechanisms on the part of public administration machinery. As the standards of ethics and integrity continue to decline and corruption continues to increase, these have to be arrested by undertaking measures on different fronts (Frimpong and Jacques 1999; Hope and Chukulo 2000, Sharma 2006). For strengthening the mechanisms of public accountability and raising the standards of integrity, the oversight institutions such as parliament, the opposition political parties, judiciary, Auditor General, Ombudsman, anti-corruption agencies, communication media and organs of civil society need to be stronger (Sharma 1998, 2006).

According to Hughes (2003), in good governance prescriptions, one finds public management reforms as a key component pointing towards market and private sector approaches to public sector management popularly called New Public Management (NPM).

New Public Management is a label used to describe a management culture that emphasizes the centrality of the citizen or customer, as well as accountability for results. It captures most of the structural, organizational and managerial changes taking place in the public services of most OECD countries, and a bundle of management approaches and techniques borrowed from the private sector. NPM shifts the emphasis from the traditional public administration to public management, pushing the state towards 'managerialism': the traditional model of organization and delivery of public services, based on the principles of bureaucratic hierarchy, planning and centralization, direct control and

self-sufficiency apparently being replaced by a market-based public service management or enterprise culture. According to Hood (1991), the major NPM doctrines of what must be done are that:

- Direct public sector costs should be cut and labour discipline raised so as to improve resource use;
- Private sector-style management practices be applied to increase flexibility in decision making;
- Competition in the public sector (through term contracts and tendering) be increased, as rivalry is the key to lower costs and better standards;
- The public sector be disaggregated and decentralized to make units more manageable and to increase competition among them;
- Controls be shifted from inputs to outputs, the stress on results rather than procedure;
- Explicit standards and performance measures be established, because accountability requires clearly stated aims while efficiency requires attention to goals;
- Managers be given powers to conduct hands-on professional management, because accountability requires clear assignment of responsibility, not diffusion of power.

New public administration initiatives are founded on the realization that the public service is under pressure as it is faced with new tasks, yet staffed by people geared to achieve old tasks. Again, public services face ever-growing pressures from tax payers, politicians and donors demanding cuts in government budgets. Citizens have become more active and vocal consumers and are able to insist on lower costs accompanied by higher quality (ECA 2004).

Improved efficiency is now the overriding aim of public sector reforms in most African countries. Reductions and refocusing of the state's activities are needed to improve macroeconomic stability, as well as the implementation of stronger incentives for performance. Furthermore, increased competition in service provision, both with the private sector and in the public sector itself, is required in order to raise efficiency (ECA 2004).

As a result, governments are required to concentrate their efforts less on direct intervention and more on enabling others to be productive (World Bank 1989:5) by providing core functions such as safeguarding law and order, protecting property rights, managing the macro economy to promote basic social services and infrastructure and protecting the vulnerable and destitute.

Despite the move to reduce the role of the public sector, there is broad agreement about the need to increase the capacity of the state through 're-engineering' (Hope 2002) or invigorating (Klitgaard 1997) public institutions. A variety of NPM-inspired measures are used, like the refocusing of public-sector functions through staff reductions and changes in budgetary allocations; restructuring of public organizations through the recognizing of ministries; decentralizing; de-linking or hiving off central government functions to local governments or the private sector; emphasis on private-sector styles of management practice; marketization and introduction of competition in service provision; performance measurement; greater transparency; pay reform; and emphasis on outputs (Therkilden 2001).

Improved accountability in the conduct of public affairs is another reform objective. Accountability involves both the political justification of decisions, actions and managerial answerability for implementation of tasks according to the agreed performance criteria (Day and Klein, 1987). Political accountability is about those with authority being answerable for their actions to the citizens, whether directly or indirectly and managerial accountability is about those with delegated authority being answerable to carrying out agreed tasks according to agreed performance criteria.

