

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM IN CENTRAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES: THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

The paper observes the transformation of the political system from a single political to a multi-political party. The essence of this transformation was to accommodate another political culture within the system of governance in the country. This article analyses public sector administration reform in three countries of the Central Africa Region (Republic of Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Republic of Congo). This paper will endeavor to respond to the following question: Why public sector reform in these three countries? Furthermore, the paper will also attempt to validate the need for public sector reform which should be undertaken when the government realises that there is a problem which needs to be resolved in the government institutions. The methodology used in this paper is solely based on the qualitative research approach which will help to understand the applicability of public administration reform in the Central Africa Region. The paper will argue that reform is extremely slow paced in each country. The situation in Cameroon is very complex due to decentralisation being legislated in 2004. However, there have been challenges with the implementation of the legislation governing decentralisation. The State President has personally appointed the majority of the governors and senior government officials in the various provinces. Since the new ministry in the Cameroon presidency assumed accountable public procurement, the 'other' reforms have been implemented and meeting the needs of the communities. The reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) also represents its own difficulties. Despite the enactment of the constitution in 2006, there is a distinct lack of reform in the public service. One of the key reforms for the current government is the decentralisation of government institutions. However, local government elections have not been held since 2006. Consequently, reformation has been extremely slow paced with limited reform in the last 8 years. The delegation of absolute autonomy to the provincial government with regard to the management of the provinces was a bold act by the DRC government which was well received by the citizens. In terms of public finance, central government has been faced by numerous challenges especially with the release of the provincial budget. Reformation in Congo Brazzaville has encountered many difficulties because of the lack of qualified human capital in the government institutions. Another critical factor which has contributed towards reformation is the authoritarian system of government. One can infer that a democratically elected regime could contribute positively towards a transformed society in all the above-mentioned countries.

Key Words: Public Sector Reform, Decentralization, Political Transformation And Democratic System

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Introduction

In the last two decades, the Central Africa Region has experienced transformation from a single political party system to a multi-political party system. The essence of this change was to consent to another political culture in the political system in the country. The transformation of the political system has an impact on the effective and efficient management and administration of public service delivery. There are eight countries in the Central Africa Region, namely: Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central Africa Republic, and Sao Tome and Principe. The paper will provide a brief overview of Public

Administration Reform (PAR) in this sub-region. The paper will endeavor to assess whether the aforementioned countries have reformed the public sector in their respective countries.

The first aspect this paper will address why PAR or public sector reformation in the aforementioned countries? The answer to this question will be addressed by analyzing Pollit and Bouckaert (2000:13) argument that "public management is continuously thought of as a mean to end, not an end for itself" but "to a multiple end". Stringent budgetary control with regular checks and balances could ensure improved quality service delivery to its citizens. Moreover, a government with adequate funding could implement the policies thereby ensure effective and

efficient public administration. Another aspect raised by Pollit and Bouckaert (2000) believe that public sector reformation provides the officials and politicians an opportunity to reveal to the public that their daily actions are for the public good.

A government should, through public administration reform endeavor to provide effective and efficient service delivery through, *inter alia*, citizen participation, consultation, transparency and probity. The afore-mentioned change could be propagated for several African countries by international institutions such as the World Bank to ensure quality public service delivery. Despite implementing several public service delivery reformations in the majority of the Central African countries, the quality of service to the public is still regarded as poor. Another key definition of public sector reform is: "... deliberate changes to the structure and process of public sector organization's with the objective of getting them to run effectively" (Pollit and Bouckaert: 2000). Another question this paper will attempt to establish is whether the countries of the Central African Region have achieved their objectives through change in the public sector. This paper will also endeavor to assess the implication of the above definition of public sector reformation.

For the purpose of this paper, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo and Congo Brazzaville from the Central Africa Region have been selected to assess the implementation of PAR in the region.

