

# The Context of Public Administration: Comparative Analysis of Selected Former Colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa

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**Abstract:** This paper presents a comparative study of the legacy of colonial ruler's vis-a-vis the culture of public administration in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Four countries, Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) were selected as case studies. They lie in two regions of the continent – West and Central Africa. The culture of public administration in Sub-Saharan Africa is complex as demonstrated by literature presented in this paper. The models of indirect and direct rule initiated prior to independence and the political transformation in each country has played a major role in their current governance. The study shows that the English-speaking countries (Ghana and Nigeria) are better advanced in terms of public sector reform when compared to the two French-speaking states (Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)). However, administrative problems remain in all the cases. Chief among these are corruption, nepotism and tribalism. Such issues have had also had a negative impact on the development of public administration within these countries.

**Keywords:** Public administration, Sub-Saharan Africa, Indirect rule, Direct rule, Public Service Reform, Decentralisation, Unitary system of governance

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## 1. Introduction

The legacy of colonial rule is apparent in the public administration of many African countries today. The notion of direct rule means that there is centralisation of the power wielded (in the "mother" country, i.e. the coloniser). European models of governance (French and Belgian respectively) were thus imposed on the local African people without taking any consideration of the way of life of the local communities or how they had previously chosen to manage and regulate their daily affairs. According to Kisangani (2010:223-226), the French colonies were governed directly from Paris through the [appointed] governors. The French used African chiefs but, unlike in the British Empire, these chiefs were appointed by the French authorities, in large measure because of their support for French rule. Most of the chiefs that were appointed by the French authorities during the colonial period were not part of the indigenous ruling family in the African politics and were often regarded as "puppet" chiefs by the local population (Peemans, 1975:173,174). In contrast, the British model, which is labelled "indirect rule", meant that power or the authority was delegated to the local authorities in the particular African state. Gerring, Ziblatt, Van Gorp & Arevalo (2011:382) explain that

for the indirect model of rule to be implemented it is, essential that the dominant country A, identify an agent within the subordinate country B (the colonised country), to whom power or authority can be effectively delegated. The capacity of the country B to serve as an agent of country A is a function of how state-like the polity is. Gerring *et al.* (2011:381-383) go on to explain that country B had to follow all the political and administrative recommendations given by country A. This means that there had to be effective communication between the two countries. If there was poor communication or a complete breakdown of communication, there was a strong possibility that the administrative agent in country B would be removed because mistrust would develop between them.

The focus of this paper is to understand the impact of the two models of governance in the French-speaking and English-speaking states in the central African region and the West Africa region. African countries that attained independence in the 1950s and 1960s experienced challenges regarding the smooth running of their newly-independent states. There was severe lack of experience and capacity in the public service to manage administrative bodies effectively. However, a general view of the challenges these

countries encountered will not be provided here as the realities differ from one country to the other. The realities in these countries are dissimilar as far as governance management is concerned. The study also assesses the transformation of public administration in the post-independence period until these countries put democratic systems in place. This transformation varied in each state because of the differing political development from one state to another and their Respective English-speaking and French-speaking cultural backgrounds.

The paper first discusses the English-speaking countries (Ghana and Nigeria) which are located in the Western African region. The transformation of government after independence underwent a complete turnabout in both of these countries when military coup d'états took place and civil regimes took control. Under these circumstances, it was difficult for any country to have a fully-functional public administration. Gradually, political struggles ensued and efforts were made to introduce efficient governance. The analysis of this process in each country will be unravelled to understand the transformation each country went through and the effectiveness of its current public administration.

A brief assessment of public administration in Sub-Saharan African states after independence shows that many of them have centralised administrations similar to those that were there already as a legacy of colonialism. Conyers (2007:2) argues that in most countries, "the period immediately after independence was one of centralised systems of governance. This system of management was justified within the country and by the external funders and advisers, on the basis that central policy making and planning were necessary to bring about the quick economic and social transformation required".

Politicians hoped that a centralised administrative system would bring stability but in reality this was not the case in most Sub-Saharan states. Initially, the level of understanding on the role of the public service and how to manage state institutions was inadequate. Furthermore, there was a lack of the necessary skills required for sound governance. It is against this background that we provide additional insight and understanding of public administration in the four countries. Further to this, we probe reasons behind the transformation

and status quo of public administration in these countries.