Evidence shows that even in consolidated democratic states in Africa, there are major deficits in accountability (Olowu 1999). The various reforms of the 1990s addressed some of the accountability to: strengthen the rule of law and the judiciary, promote democratization and the role of the media, depoliticize the public sectors in countries that used to have one-party rule, strengthen anti-corruption measures and increase internal and external auditing capacity.

In 1995, the Commonwealth Heads of Government endorsed the Commonwealth Initiative for Public Service Reform to provide a focus of collaboration between member governments as they face the challenges to improve public service performance. It was an attempt to demonstrate their commitment to good governance as enunciated in the 1991 Harare Commonwealth Declaration.

### **Diversity of Reforms**

Ayeni (2002) documents public sector reform initiatives in 40 Commonwealth countries, 17 of whom are in Africa. Key reforms include decentralization, commercialization, privatization, bench-marking, organization and methods, fighting against corruption, good governance, accountability, public financial management reform programme, public sector income policy and administration, functional reviews, job

evaluation and salary review, training, information technology, one-stopshops, code of ethics for public officers, strengthening management capacity, service delivery improvement, ICT, computerization of human resources information, performance management systems, and restructuring ministries and provinces.

In Botswana, for instance, the government has undertaken various public service reforms to enhance productivity. As outlined by the National Development Plan No. 9, the public service reform programmes include: the Performance Management System (PMS); Work Improvement Teams (WITS); the Computerized Personnel Management System (CPMS); Organization and Methods (O&M); Privatization; Performance-Based Reward System (PBRS); Parallel Progression; Scarce Skills; Job Evaluation; Localization; Decentralization (Republic of Botswana 2003) and, currently, the Balanced Score Card have been implemented.

### **Malawi and Public Sector Reforms**

The Malawian society has undergone a lot of political, social and economic transitions from the pre-colonial to the current multiparty democracy (Dzimbiri et al. 2000). Independent from Britain in 1964, Malawi was a one-party state under Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda from 1966 to 1994 when she became a multiparty democracy under Bakili Muluzi (Phiri and Ross 1998). Like most countries in Africa, Malawi has not been an exception in political and administrative reforms right from independence. Not only did Malawi move away from the multiparty and Westminster-style of parliamentary democracy to the one-party presidential system two years after independence, but also that profound changes in economic, administrative and political spheres took place since then. The country had to transform economically to raise the living standards of its people through agricultural reforms, public sector performance and private enterprise encouragement. However, lack of an indigenous entrepreneurial class, finance and human resources forced the state to be in the forefront of spearheading socio-economic development (Dzimbiri 2004). Consequently, the expansion of the public sector was noticed within a few years and, like in other countries, was seen as a burden to development. The oil crisis of the 1970s threw most of the gains the country made out of balance and, consequently, Malawi became a candidate for the World Bank-supported structural adjustment programmes (GoM 1987).

The most significant reforms are those of the 1990s, when internal and external pressures led to the transformation of Malawi from a dictatorial one-party state to a democratic multiparty state during the period 1992-94. This meant a total rewriting of the national constitution,

repeal of harsh laws and the re-enactment of new laws to guarantee human rights, good governance and other basic rights. New institutions like the Office of the Ombudsman, Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation, Law Commissioner and, more importantly for this article, the Anti-Corruption Bureau, were created. Reforms undertaken in the public sector include privatization of public enterprises, contracting out, out-sourcing, job evaluation, rationalization of ministries, democratic consolidation, and budgeting systems, police reforms, judicial reforms and labour policy reforms.

The rhetoric of fighting against all forms of corruption has characterized the entire period of the multiparty democracy in Malawi. I wish to dwell on the fight against corruption as an example of public sector reform measures the country has embarked in order to try to explain why failure to transform the cultural aspect of the reform effort has the potential to prevent the realization of the benefits of certain public sector reforms which require a shift in the existing values, attitudes and beliefs for them to succeed.