An overview of public administration reform

The practicality of public administration reformation takes place when a government takes a decision to change the approach in the provision of services to its communities in conjunction with the private sector. It can be inferred that cultural diversity among the public officials could inhibit effective and efficient service delivery. Bouckaert (2007:29) argues that, "there are a macro, a meso, and a micro approach to culture in reforms in general and public sector reforms in particular". In a "macro culture", society is perceived in general while in the "meso culture" reference is made to public administration and the body of the professionals. In the "micro culture" focus is on the work cluster offices in government institutions. Some scholars perceive public administration reform as: "the outcomes of administrative reform by identifying it as the means to make the administrative system a more effective instrument for social change, a better instrument to bring about political equality, social justice and economic growth" (Samonte, 1970: 288).

Another argument concerning public sector reform is an explanation provided by Pollit and Bouckaert (2011:8) who state that: "public

management reform consists of deliberate changes to the structures and processes of public sector organisations with the objective of getting them to run better". One of the principles is to perceive the government institution and the local municipality as responsible to improve the quality of service across the country. One could infer that a new transformed political system in a country could have the potential to impact on public sector reform in a country.

According to experts Muccio and Mauri (2012:7), "the modernisation of public administration has developed similar reform effort that is strongly related to the principle of efficiency and effectiveness promoted by the New Public Management (NPM) approach and currently, good governance". This change from the centralisation of power in the capital to a decentralised system could have implications. Hammerschmid, Meyer and Demmke (2007:150) state that "national specificities and different administrative cultures and traditions makes public administration a unique, path dependent product of history and local traditions, leading to diverging reform paths and implementation." One can infer that public administration is linked to the political transformation of one particular country while other aspects such as social and economic factors will have an implication on public sector reform.

Wollmann (2003:3) provides a general overview from an international perspective of public sector reform which has already taken place in several countries. He states that there are three phases of public sector reform namely: the first phase covers the period between 1960 and 1970 where there were wide spectrums of reform which addressed the reorganisation of the government and the ministerial structure. The same phase also included the decentralisation and deconcentration of political and administration functions, territorial reforms as well as the introduction of policy evaluation as an instrument of policy making.

The second phase or period covered mid-1970 to 1980. During this particular period institutional changes were achieved under deregulation and privatisation of government assets. Another aspect which was introduced during that particular period was the evaluation of cost reducing procedures such as cost benefit analyses and task scrutiny (Wollmann, 2003:3). It was also a period when a large number of personnel were retrenched in the government institution. Many African countries experienced this unfortunate challenge of retrenchments in the public sector.

The third phase commenced during the latter part of 1990. This phase was considered as the 'birth' of New Public Management (NPM) which was guided by institutional reforms, such as downsizing, agencification, contracting, outsourcing and performance management. Performance monitoring, measuring and controlling was introduced (Wellman, 2003:3). This paper will briefly clarify the NPM

reformation which took place in various countries with each country having to adjust according to its circumstances. A success of one particular reform in one country cannot be generalised to another country which means that the political and administrative culture of one country cannot be the same with that of another country. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2000:13) support the latter statement when they state that: “these differences are problematic because, to put it colloquially, we are constantly in danger of comparing apples and pears. Different countries start from different places, have different histories and pursue different trajectories”. A common language many countries can speak in unison is, for example, good governance, accountability, honesty and efficiency.

Latin American countries were colonised by the European countries. Eighteen are Spanish speaking countries, Haiti a French speaking nation while Brazil was colonised by the Portuguese. The regimes in the Latin Americans are based along colonial lines which implies that “from colonial times, that continent had been subjected to a kind of state society relationship based primarily on five principles namely: bureaucratism, centralism, formalism, fiscalism and authoritarianism” (Monteiro, 2001:182). For any reform to take place in the Latin America countries, the five principles must be taken into consideration. These principles might be considered as a stumbling block to change within the country.

Administrative reform in Latin America has been in most part characterised by external factors. This argument is supported by Nef (2012:651) who states that the introduction of NPM with Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) is a strong example. Nef further asserts that “the initiative of administrative reform from within have been feyer, piecemeal, discontinuities”. The external force in terms of administrative reform in Latin America plays a huge role. This could be as the result of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The two financial institutions are the main drivers of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) who also recommend that the country implement administrative reform. This is usually the procedure followed by the IMF and World Bank when they are approached for financial assistance.