According to Geva-May (2002:279), one of the basic questions decision makers and scholars should pose is how they can better comprehend developments in public policy, administration, and management and derive useful insights from them. In Geva-May's (2002) view, there are two levels on which these questions can be addressed the first being the macro level where they relate to the macro-underlying principles that should promote an international discourse. A case in point given is that in the realm of administrative change and reform this pertains to underlying overviews of the impact of globalisation and administrative reform and an understanding of what is happening in theory. Second is the micro-level or case study level which refers to what can be extrapolated from a national natural experiment by those involved in international discourse. Hence, one cannot ignore the value of analysing individual cases. Citing Rose (1993:110) Geva-May (2002) states that this value lies in crossing national boundaries (and) expand(ing) the number of programs that can be observed in action ... the fact that they are foreign introduces an element of speculation whether they can transfer.

The question that inherently follows is: 'Does the problem have international scope, and if so, to what extent?' Of particular importance in this context is the ability to use an appropriate method of inquiry that transcends national/geographical boundaries. In this regard, comparative studies provide the means to ask questions about common fundamental problems and transferable arrangements. The method applied in this paper is solely of a qualitative nature which will help to understand the applicability of different theories of governance. The researchers focus primarily on secondary data which discusses the development of public administration in the selected countries. A qualitative research method provides a comprehensive interpretation of concepts, constructs and opportunities which brings the research nearer to "social reality" (Bless & Higson, 2004). Qualitative research is exploratory and is frequently used in an investigation of a subject area in which there is only limited knowledge. This method of investigation will throw light on the differences and similarities between the English-speaking and French-speaking countries in the selected regions in Sub-Saharan Africa.

## 2. The Theory of Direct and Indirect Rule

An understanding of direct and indirect rule should begin with an investigation of the type of political development and administrative organisations these countries had in the pre-colonial period. In most cases the existing model of governance was incompatible with European models of governance and the coloniser simply chose the model it felt was most appropriate. A practical way to understand the theory of direct and indirect rule is to begin with a simple definition. The Oxford Dictionary defines "direct rule" as a system of government in which the area colonised is managed by the coloniser's central government (Oxford Dictionary, 2014). The online version of the same dictionary provides a slightly more nuanced definition by stating that "direct rule" means a "system of government wherein the central government controls [both] the state and the provinces" of the territory that has been colonised (Oxford Dictionary, 2014). Taking these two definitions back to the colonial period it means simply that the government in the metropole (seat of power of the coloniser) is considered the main political decision-maker and has the power to govern or decide the fate of the colonised area and its people. In other words, direct rule means "centralisation of power".

This model of government is discussed by Klibanoff & Poitevin (2013: 3) who explain that:

*"under centralisation, localities have no right in dealing with the central authority. Localities effectively become internal divisions of the central authority's organisation. They are vertically integrated and they are an integral part of the legal structure of the central authority. Within this organisation or legal structure, divisions have no property or contracting rights. In effect, no legal contract can be enforced between them".*

Direct rule and centralisation of power therefore mean that that country A gives direction to country B on what to do. In the colonial period the metropolis, the capital city of the coloniser, based in Europe, provided policy directives to be implemented in the colony, i.e. country B. It means that the major decision making took place in the metropolis. The central government took most of the decisions and the periphery which was considered a province, implemented those decisions. According

to Schneider (2003:32-56), cited by Gerring *et al.* (2011:381) the collaboration between an imperial metropolis and its colonies, was similar to the collaboration between core and peripheral regions of a large, "diverse nation state such as the United Kingdom or Russia, rendering the classical distinction between intrastate and interstate authority difficult". To explain this argument: there is an inter-governmental relationship between these different governmental bodies. When a decision is taken by the central government, other institutions have to implement the decision handed down to them from above.

This means therefore that there must be an inter-governmental relationship between the governance institutions in the centre and those situated in the periphery. For example, the Belgian government and the French government established a system direct rule in the DRC and in Senegal. The governance of the colonies was under the supervision of the central government in the Western capital. To elaborate further, the degree of management found in country B allowed country A (from the metropole) to enforce its will on the colony. One of the key elements here is to gain a better understanding between the two nations in terms of political governance of the country.