### **The Fight Against Corruption in Malawi: A Case of Unsuccessful Reform Initiative**

Corruption can be defined as the part of a public official's behaviour that deviates from the normal duties of a public role because of pecuniary or status gains (McCormack 1997 in ECA 2004). According to Hope (2002, in ECA 2004), the two major contributions to bureaucratic corruption in Africa are the erosion and the compression of the salary scales of public servants. Transparency International (1997, in ECA 2004) has documented a number of corrupt practices to testify to this dimension. In many African countries, a variety of measures have been taken to curb ethical violations. Ghana, Namibia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe have experimented with the institution of the ombudsmen, anti-corruption bills and a variety of institutional mechanisms to enforce ethical behaviour (ECA 2004). The need to improve transparency and accountability and, more importantly, to curb corruption led to the creation of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) in Malawi in 1995. The ACB is a government organ mandated to prevent and control corrupt practices through public education, investigation and prosecutions. The ACB's role includes:

- Examining the practices and procedures of public and private bodies in order to facilitate the discovery of corrupt practices and secure the revision of methods of work or procedures conducive to corrupt practices;



- Advising public and private bodies on ways and means of preventing corrupt practices, and on changes in methods of work or procedures of such public and private bodies compatible with the effective performance of their duties;
- Disseminating information on the evils and dangerous effects of corrupt practices on society;
- Enlisting and fostering public support against corrupt practices;
- Receiving and investigating complaints of alleged or purported corrupt practices and prosecuting the offender;
- Investigating any conduct of any public officer which, in the opinion of the Bureau, may be connected with or conducive to corrupt practices, and to report this to the Minister responsible.

At the official launching of the ACB in 1996, former President Muluzi said:

The establishment of the Anti-Corruption Bureau serves as proof that the Government considers corruption to be an evil which must be fought. Let it be known, therefore, that the fight against corruption is now a top Government priority. I also wish to make it clear that although the Anti-Corruption Bureau is linked to the Government, it will fight corruption from top to bottom without fear or favour. I repeat, without fear or favour. The Government is determined to respect the independence of the Bureau and will not interfere in its work (Chunga 2005).

In 2004, the second multiparty president, Binguwa Mutharika, went into government with a promise to cut down government expenditure, reduce government debt and fight corruption and other vices that had been perpetuating poverty in the country. In his inaugural speech in May 2004, Mutharika declared a zero-tolerance policy on corruption and promised to take action against anybody found to be corrupt, regardless of his/her status in society (*Nation* May 25 2004). Speaking when he presided over activities marking the 2005 National Anti-Corruption Day, Mutharika reiterated: "I will not relent until the roots of corruption have been pulled out from our nation. I will not relent until those who plundered our economy with impunity have been brought to book" (*Nation* 8 February 2005). President Mutharika has repeatedly promised to put his weight behind ACB, saying he would not protect any corrupt person.

### **Outcomes of the Anti-Corruption Reforms**

The extent to which such reform initiative is yielding fruits can only be inferred from several corruption experiences and allegations over the past years. According to the ACB Annual Report 2000/2001, there were several cases involving top political elites and senior government officials

and large sums of money (ACB 2001). The first is the Apex Case which involved a former Minister of Justice and Attorney General and a former Minister of Home Affairs and Internal Security. The two were implicated in the US\$7,615,803 case for the purchase of Land Rovers for the Malawi Police Service from Apex Motors. The ACB sought prosecution of the former ministers for abuse of office and the owners of Apex Motors for cheating and obtaining money under false pretences. The vehicles, which were sold to the Government, were supposed to have been brand new, but were second hand and reconditioned (*Nation* 10 January 2005).