Latin America scholars Adie and Poitras (1974:250) explained some of the realities those countries are facing. They state that “historically, the administrative experience of Latin America has been shaped by numerous failed attempts at modernization and cyclical crises”. The problem is that the political reality of Latin America plays a major role because of the model of governance which was implemented in some countries. Some countries, such as, Chili, Brazil and Argentina adopted a military regime which could not implement the recommended administrative reform. Martner (1984:62) quoted in the Nef (2012) argues that “without political and institutional

development, addressing real issues such as poverty, unemployment or lack effective citizenship, administrative reforms-even couched in the current rhetoric of public sector modernisation are mere epiphenomena”. The paper highlights that even though reform had taken place in Latin America, much still needs to be done by many of the countries in that particular continent to improve the quality of service. Furthermore, many Latin American countries have embraced the democratic system of government, and reforms of public institutions are taking place across the Latin American continent.

The experience of public sector reformation in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is different. The beginning of public administration reform in the CEE countries started during early 1990 which focused on building a system of public administration rooted in the democratic foundation. The major focus for the CEE was to modernise government machinery. A group of European academics provided some findings concerning PAR in CEE. According to Lancu, Junjan and Devries (2013:3), for Central Eastern Europe and Central Asia, “the transition in PAR tried to move from one extreme (which is the state) to the other (market) and, eventually ended somewhere in between administrate market”. The reform within public institutions in the CEE reveals the private management theory in practice.

Nevertheless, the reforms in those countries which they took from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Suwaj, 2012:664) were relatively similar. CEE received financial support from OECD member states such as Canada and the United of America to implement administrative reform. The majority of the aforementioned countries decided to join the European Union (EU) to ensure that public administration responds to the standards prescribed by the EU member states.

Methodology

The research method for this paper is based on the qualitative approach which would facilitate to understand the applicability of public administration reform in the Central Africa region. The researchers focus primarily on secondary data which highlights the development of public administration in the selected countries. Moreover, to assess the change, most governments decided to implement reform in terms of transformation of the public service. A qualitative research method provides a comprehensive interpretation of concepts, constructs and opportunities which brings the research nearer to “social reality” (Bless and Higson, 2004). The qualitative research method is defined as “situated activity that locate observer in the world where researcher are attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning of people bring them in natural settings” (Gabrielian,

Yaung and Spice, 2012:143). Qualitative research can also be linked to a study which focuses on analysing a specific case study in one's community. For the purpose of this paper, each country will be considered as a particular case study. The purpose of the study is to establish whether any particular change has taken place in the Central Africa Region (CAR) in terms of public sector reform. The researcher is aware that most of these countries went through several reforms, however, the purpose is to determine whether the reform has been successful. This question will be developed by assessing each particular country *vis-a-vis* with the African Development Bank report which was released in 2014.

Sub-Saharan African experience: public sector reform

Public administration in most of the African states has encountered various problems since independence. The majority of the governments were advised by the international community to effect reform in the government structures. One of the leading international institutions, the World Bank, recommended to the African states in 1980 to transform public administration in their respective countries. Three plus decades later, there is another series of public administration reform in the form of "New Public Management". Under the new vision, public administration should be more efficient when the government provide services to the community. The Africa Economic Commission (2003:8) argues that "the core paradigm which can be discerned as influential in the development of public sector reform in the 1980 and 1990 was that the public sector provision was inefficient and often ineffective that led neither to cost containment nor quality improvement". Olowu (2012:609) argues that "the negative impact of the public service in the Sub-Saharan Africa, the first generation of African leaders wanted to have a direct control of the state apparatus, an orientation that encourage the evolution of a patronage based system of administration". The consequence hereof has been nepotism and tribalism in the public service in many of the African countries.

The impact of the afore-mentioned situation after independence brought the implementation of public sector reform in every single state in the Sub-Saharan Africa. The earlier public sector reform which took place in Africa was based on making public administration more developmental by changing its structures and procedures (Olewu, 2012: 610). During this particular period, the majority of the governments in Africa hired international experts to advise senior government officials. The public servants were duly informed to serve the community with care and respect. Mutahaba and Kiragu (2002:2) argue that the reform which took place over more than two decades form part of the global phenomena that has touched all the countries, that is, the

developed and less developing countries. Kiggundi (1998) asserts that the World Bank report revealed that from 1986 to 1997, 64% of the entire public sector reform operation was executed in Africa.