In an article written by Mamdani (1999:862) it is stated:

*"direct rule aimed at creating a native elite that was granted a modicum of civil rights in return for assimilating the culture of the coloniser. The second type of model was called indirect rule. While direct rule was premised on assimilation, indirect rule was premised on autonomy. In spite of its claims to being a more benign form of rule, one that tended to reproduce native custom in a permissive fashion, indirect rule was the more hegemonic assertion of colonial power".*

The two models cohabited beside one another in most of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The administrative system used in many Western European countries applied this model to control their colonies. Furthermore, Mamdani (1999) explains that the model of direct rule was focused on the ideology of a single legal order. He also emphasises that it was a total contradiction of traditional native institutions. Country A introduced a new administrative system devised in

the metropolis and the indigenous people were forced to adapt to this new system. The theory of indirect rule in Africa features prominently in studies of colonialism before and after independence across the continent. This system of governance influenced state capacity, the economic development of the country, and other activity that took place in colonised states. According to Naseemullah (2013:1):

*"Principally, the colonial powers or nations ruled territories indirectly in indifferent ways both within and across imperial territories. Secondly, while indirect rule is usually portrayed as a colonial form of governance, de-colonisation did not always lead to direct rule; forms of indirect rule persist in many post-colonial nations".*

This system of governance in Sub-Saharan African was found in the West African region, more specifically in the British colonies. Some West African scholars dispute the argument which claims that indirect rule was only applied in the latter stage. This paper is not going to focus on that particular debate.

Another argument raised by Naseemullah (2013:2) concerning indirect rule is that the "model is seen as a form of colonial control in which colonizers delegate the control of authority to the local people. The region of indirect rule was considered beyond the reach of direct power and authority of the state; instead, intermediaries often those holding traditional or customary authority were the face of political elite".

In this context the local authority or the chief had the power to control his region and report back to the capital or the metropolis. To access the system with the current realities in terms of public administration we can say that this was a form of decentralisation of power. Other scholars, such as Lange (2009), claim that the British direct rule system led to strong states and greater economic development, than indirect rule. There is a question to ask when the statement raised by Lange read. Did the British impose direct or indirect rule in their colonies in Africa? To answer this question in a simple manner, the British and the French used both these models. Our discussion now turns to the first of the Sub-Saharan states with an English-speaking culture in the West Africa region, and more specifically to public administration in Ghana.

### **3. English-Speaking Countries – Republic of Ghana and Federal Republic of Nigeria**

In this part of the discussion, we begin by looking at the Republic of Ghana and the Federal Republic of Nigeria. While Ghana has experienced relatively stable governance over the years, Nigeria has on the other hand been marred by military coups popular in the West-Africa and military leadership in the recent past. Despite these developments, we argue that public administration in these two countries has been, overtime, largely decentralised as influenced by the indirect rule during their colonial days.

#### **3.1 Public Administration in Ghana and Nigeria**

Ghana is a country on the coast of West-Africa with a long history of trade. In 1850, the British formalised their control of the Gold Coast region by making it a colonial protectorate following their early nineteenth century domination. The British appointed a governor to rule the colony, but largely depended on in-direct rule, that is, governing through African traditional leaders who took new roles as colonial administrators. By 1874, the British made the Gold Coast an official colony with colonial officials establishing a legislative council-including appointed African representatives (The Choices Program, n.d.:27). The Gold Coast became independent on March 6, 1957 with Kwame Nkrumah as being its first Prime Minister. Notwithstanding, in most African countries the period immediately after independence was one of the centralisation of power. This was justified both by governments and by external funders and other Western advisers working with the political leaders (Conyers, 2007:19). A major reason often cited, is that many of the countries in the SSA did not have the expertise to maintain the management of the public service at pre-independence level. Ghanaian government took the initiative to centralise decision making in the capital city but the central government could not perform effectively in the periphery (the provinces) because of lack of skilled manpower. The result was a negative impact on the public sector as a whole. The approach adopted here is to assess the different reforms introduced by the Governments of Ghana (GOG) and Nigeria (GON) to reach the current levels of public administration. According to Nti (1978) as cited in Ayee (2001:2) public administration

in Ghana has been considered "the finest, most relevant and performance-oriented institution in Sub-Saharan Africa" and as "a moribund, paper pushing institution". Ayee (2001) goes on to say that in Ghana the public administration has had good years across the difficult period of different regimes. This particular statement has sparked debate among Ghanaian scholars and international experts in public administration.