The second case is the K187 million Ministry of Education scam which implicated the then Minister of Finance and Education (*Weekend Nation* 8-9 January 2004). He was accused of authorizing payments to contractors, mainly ruling party supporters, who had been dubiously awarded contracts. He was discharged in 2001 after the Director of Public Prosecution had refused consent to allow the ACB to continue with the case whose proceedings had already started. The Minister was also implicated in the awarding of the pre-shipment inspection contract to a British firm, Intertek Testing Services (ITS), instead of the Swiss firm, Societe Generale de Surveillance (SGS), which was recommended by a seven-member evaluation committee.

The third case is the K2.9 billion maize scam in which a former Minister of Finance and other ruling UDF top party officials were accused of selling maize from the Strategic Grain Reserves in 2002, a situation that caused hunger which threatened the lives of 3.2 million people (*Daily Times* 8 September 2004). The ACB recommended the prosecution of the former minister and other senior public officials for criminal negligence and recklessness. The fourth case involved a former Deputy Commerce Minister who was implicated in a K559, 216 case concerning the issuance of licenses for the import of chicken by the Ministry of Commerce. The ACB recommended prosecution of the accused for penal code offences. The fifth case was the City Motors case in which a former Minister of Works and Transport was implicated in a K14 million abuse of office case in which he was accused of wrongfully authorizing payment to City Motors. Another case implicated a former Minister of Education who was convicted for using government money to fund his wedding ceremony.

Again, the former president is being investigated for pocketing donor money amounting to K1.4 billion into his personal account. The ACB arrested the former chief executive of the state-owned bus company, Shire Bus Lines, in August 2004 on allegations of corruption (*The Nation*

14 September 2004). In November 2004, the ACB also arrested a former Minister of Finance on allegations revolving around the construction of a multi-million Kwacha hotel and abuse of office when he was the General Manager of the state-owned Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation. Lastly, a former petroleum chief executive was convicted in 2004 and sentenced to 6 years in jail for receiving US\$25,000 as gratification from Humble Energy of the United Kingdom (*The Nation* 2 September 2004).

A study conducted for the Commonwealth Foundation on features of a good society – and which tends to corroborate the above – concluded that the existence of corruption in the country was one of the factors that prevented the existence of a good society in Malawi (Dzimbiri 1998). Newspaper headlines reported incidences of corrupt tendencies. For example, contracts were awarded to own construction companies, and projects fizzled out whilst in progress because funds had been embezzled (Dzimbiri 1998). Headlines in popular dailies included 'Mother of All Corrupt Practices', 'Probe Surveys Department', 'Corruption and Nepotism', 'Fraud at Ntcheu Government Offices', 'Duty Evasion: Are VIPs Privileged?', 'UDF Ministers have Banished their Poverty', 'Where is UNESCO's Money?', 'The Catholic Bishops Criticize Corruption in the UDF Party', and 'Corruption has Increased Tremendously in This Country'. Zedi Mbewe argues that, before coming into power, UDF ministers were poor; but four years later, they own minibuses, Mercedes Benzes, mansions, cars for spouses or children and he alleges that corruption was the major strategy used to enrich themselves (*Malawi News* 28 February 1998).

Aubrey Kayange lamented the increasing levels of corruption and nepotism in recruitment and promotions. He queries what the Anti-Corruption Bureau was doing: 'Let us uproot these evils' (*Nation* 1 April, 1998). A Ntcheu district citizen reports an officer who bought a car battery using official petrol coupons and demanded a cash sale which he used to claim K2,574.58 (*Nation* 1 April 1998). Headlines in popular newspapers include: 'Malawi High on Corruption Index' (*Nation* 23 December 2003); 'Civil Service Corrupt' (*Nation* 10 September 2004); 'Fighting Corruption: 2004-2009' (*Nation* 16 April 2004); 'Members of Parliament Faces Corruption Charges' (*Nation* 16 April 2004); 'Muslim Association in a K10 Million Scam' (*Nation* 16 April 2004); 'Muluzi Faces Arrest' (*Nation* 10 January 2005); 'K187M Education Scam Rears Ugly Head' (*Weekend Nation*, 8-9 January 2005).