The majority of the countries are struggling to improve the quality of service to its citizens despite the implementation of reform more than two decades ago. Olefeni and David (2010) assert that in Nigeria, public sector reform has been on the government agenda for many years. Former Nigerian State President, Obasanjo, stated in 2005 that "*the reform of the civil service is one of the central themes of government agenda. Without a transparent and effective public service, government business and service delivery, to the public will be crippling and mired in dishonesty and graft. I am convinced that an efficient transparent and accountable civil service should be the hallmark of our democratic transformation and development. The Nigeria people deserve nothing less*". According to Gboyega and Abubakar (1998:3), the period after independence, the public sector in Nigeria was considered as one of the most important legacies the British colonial master had left behind. Observing the structure left by the colonial master, Nigeria thought that the socio-economic development of the country would evolve at a faster pace. However, that scenario was difficult to realise because of the political stance adopted by the regime.

Public sector reform was implemented in Uganda as soon as the "National Resistance Movement (NRM) took power in 1986. The argument introduced by the Museveni government was to change the way service was provided by the previous regime. They wanted the government to become accountable, transparent and efficient in the provision of services to the citizens.

The Ghanaian case is totally different to that of Uganda. The World Bank advised the Ghanaian government to retrench 15 000 civil servants under the reform programme which took place on 31 October 1987. The World Bank would compensate the Ghanaian government and retrain some of the civil servants. Davis (1990) criticised the Ghanaian reform as unsuccessful for several reasons. He claimed, for example, that the retrenchment of civil servants from the ministries did not help the government to reduce the number of public officials because the civil servants who were retrenched from one ministry simply found employment in another ministry. Davis maintained that the reforms introduced in the public sector in Ghana were by no means successful.

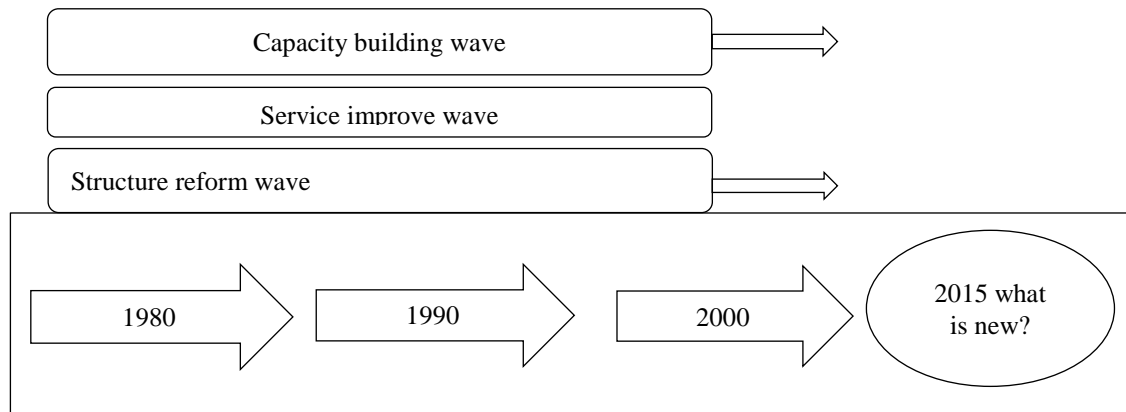
Reform in Kenya and Zambia also did not provide a positive result. According to Olefeni and David (2010:7), "in Kenya, the retrenchment of public servants through voluntary early retirement scheme, between 1994 and 1996 was, reversed through the hiring of teachers. Observing the Zambian government experience, the World Bank in

1997 recommended the country to retrench 37 000 civil servants”. The number of civil servants dropped from 139 000 to 102 000.

According to Kiragu (2002:9), in both Kenya and Zambia “their macroeconomics and fiscal adjustment driven reform remained high on the agenda of public sector reform, despite the fact that the SAP driven reform initiative were formally launched in 1990”. One needs to take cognisance that when the government downsizes the number of civil

servants, this would not remain consistent for several years. The recruitment of civil servants would have to be re-introduced in the near future which implies that the solution is not the retrenchment of civil servants. It is imperative that African governments understand the reason for the implementation of public sector reform. The figure below illustrates the passage of public sector reform in Africa from 1960 which was the year many African countries got their independence.