Comparatively, the evolution of Nigeria as a nation can be traced to 1914, when the British protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated by the imperial government (Osieke, n.d.:1). The amalgamation was motivated by the desire to pool resources so that the relatively rich territories of southern Nigeria could assist their poorer neighbours in the North. Nigeria became an independent state on 1 October 1960. Since then, the military has ruled the country for a total of 30 years while democratic governance has existed for only 17 years –1960-66, 1979-83, and 1999 to the present. According to Agba, Chukwurah & Achimugu (2014:27) Nigeria is a multifarious ethnic society (having more than 250 ethnic groupings) with a long-standing history of traditional administrative, military and democratic governance. Traditionally, before independence, Nigeria had well established traditional structures of politics and administration. For instance, the three major ethnic groups (Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo) had their peculiar system of administration.

After attaining independence, the bureaucratic system inherited was one of centralisation of power which was to serve the interests of the British colonial master. It was structured in such way as to guarantee law and order, to collect taxes and fines. Adamolekun (2000: 33) illustrates that "British colonial rule was an 'administrative', a dictatorship, and an authoritarian system of government". During that particular period most of the senior positions in the public sector were occupied by white officials. For the most part, Nigerians had only previously been responsible for jobs which entailed manual labour and at the time were therefore not desirous of working in the public service. Adamolekun (1999:34) underlines this point asserting that after independence, and "even today, many Nigerians still regard [working in] the public service as a 'White Man's job'". This is a significant legacy that was left for Nigerians by their colonial masters. However, in this regard, a year after independence the public

service was transformed completely. Most of the positions in the government sphere were thereafter occupied by Nigerians. It is very important to understand that Nigeria is a federal state; it functions as a federal system of government with three spheres of governance. There is a federal government; another for each of the composite states; and a lower level of municipal or local government.

### **3.2 Political Factors**

There is no doubt that political developments in Ghana and related unrest are linked with the level of public administration of the country. To support this position, we agree with Ayee (2001:2) who wrote that "the best period in Ghana's public service covers the entire period before independence in 1957 and after independence in which goes to the beginning of 1970. That period demonstrated that the machinery of government essentially revolves, appear to have been well trained and adequately remunerated and resources".

The number of Ghanaian civil servants was limited during that time and the government was able to manage the public administration of the country effectively. This was despite the fact that the economy of Ghana was stable and good in that particular period. The ten years after independence should have shown good progress in public administration were it not for military coups which led to failed economies for several years. By observing the political transformation which Ghana went through one can conclude that there is definitely link with the development of the public service in that country. The literature shows that the country had a centralised administrative system which was implemented for two decades under the various military and civil governments (Haruna, 2003:343-353). Aware of the parlous condition of public administration in the country the Ghanaian government decided to transform the public service for the better. It was clear that there was gross under performance. One of the reasons for this was that civil servants were receiving very poor salaries and Ghanaians with the necessary skills were not prepared to render the required services for such poor remuneration. The main changes were initiated in the ministries, departments and agencies that form the administrative core of local and central government (Ayee, 2001).

According to Republic of Ghana (2014), the "strategies the government took to introduce reform

**Table 1: Some Strategies of Civil Service Reform in Ghana**

1. Further rationalisation of the pay to provide incentive for all grades
2. Re-grading of all civil service posts to allow for improved salaries
3. Introduction of new scheme of service to retain and reward high calibre staff
4. Work to support decentralisation of authority to district assemblies, including staff, structure, and functions
5. Implementation of job inspection reports, linked with new manpower planning and budgeting methods
6. Finalisation of new civil legislation to provide a sound legal framework for reform
7. Introduction of a new performance appraisal system which sets agreed objectives for each office to motivate and assess staff effectively
8. Production, distribution and computerised updating of senior and junior staff lists to assist manpower planning
9. Comprehensive analysis of training needs for all classes, with crash training programmes in key areas to improve skills from the top down
10. Launching management reviews of key ministries and functions to achieve improvement of the civil service

Source: Ayee (2001)

involved diagnostic work, institution building, down-sizing, identification and redeployment of excess labour, as well as restructuring and decentralizing public administration". Table 1 above indicates the strategies of civil service reform which were introduced based on human resource development and manpower initiatives.