### **Why the Discrepancy?**

The law on corruption and the consequences of corrupt practices are known to many Malawians, and top-level political commitments through public pronouncements are also clear. What can explain the continued incidence of corruption scandals over the years? According to ECA (2004), anti-corruption initiatives have not been successful for many reasons: in the first instance, many have been introduced in an overall political and policy environment that has not been sufficiently conducive to the success of the measures. The nature of the state and governance and commitment at the highest political level are crucial prerequisites for any successful drive to curb and punish ethical violations. For Malawi, at the formal level, this commitment has been noted. Secondly, some of the anti-corruption measures that have been introduced have been partial in nature, focusing mainly on sanctions, and not the source. Of course, there is a tendency by the Anti-Corruption Bureau to be involved in educating the public and investigating allegations and prosecuting the culprit. But questions about causes of corruption are not being handled. Third, many of the institutions that were established to promote ethics and accountability often lack the resources, public visibility, impartiality and public support that are critical to their success. True, in the case of Malawi, the bureau has at times complained of so many cases being shelved due to lack of money for investigation. Shortage of staff to handle investigations is also another explanation for delays in investigations and, therefore, bringing the culprit to book.

### **Why Do Public Sector Reforms Fail?**

Practitioners and researchers have advanced several reasons to explain why the achievements of public sector reforms have in most cases fallen short of expectation. I intend to discuss these in terms of the general overview and what I consider to be the influence of the hybrid administrative system on public sector reforms.

### **A General Overview**

There are several factors to explain why reforms fail. Some of them include institutional capability. Programmes and strategies for Africa's economic recovery and development have not been implemented in full because public sector institutions have been afflicted by problems of corruption, nepotism, inefficiency, poor coordination, poor management and institutional capacity, non-existent salary policies and political interference (ECA 2004). These weaknesses have stifled the process of socio-economic development across the continent. Multiple

accountabilities – such as managerial, political and financial – and public accountabilities are also viewed as another explanation. Declining public service ethics, social values and morale are other reasons advanced for the failure of public sector reforms in general (ECA 2004). According to Corkery (1995), one key reason for the failure of public sector reforms is that models derived from developed countries, mostly under the sponsorship of IMF and World Bank, are largely irrelevant because within the more sophisticated institutional practices and procedures, any changes that have been introduced are supported by institutional safety nets which are not available in Africa. He further argues that private sector management practices imported in some countries have not always been transplanted successfully because the parallel reform of monitoring and review procedures called by the introduction of these practices is not taking place simultaneously. For Fofana (1995), lack of political will for reform translated into concrete actions explains why reforms fail. These arguments are indeed crucial for understanding the problems of administrative reforms in Africa. However, this article makes one contribution to these problems by highlighting the significance of the hybrid administrative system in explaining the failure of some public sector reforms in Africa, particularly those which involve acquiring new values, norms, beliefs, orientations and practices, like fighting against corruption. In other words, some reforms involve not just institutional or structural change, but also changes in values, attitudes and beliefs.

### **The Hybrid Administrative System and Corporate Culture**

The current administrative system in Africa needs to be understood as a mixture of the traditional indigenous and western structures and values which continue to co-exist side by side. At independence, African governments inherited administrative structures which were geared towards the requirements of the ex-colonial powers. For Balogun (1986), most African countries had experienced a dilemma in terms of which administrative culture to adopt. To go back to the good old days of despotism and kingdoms or to come to terms with the Western administrative system which co-existed with indigenous structures and values for close to a century?

Political and administrative reforms were undertaken in many African countries due to changes in political objectives and greater volume of governmental role, especially in development (Hyden 1975). For Leys (1974), it was a move from law and order orientation of government to one of development. A hybrid administrative system is one in which the superstructure (institutional arrangement) mirrors the Western model

while the value system remains unchanged. According to Khandwalla (1977), the wider culture influences the functioning of modern organisations.