Figure 1. Illustration of the three waves of Public Sector Reform in Africa



Source: Mutahaba and Kiragu (2002)

Figure 1 above illustrates the passage of reform many governments undertook to improve government institutions in their country. According to Olefemi and David (2010:6), quoted by Mutahaba and Kiragu (2002) state that these reforms took more than 20 years as part of the structural adjustment programme imposed by the World Bank in Africa. Moreover, the researcher includes another element in the figure above: the year 2014; what is new? What are the probable changes the three countries have achieved specifically in the Central Africa Region? Has public service delivery become effective or more transparent when they deliver services to the community? Since the new wave of reform in 2014, the afore-mentioned governments are either improving or failing to implement reform. The research would highlight how far these countries have progressed with regard to reform of public administration. Cameroon will be the first country the paper will try to analyse the impact of PAR in the Central Africa Region.

Republic of Cameroon

The paper will assess the public sector reforms in the former French-speaking colony, the Cameroon in the past five decades. It is also imperative to note that the political situation in the Cameroon has been marked by a relative political stability in the recent past.

A brief administrative history of the Cameroon provides evidence that it is unique among former French colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa. It has faced

three historical sequences of colonial administration. The first phase was German colonisation which began in 1884 and lasted until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. The second and third phases involved French and British colonisation in the period between 1919 and 1960 (Mawhood, 1983:189). For this reason Cameroon’s public administration shows the influence of both English and French traditions. Cameroon now has a unitary governmental system which was introduced in 1972 to replace the previous federal arrangement, namely: the former French-administered territory of Cameroon in the east; and the former British administered Southern part of Cameroon (Republic of Cameroon: 2014).

The current system of public administration in the Cameroon was created by following the Weber-based administrative model. Corkery, Daddah, O’Nuallian and Land (1998:109) indicate that the head of the administration in the various ministries is a director general. Each of these ministries comprises different divisions, services and departments. There is also a provincial administration which includes provincial offices that are responsible for services in that province. This is also divided into a number of departments. There are ten provinces in the Cameroon, and the governors of each of the provinces are appointed by presidential decree. There is no elected governor in these provinces.

There is a decentralised system of local government in the Cameroon. The Cameroon country profile (2014: 37) states that “following the

provisions of the 1996 constitution, legislation on decentralisation was adopted by the National Assembly and signed on 22 July 2004". The law on decentralisation was supposed to be implemented between 2004 and 2007. The pieces of legislation which recognise the power of local government are the following:

- Law No 2004/017 of 22 July 2004, on decentralisation.
- Law No 2004/018 of 22 July 2004, on councils.
- Law No 2004/019 of 22 July 2004, on regions.

The above three pieces of legislation are the foremost laws defining the decentralisation of local government in the Cameroon. They replaced the previous legislation on local government and decentralisation. There are five types of local authorities or local councils. According to the Cameroon (Country Profile, 2014), there are a number of such bodies (the numbers are indicated in brackets):

- Rural (306)
- Urban (11)
- Special status urban councils (9)
- City councils (2), namely Yaoundé and Douala
- Sub-divisional urban councils (11) which are sub-units of Yaoundé and Douala. Yaoundé has six sub-units and Douala has five.

Administrative reform in Cameroon

The reform of the public service in Cameroon was and still is very complex. One first needs to understand the national context within which the country functions. The main goal facing the government was to change the inherited colonial civil service to a national civil service. It is emphasised by Corkery *et al.* (1998: 110), that "the statutory change was marked by a particular characteristic in Cameroon in that the inherited product was the consequence of four different types of administrative cultures (pre-colonial, German, French and British)". The government decided to unite the country incorporating the four cultures and to have a single civil service. Many Cameroonian politicians and scholars are of the view that "the public service has always been characterised by the existence of a great deficiency in the machinery of their internal operations, and with regard to their original conception as a support for all development activity" (Corkery *et al.*, 1998: 112). Below is a discussion of two of the major reasons why administrative reform was necessary in the Cameroon. Corkery *et al.* (1998:111), discuss under two blanket terms, namely: "subjective blockages" and "objective blockages".