These reform measures helped the government to identify the correct number of public servants and to remove the "ghost workers" from the payroll. However, according to Davis (1990) the reform in the Ghanaian public service was not totally successful for several reasons. He claims, 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. He therefore maintains that the reforms introduced in the public sector in Ghana were by no means successful across the board. Davis (1990:3) argues further that "difficulties experienced in finding the resources to adjust civil service pay to realistic levels suggest that the scale of downsizing programmes in the Ghana public service was insufficient to enable adequate progress to be made in this area". However, it cannot be denied that in the more than five decades since independence and under a number of different governments, the public administration in Ghana has shown significant improvement.

Analogous to Ghana, the current system of public administration in Nigeria was profoundly influenced by the colonial administrative system in place before the attainment of independence. In about 1914 this was a divided or fragmented administrative system that differed in the northern part of Nigeria and in the southern part. The historical evolution of Nigerian public administration is explained below (based closely on Maduabum, 2006:14). He provides the following chronology:

- From 1866 to 1874 the central administration of Lagos, Gold Coast, Gambia and Sierra Leone was transferred to Freetown, Sierra Leone.
- From 1874 to 1886, the Lagos Colony was administered from Gold Coast.
- In 1886 Moloney was appointed governor of Lagos.
- In 1889, the Niger Coast Protectorate was merged with the territories of the Royal Niger Company.
- On 1 January 1900 the protectorate of Southern Nigeria was formed along with that of Northern Nigeria.
- In 1906, the Lagos Colony was merged with Southern Nigeria.

- In 1914, the Lagos Colony and the Southern Protectorate were merged with the Northern Protectorate to form an amalgamated territory called Nigeria. Thereafter, a governor general by the name of Sir Fredrick Lugard was appointed for the amalgamated colony. He was assisted by a number of European members all of whom were appointed, and who formed an Executive Council.

The law of governance is stipulated in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. There are mixed cultures of governance as a result of the political transformation the country went through. Nigeria was under a military regime for an extended period of 28 years while the remaining years since independence have been under a democratic government. Both these cultures of governance have had an impact on the Nigerian public service. Anazodo, Okoye & Chukwuemeka (2012:22) maintain that the main objective of public service reform in Nigeria was to raise the quality of service delivery to the Nigerian population, provide good economic support and social development.

They point out that Improvements in this regard also enhanced the capacity to implement core state function revenue generation, financial management and personnel management.

To reach these goals the Nigerian government introduced widespread public service reforms after the country gained its independence. An outline of these changes is presented in Table 2 below. However, the realities in Nigeria concerning the level of public administration and service delivery available still require a great deal of upgrading and more effort must be made on the part of the state to make significant improvements.

Of the above list of reforms, the government implemented there are some which are more significant than others. Anazodo *et al.* (2012:22) argue that the most important reforms are those introduced by the Adebo Commission in 1971; the Udoji Public Service Review Reform 1988; and the Allison Ayida Panel in 1994. Some of the key reforms entailed a review of the civil servants' salaries because the cost of living in Nigeria had risen so much that

**Table 2: Public Service Reform in Nigeria (1945 to 1998)**

Reform Commissions	Year
Tudoe Davies Commission	1945
Sir Walter Harragin Commission	1946
Gorsuch Commission	1954
Mbanefo Commission	1959
Morgan Commission	1963
Simeon Adebo Commission	1971
Udoji Commission	1971-1974
Williams and Williams Commission	1975
Report of Presidential Commission on salaries and conditions of service of university staff (Cookey Commission)	1981
Report of Presidential Commission on parastatals (Onosode Commission)	1981
Dotun Philip Panel	1985
Public Service Reform in Nigeria	1988
Justice Atanda Fatai Williams Committee	1990
Longe Commission Report	1991
Allison Ayida Panel	1994
Report of the Vision 2010 Committee	1997
Committee on harmonisation of remuneration in the public service	1998

Source: (Banjo: 2013)

public servants were in financial difficulty. From 1963 to 1999 all the above reforms emphasised the government's evaluation of salary scales. These various recommendations reviewed some of the discrepancies civil servants encountered in various parts of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. According to Azando *et al.* (2012:22) put it, the "uniformity of salary scale, the conditions of service, performance of appraisal, and so forth" were under scrutiny. However, the Nigerian government did not take steps to address all the recommendations suggested by the various commissions (Azanodo *et al.*, 2012). Indeed, some commentators are of the opinion that the public sector in Nigeria is still performing very poorly. For example, Nigeria still faces an exceedingly high level of corruption which continues to affect public sector performance in that country.