Thus, the wider culture has a significant impact on the extent to which citizens obey and follow national constitutions, laws, rules and procedures created for the effective functioning of nations and institutions. For example, Dzimbiri (1996) noted that while organisational structures and process in Africa mirror exactly those in the West, and that Western management theory and literature is used by trainers in training experienced managers, the latter are too aware of the gap between what the theories propose and the actual practice in organisations. For example, while the literature talks of merit, competence, official verifiable qualifications for deciding recruitment or promotion of officers in organisations or public service in general, managers as well as trainers are aware that such objectivity or meritocracy is overtaken by extended family considerations, nepotism, bribery and favouritism which are in line with some African cultures. The dilemma of the trainer at this point is whether he/she should be talking of nepotism and corruption which are hard realities in the organisations where these managers come from, or should continue to talk of merit or objectivity as propounded by western literature when this is not what is happening on the ground.

In the case of the fight against corruption; like in other countries of Africa, Malawi has been working hard to fight against corruption, as evidenced by the creation of the anti-corruption bureau and top level pronouncements against corruption at the presidential level. In spite of all this effort, many top profile cases have emerged and the epidemic is not in any way diminishing. Malawi is one of the countries ranked high on the Corruption Index. How does the hybrid administrative system help understand the increasing level of corruption against these national efforts?

Thus, while anti-corruption reform measures are imported from the West, as long as the mindset or value infrastructure pattern of beliefs, values, traditions, practices remain supportive of corruption, these initiatives aimed at arresting corruption may even exacerbate it. After all, why should ministers, presidents who are policy giants be in the forefront of corruption scandals when they are in practice behind the very policy-making process for the eradication of corruption? Why should there be a wide discrepancy between policy formulation and policy implementation? In other words, why should there be such an unprecedented

window dressing in the introduction and implementation of reforms aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the public service?

Over five decades ago, Riggs (1961) talked of a prismatic society in trying to clarify the impact of ecology on administration. Although that was years ago, his argument is very relevant to the current dismal failure of some administrative reforms in Africa. They are new 'innovations' in 'foreign' contexts. We are transferring institutions, procedures and systems to contexts which cannot handle the value systems which come or work well with the new systems. The result is a total misfit between the reform strategy and the cultural orientation of the key actors who are instrumental in implementing the reform. As a result, there is a lot of expenditure in terms of money, personnel, time and effort to make things work. We create laws, new constitutions, financial or procurement procedures and fail to follow them up in practice. Why? This raises a serious question on the role of the law in changing people's behaviour. Will a change of national laws, constitutions, rules and regulations automatically lead to compliance in terms of citizens' behaviour? Why, for example, would states that have adopted the United Declaration of Human Rights and enshrined laws in their national constitutions become violators of human rights themselves? Again, why would states that have adopted international labour conventions on collective bargaining, freedom of association and the right to strike, for example, become major violators of labour rights? (Dzimhiri 2005). Thus, unless the cultural infrastructures of public services in most African societies are able to transform, to create a good fit with the new structures, some of the reforms will amount to a 'leopard dressed in a goat's skin'. The discrepancy between rhetoric and practice, law provision and implementation will continue to be greater. Evidence abounds in Africa to demonstrate how donor-driven democratic reforms are propping up theoretically-evolved democracies (*Financial Times* 5 March 2000).

### **Transforming Corporate Culture: A Suggested Way Forward**

From the above discussion, it is evident that a discrepancy between the intentions of some reform measures and the outputs as well as outcomes on the ground exists. The fight against corruption, for example, has become tough on the reform agenda of many states in Africa. Most of them, like Malawi, continue to experience high incidences and allegations of corruption cases in spite of the reform measures carried out on existing institutions and legal provisions to arrest the epidemic. While many reasons are advanced for the continued incidence of corruption, it is the

lack of fit between the value system that comes with the reform measures (through aid) and the reality on the ground.