One of the major changes the government wanted to implement was to resolve the problem of

language differences in the Cameroonian public institutions. The southern parts of Cameroon are Anglophone and the eastern part is Francophone. Corkery *et al.* (1998:112), describe this issue as one of several "subjective blockages" and maintains that "linguistic differences (a cultural colonial legacy, the inequality in the use of bilingualism, various national languages), disparities in the training of officials (some training at home, others training overseas)" had to be addressed. Government needed to take a specific decision to remedy this divisive tendency. Corkery *et al.* (1998), also use the term "objective blockages" to describe the unequal distribution of government officials in the different departments, and the allocation of facilities which do not conform with acceptable principles of sound governance.

Public administration in the Cameroon is a centralised system, regardless of Law No. 2004/017 of 22 July 2004, on decentralisation. For example, there is no doubt that the hiring of public officials is a fully centralised process in the Cameroon. To emphasise this particular statement, it is argued by the African Development Fund (AFD) (2006: 26) that "The systems of recruitment, promotion and remuneration of the government officials in Cameroon are not governed by precise rules, and this significantly affects transparency in the administration". Below is a brief discussion of the political, socio-cultural and economic aspects of the public service in Cameroon.

Political factors

The political chronology of post-colonial Cameroon can be divided into two periods. The first period began in 1960, when the country gained its independence and it ended in 1990. In this first period was there was a one-party, non-democratic government as was the tendency in many Sub-Saharan African states immediately after independence. The second period began in 1990 and is currently still in place. In 1990, with the birth of democracy, there was a change of state leadership and President Ahidjo was replaced by President Paul Biya who is still in power. Corkery *et al.* (1998: 113), explain that the political system in the Cameroon is characterised by a concentration of political power in the hands of an executive president. This system of governance places the seat of power and the centralisation of government services in the capital.

Socio-cultural factors

Ethnicity, that is tribal affinities, play a major role in running government institutions across the country. Provisions to deal with this element of Cameroonian society have been included in the constitution.

Economic factors

Holding a position in government institutions at whatever level should be open to all citizens of that particular state if they possess the necessary skills. However, the payroll of the Cameroonian public service has increased year by year without improvements being apparent in the provision of efficient services, which smacks of social distribution rather than running a sound public administration.

In 2013, the Cameroonian government introduced another series of reform in the government institutions. That particular reform targeted the creation of a new Ministry for Procurement which purchases the necessary materials for the government and other government agencies. According to Africa Development Bank (2014:16) “the Cameroonian public sector is highly fragmented resulting in powers overlapping between one ministry and another, as well as wasted resources and limited effectiveness”. The decentralisation of Cameroon is still going to strength the application of reform which started several years ago while other responsibilities have been delegated to the local authorities. This reality still has to be realised because some Cameroonian scholars believe that the power base lies in central government.

In terms of “Public Finance” there is a new law to improve transparency and admissibility in the government institutions. Moreover, the Africa Development Bank (2014:17) reported that “*there are institutions in charge of internal and external of control concerning public account in Cameroon. There is an inspectoral general for each ministry, the inspectorate general of the Ministry of Finance, the Audit Bench, the Supreme State Audit Office (CONSUPE) and the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC)*”. The Audit Bench assists the government and parliament to enforce the law of the public account.

The government decided to release at the end of each year a report identifying the country’s debt. This was a wise decision taken by the government to act in a transparent manner by revealing to the public the level of borrowing from international financial institutions. This act is an element of good governance by the Cameroonian government.

In addition, the Cameroonian government joined the Extractive Industries Transparency Industrials (EITI). These countries produce mineral resources. In 2013, the government achieved the status of compliance with the requirement of (EITI). Under those particular circumstances, the government must release EITI reports every financial year. The 2012 report is expected to be released by the government by the end of December 2014. The EITI report of 2013 was published in July 2014. The Cameroonian civil societies and other stakeholders are part of the Cameroonian EITI. These processes provide transparency with regard to the financial flows of the

extractive industries of Cameroon (ADB: 2014). Public sector reform in Cameroon has not met the expectations of the citizens. There are numerous challenges which the government needs to take seriously. The Ministry of Procurement which is based in the presidency is a contentious issue among the citizens. It is recommended that the procurement ministry be placed under the control of the Premier Ministry Office. The latter Office could establish checks and balance mechanisms to reduce corruption and nepotism which is still destroying some of the ministries in the Cameroon.