There are some Nigerian scholars who claim that although Nigeria is a federal state, the country still shows certain aspects of a unitary system of governance. Ogundele & Somefun (2008:32) write that "most developing countries that are practising federal states do not practise a full federal system as what they refer to as federal state is synonymous

to a unitary system". Wilson (2013:142) emphasises that the Nigerian constitution has been a major source of controversy on the issue of the autonomy and power of the local government. The author implies that the federal government influences most of the decisions in all three spheres of government and allows very little opportunity for grassroots political participation. However, one cannot deny that there has already been an enormous transformation in Nigerian public administration reform in the past years across the country.

The analysis of two English-speaking countries in the West African region, Ghana and Nigeria, shows that the governments in these countries have introduced significant public sector reforms since independence. However, there are also areas of ineffectiveness in the public sector of both these countries. Some of these problems have been highlighted in Table 3 below.

In both Ghana and Nigeria in the past decades many of these inefficiencies have been addressed. The challenges for the transformation of the public service in these two countries is however still significant

**Table 3: Causes of Civil Service Ineffectiveness in Ghana and Nigeria**

Ghana	Nigeria
1. Poor morale	1. Highly regimented and militarised
2. Poor pay, benefits and incentives	2. Slow response to technological changes and modern organisational methods
3. High level of absenteeism	3. Sycophantic because civil servants feel that it is safer to conform than initiate
4. Inadequate supervision and accountability	4. Poor work arrangement, highly hierarchical operational structure, un-streamlined organisational structure
5. Ineffective promotion and career development policies and procedures	5. Lacking in financial and material resources
6. Poor performance appraisal practices	6. Corrupt in virtually all affairs because of insecurity of tenure, poor remuneration and glorification of materialism by society
7. Poorly designed jobs	7. Grossly indiscipline and negative poor ethics
8. Poor human resources management	8. Declining efficiency, effectiveness and productivity
9. Hostile environment	9. Disregard and disrespect by some members of the political class, the business community and other public servants

Source: Ayee (2001)



due to corruption in the system and issues such as political patronage within the public service.

### **3.3 Socio-Economic Factors**

Ghana was accorded role to play in governing the colony by its colonial master through the legislative council and later the Executive Council. The British policy of indirect rule made the chiefs and local leaders' agents of colonialism representing the people of Ghana. There was significant economic development in colonial Ghana such as the construction of roads and a harbour at Takoradi (US Library of Congress, 2014). According to The Choice Program (n.d.:27), African in the Gold Coast worked for themselves or for other Africans, this was not practiced in other colonies.

With regard to Nigeria, some scholars (Olowu, Otobo & Okotom, 1997:3) are of the view that public administration in Nigeria was more efficient and effective during the colonial era. However, this has in Akinwale (2014:4); Olusanya (1975:66); Gboyega's (1989:169) view, since changed as regionalisation, political and ethnic interests took precedence over merit principle. According to Oladimeji, Nasiru, & Ajike (2016:35) with colonialism, the administrative system to a large extent was dictated by the exigencies of the era and therefore attempted to conform to that of colonial power largely making the boss to occupy larger than life posture while the subject was to obey.

The post-colonial leaders instead of absorbing the positive aspect of the imported administrative system at the local levels copied it entirely. The administrative system generally in Nigeria manifested servant-master relationship while the governed were always at the mercy of the governed. Though in some instances when the political leaders were elected, the experiences under military system further reinforced servant-master relationship and the hope of inclusive and democratic local government system has become a mirage. The Colonial Administration in Nigeria, introduced good governance structure as it partly succeeded in transforming native customs and institutions such as improvement in medical care, education, infrastructure and administrative reforms. The administration noted the unity of Nigeria despite the diverse nature of her peoples and also recognised the strength of the merit principle in the practice of representative bureaucracy in Nigeria (Akinwale, 2014:2).