The need to transform individual and organisational or corporate culture becomes imperative for the success of certain reforms. There is a need to inculcate moral and ethical values that are associated with accountability, openness, integrity, selflessness, public spiritedness, love, sympathy, human goodness, truth, morality, dignity, ethics, spirituality, fairness and humility, besides institutional or procedural reforms in public sector reform initiatives. Unless people become 'born again' or change their attitudes and values, they will be guided by greed, selfishness, lust, self-aggrandizement, and narrow and parochial values which might be counter-productive to reform intentions. Resistance to change 'the way we do things around here' is one of the factors that create a discrepancy between law and practice or promise and action. This requires new breeds of leadership which can transform others for the good of humanity. Such leadership that can lead above, and not below the line will lead according to the fundamental principles of humanity (Ferguson 2003).

In our view, therefore, cultural change is key to success in many reform strategies. At the organizational level, corporate culture is the pattern of basis assumption, values, norms and artefacts shared by the organizations' members (Cummings and Worley 2005). These shared meanings help members to make sense out of the organization. Basic assumptions are unconscious, taken-for-granted assumptions about how organizational problems should be solved. These basic assumptions tell members how to perceive, think and feel about things. They represent non-comfortable and non-debatable assumptions about relating to the environment as well as about nature and human nature, human activity, and human relationships. Values tell members about what is important in the organization and what they need to pay attention to. Norms guide how members should behave in a particular situation. They represent unwritten rules of behaviour. Artefacts are visible manifestations of the other levels of cultural elements. These include observable behaviours of members, as well as structures, system procedures, rules and physical aspects of the organization (Cummings and Worley 2005). A favourable corporate culture can improve an organization's ability to implement new business strategies, as well as achieve high levels of excellence. A lack of fit between the culture and the necessary organizational changes can result in the failure to get them implemented effectively.



## Culture Change Interventions

Culture change interventions start by diagnosing the organization's existing culture to assess its fit with the current or proposed business strategy. Diagnosing a corporate culture requires uncovering and understanding people's basic assumptions, values, norms and artefacts about organizational life through an interviewing process, standard surveys to identify a culture gap, and describing culture in terms of managerial behaviour (Cummings and Worley 2005). Guidelines for changing culture include: development of a clear vision and the desired shared values and behaviour; top management commitment, symbolic leadership which communicates the new culture through its actions, supporting organizational changes, selection and socialization of newcomers and termination of deviants (Cummings and Worley 2005).

The role of learning institutions in providing value supportive of public sector reforms is instrumental. There is need to inculcate the above values and ethical standards in the youth through innovations in the curricula of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. If the present children start getting lessons on the negative aspects of corruption, the need for moral integrity, transparency, accountability, objectivity, meritocracy, among others, at the earliest stage of their moral and physical development, the future generation will acquire values that are not only supportive of public sector reforms but are also geared towards increased organisational health, effectiveness and efficiency. This is not to suggest that all public sector reforms fail because of culture, but to argue that many of them require changing the mindset of the major actors and implementers of the reform initiatives, if their success is to be guaranteed.

## Conclusion

This article has attempted to explain the place of cultural change in public sector reforms in Africa. A lot of reforms that have been implemented in most of Africa have not borne the fruits that were expected. Various explanations have been advanced. These include shortage of finance, incompatible models of reforms, corruption, multiple accountabilities and lack of top-level political and administrative commitment. However, the article makes one additional contribution to the list of factors – cultural change. Reforms are not simply structural changes but involve a great deal of human/behavioural change in the way people do things, their values and beliefs. Structural change alone will not do. This article concludes by arguing that unless specific structural reforms are accompanied by parallel change/reforms in values, attitudes and beliefs of the major actors in the reform agenda, a great deal of discrepancy will continue to exist between reform intentions and practice or outcomes on the ground.

## Note

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