Democratic Republic Of Congo

The DRC is a French-speaking country which was colonised by Belgium. It is the largest French-speaking country in Sub-Saharan Africa and presents a different reality from the situation in the Cameroon. The discussion which follows will be based on the transformation of public administration in the DRC since it became independent.

Brief history of public administration in the DRC

The implementation of public administration in the DRC began with the arrival of the European (Belgian) colonisers. There is evidence that as early as the fifteenth century, long before the arrival of the Europeans, the so-called Kingdom of Kongo was well governed, although the European type of public administration was unheard of. However, after the Berlin Conference of 26 February 1885, Belgium established the l’Etat Independent du Congo (EIC) which ruled the Congo from 1885 to 1908. This period saw the establishment of public administration in the country. As soon the EIC was formed, the Belgian government set up a two-tier structure of governance comprising a central government (with its headquarters in Brussels) and a local government with its headquarters in Vivi (Boma), now in the Bas-Congo Province (Ndaywel and Nzieme, 1997:35).

Historians claimed that public administration in the DRC began in 1888 when the central government based in Belgium reorganised the management of the colony. This was inaugurated by royal decree on 1 August 1888. In terms of this decree, the colony was divided into eleven districts (Ndaywel and Nzieme, 1997: 36).

Each district was managed by an administrator who had one or two deputies to assist him in the daily running of the district. All the administrative institutions were operated primarily for the benefit of King Leopold II of Belgium. During that period the administrative entities worked with private companies such as the Anglo-Belgian Indian Rubber Company, for the exploitation of rubber.

Public administration in the DRC underwent many transformations, the details of which will not be

provided in this article. An overview will be provided to allow for a comparative analysis with the other three SSA countries as far as public administration is concerned. Public service in the DRC is relatively unsatisfactory and the government needs to make a great deal of effort to overhaul and improve the public service.

When the DRC attained its independent status in 1960, the system of governance was centralised in the capital. The provincial authorities merely implemented the decisions taken in the capital. This system of management is still enforced by the current government. The DRC's constitution which came into being on 18 February 2006 with the introduction of the first democratic government, recommended a decentralisation of governance in the country. Unfortunately, till today, decentralisation has been implemented at a pedestrian pace by the Congolese politicians.

The pros and cons of decentralisation in the DRC is a matter of debate. In terms of political and administrative control, central government wants to continue taking the final decisions on all matters of governance. According to the World Bank and European Commission (2008:2), the implementation of decentralisation in the country would essentially be a political process and would bring an element of broader peace and stability. It would also be a reflection of the reconciliation process that has taken place in the last five years. In this perspective decentralisation is part of the process of seeking a new equilibrium and national consensus that provides a wider acceptance of sharing resources while maintaining the national integrity of the country. This sets the procedure apart from the donor-driven decentralisation process that has often been seen in other African states. It also requires the current government to organise local elections in 2015. After the local elections there is a possibility of proceeding towards decentralisation of governance across the country.

DRC reform

The new constitution which was promulgated in 2006 recommended the government to implement consistent reform in Congolese public administration. The first reform which took place in the DRC was the election of a premier of the province and members of the provincial council. The members of the provincial council consist of those who eligible to elect the premier of the province (DRC constitution, 2006). Another reform undertaken by the DRC government was to delegate total management autonomy to the provincial government. Another key element stipulated in the new constitution is the financial autonomy of the province. According to the DRC constitution, 40% of the provincial revenue must be returned to the province. That public finance budget would assist the province to implement various

projects in the province. The African Development Bank (2014:45) states that *“since 2006 the country took decision to decentralise management to improve public policy. Despite the implementation of a strategic plan for public finance reform, local authorities faces several problems in managing their public finance. This is because of the interference with the central government, both in the collection of some the revenue and in implementing investment budgets”*. One of the major problems many of the provinces face is the lack of good infrastructure in the province. In terms of the public management procurement process, it has not as yet been implemented across the province. The provincial authorities are not to be blamed for the non-implementation. This blame is located in the central government. The government is delaying the implementation of some of the policies which were had been taken in parliament.