## **4. French-Speaking Countries – Republic of Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo**

The second section of this paper focuses on two French-speaking countries in the central African region namely the Republic of Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo formerly colonised by France and Belgium respectively. We assess the development of public administration since their independence. Of particular interest, are reforms the Cameroonian government has implemented in the past five decades. It is also pertinent to note that in contrast to the DRC, the political situation in Cameroon has, in the recent past been marked by relative political stability. A brief administrative history of Cameroon provides evidence that it is unique among former French colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa. The country experienced three historical sequences of colonial administration. The first phase being the German colonisation that 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. On the other hand, the DRC was colonised by Belgium. It is the largest French-speaking country in Sub-Saharan Africa and presents a different reality from the situation in Cameroon hence our discussion on the DRC in is inclined towards the transformation of public administration in the DRC since it independence.

### **4.1 Public Administration in Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo**

According to Lee & Schultz (2010:12) between 1922 and 1945 the British system of governance in Cameroon was based on the model of indirect rule. French governance in the eastern part of Cameroon applied the model of direct rule. In the east, a commissioner (appointed by France) managed the local government and had total authority over the local community. There was a similar situation in the region controlled by the British in the southern part of Cameroon. The central government in the capital was the main decision-maker during that

period. Like most other African nations, there exists in Cameroon, an administrative culture influenced by colonial heritage.

The current system of public administration in Cameroon, the creation of the system followed the Weber-based administrative model. Corkery, Daddah, O'Nuallian & 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. Divided into a number of departments is a provincial administration which includes provincial offices that are responsible for services in that province. There are ten provinces in Cameroon. Governors of these provinces are appointed by presidential decree hence none is elected into office. The system of local government in Cameroon is decentralised. Cameroon's 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.

These three pieces of legislation are the main laws defining the decentralisation of local government in Cameroon. They replaced the previous law on local government and decentralisation. There are five types of local authorities or local councils. According to the Cameroon country profile (2014), these are (with the number of such bodies 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 of these sub-units and Douala has five.

In like manner, 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, then called Kingdom of Kongo was well governed, well before the European type of public administration was heard 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 (Ndaywed & Nzieme, 1997). The governance model of direct rule was used in the former colony.

Historians claim 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 (Ndaywed & Nzieme; 1997). 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 went through many transformations, the details of which cannot be provided in this article. An overview is however provided to allow for a comparative analysis of public administration of the other three SSA countries. Public service in the DRC is far from satisfactory 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 became centralised in the capital. The provincial authorities were merely implementing the decisions taken in the capital. This system of management is still enforced by the current government. The DRC's constitution which came into force on 18 February 2006 with the introduction of the first democratic government recommended that there be a decentralisation of governance in the country but as yet,

the Congolese politicians have not yet followed this recommendation.

#### **4.1.1 Administrative Reform**

The reform of the public service in Cameroon was and still is very complex and one needs first to understand the national context of the country. The main goal facing the government was to change the inherited colonial civil service to a national civil service. As explained by Corkery *et al.* (1998:110) "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 culture (pre-colonial, German, French and British)". With these different administrative cultures, the government decided to unite the country and to have one single civil service. Many Cameroonian politicians and scholars are of the view that in Cameroon "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).

Public administration in 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 Cameroon. To emphasise this view, 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 a brief discussion is provided on the political, socio-cultural and economic aspects of the public service in Cameroon.

Contemporary reform in the DRC is mainly that of decentralisation. In the DRC, the pros and cons of decentralisation are a matter of debate. In terms of political and administrative control the central government wants to continue making the final decisions on all matters of governance. According to the World Bank & 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 from the international community a different, less technical and more politically conscious approach.

#### **4.1.2 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 coming of democracy, there was a change of state leadership and President Ahidjo was replaced by President Paul Biya who is still in power. As Corkery *et al.* (1998:113) put it, the political system in 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. Cameroon is divided into ten administrative areas called regions. Regions are in turn divided into divisions (departments), which are further divided into sub-divisions (arrondissements), which correspond to the 374 local government councils (clgf.org.uk, 2017:38).