Republic Of Congo

The Republic of the Congo is the third Central Africa Region country which this paper analyses the impact of public administration reform. This country has experienced political instabilities for the past several years. Nevertheless, this does not form part of this papers discussion. According to Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI: 2012), *“the transformation of the Republic of Congo (also referred to as Congo-Brazzaville) was marked by continuous political and economic consolidation after years of civil war and violence”*. This was first a Soviet Marxist country and after several military coups, the government decided to embrace a democratic system. The political transformation in most of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa does have an impact on the administrative system of the country. This situation can be demonstrated where there is political instability in the country. However, this is not the case in Congo Brazzaville.

Public administration in Congo Brazzaville is under performing because of corruption within the government spheres. Public Administration is considered ineffective and worsened by the poor service delivery provided to the community by the civil servants (BTI, 2012). The latest report released by the African Development Bank (2014) reveals that reform is taking place in the country. However, the implementation of the reform is problematic in Congo Brazzaville because the government has failed to implement decentralisation in its entirety. It is argued by the African Development Bank (2014:63) that *“the satisfactory implementation of these reforms is hindered by an insufficiency of human and financial resources in the newly created structures”*. The implementation of service delivery is hampered by ineffective and poor governance. Another factor is limited expertise in the public institutions. There is a complete lack of public sector reform because the

country still not abolished the authoritarian style of governance and power is still vested in the presidency.

Lesson to be learned relating to Public Administration Reform in the Central Africa Region

The reform reviewed in the three selected countries presents its own realities because of the political culture each country has adopted. It can be argued that public administration reform is taking place in each of the selected countries but at a painstakingly slow pace. The circumstances in the Cameroon are exceptionally complex despite legislation being adopted to decentralise in 2004. The biggest challenge to date has been the lack of political will to implement the legislation. The State President is holding onto power by personally appointing the governors of the provinces as well as the senior government officials. However, certain reforms, *albeit* limited, are in place in the Cameroon which is an indication that the government is implementing the reform process. There is a new ministry in the presidency which is responsible for all government procurement.

Reform in the DRC also represents its own challenges. The new constitution was enacted in 2006. However, complete reformation is still lacking till today. The decentralisation of government institutions which is one of the key objectives of the current regime is extremely slow. Local government elections have not taken place since the adoption of the new constitution in 2006. Furthermore, the government has failed to make any progress towards decentralisation in the last eight years. However, the government delegated total autonomy to the provincial government. Unfortunately, there are numerous challenges central government is facing in terms of releasing a feasible budget to the provincial sphere to enable them to provide effective and efficient service delivery.

The implementation of reform in Congo Brazzaville has encountered many difficulties because of the lack of qualified human capital in the government institutions. The government has adopted an authoritarian system of government which has had a negative impact on its citizens.

Conclusion

Finally, the way forward for the three countries is to rise above their political system and provide the appropriate techniques for the transformation of the country. In the case of Cameroon, it is very complex due to the political system they have adopted. Although legislation recommends a total transformation of the administrative system, there is a distinct lack of implementation. The executive, which is the power base in the capital, is holding onto

political power. However, the limited reform which has been implemented reveals the willingness of the government to provide change and become more accountable to the Cameroonian people.

Observation of the DRC reveals that government also needs to react boldly to implement a complete decentralisation programme as stipulated in their constitution. Local elections need to be held which would prevent central government from making political appointments at the local sphere. The decentralisation of the fiscal must be reinforced by central government which could provide the provincial authority with improved governance.

The political system in Congo Brazzaville is exceedingly complex a political will is required by the politicians to effect public sector reform. A democratic and transparent government needs to be established before any public sector reform can be implemented. Unfortunately, the current political system impedes all possibilities of political change. Political change could result in the reformation of the countries approach to a transformed / liberated public administration.

To close the discussion of public sector reform in the Central Africa Region, these countries will require political transformation with a total democratic system in the three countries the paper analyses. Without this some of the reform in the public institution will continue to face difficulties as the paper try to highlight.

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