With regards to the DRC, Leopold's rule during the Belgian colonialism, and Mobutu laid the framework for the current form of government. Mobutu established what some have called a "kleptocratic" dictatorship, in which the constitution and separate executive, legislative, and judicial branches existed on paper only, and the primary role of the government was extracting money from the land and people. On paper, Kabila answered to a bicameral parliament including a Senate, Chamber of Representatives, and an independent judiciary. In reality, he allowed himself to operate the entire country with the help of only twelve men, who comprised his interim assembly, citing civil war as a deterrent to democratic rule (Countries and their cultures forum, 2017).

Kabila's rhetoric included the goal of transferring power to the people through the use of People's Power Committees, which were slated to begin

operations in each province sometime in the future. Kabila dissolved his own party, the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) in January 1999, and subsequently engaged in fighting several armed factions opposed to his rule. Allegiances to a political party or faction are usually based along ethnic and clan lines (Countries and their cultures forum, 2017). Such developments effectively corroded the good governance principles that were neatly laid out on paper. The United States Institute for Peace (2011:5,6) observes that good governance implies competent management of a country's resources and affairs in a manner that is open, accountable, equitable, and responsive to the present and future needs of society. According to the Institute, the use of this political, economic, and administrative authority is meant to facilitate a process through which citizens and groups can articulate their interests, meet their obligations, exercise their legal rights, and mediate differences. These are some of the values embedded in the ethos of good governance.

#### 4.1.3 Socio-Economic Factors

In Cameroon, 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. One of the major changes the government wanted to implement was to resolve the problem of language differences in 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 maintain 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. In the same vein, 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 (Lukamba, 2015:350). Looking at the DRC, according to the United States Institute for Peace (2011:5,6), the DRC is known for the mismanagement of its resources, the incompetence of its leadership, and corruption. The basic needs of the Congolese majority go unmet while an elite minority benefits economically from special status connections to the government. The institute further argues that if good governance is a precursor to sustainable economic development in the DRC, every actor in society must meet challenges to governance and contribute to improving it.

### 5. Lessons Learned in this Comparative Study of Public Administration in Sub-Saharan Africa

As demonstrated by the literature in our analysis, the culture of public administration in Sub-Saharan Africa is very complex. The model of indirect and direct rule introduced by the European colonisers prior to independence played a major role in influencing the current public administration in the four countries under study. Despite the attainment of independence, a culture of public administration influenced by the system of indirect rule still persists. Our findings demonstrate that the development of public administration reform Ghana and Nigeria is far more advanced when compared to the DRC and Cameroon. This reality should however be linked with the political transformation that took place in Ghana and Nigeria. There are good lessons to be learnt from the two English-speaking countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with regard to public service reform. In the years when civil and military governments held sway, both states implemented reforms to reduce the number of civil servants. These countries also they put mechanisms in place to remove "ghost workers" in many government institutions and introduced programmes of performance appraisal for civil servants in the public sector. Further to these, they promoted training to improve the skills levels of civil servants in the different spheres of management.

The discussion on Ghana's public sector reflects on the problem of decentralisation of government institutions. Undoubtedly, various Ghanaian governments since independence, made significant progress in this regard however, there are still some

key challenges the government faces regarding the representation of people who live in the outlying districts. Another problem is the line of accountability and the viability and long-term sustainability of the sub-district structure (Joint Government of Ghana and Development Partners, 2007:3). One other challenge the GOG is facing today and the criticism levelled at the decentralisation process in Ghana is based on the mixed model of representation at the district level. The reality is that 70 percent of representatives are elected by the people living in the particular district and 30 percent are political appointments. In its defence, the GOG's argument is that the political appointments are experts, that is, skilled people who are members of the party who won the election. With this kind of decentralisation system there is a problem of accountability at the local government level. It is argued by many experts in the field that a developing African state should adhere more closely to and have greater respect for the democratic system in the grassroots third sphere of government, which is local government.

To introduce an efficient public service system in a newly democratic country is a difficult task. Boasiako (2010:166-175) writes: "Ghana's political structure falls into the unitary political class, where the executive holds the power of nominating district and regional leaders. Hence, the governed in these units have no choice but to live with the selection of the executive". In support of this view the central government in Ghana holds the majority of power in terms of appointing senior government officials in the different spheres of government. This links up with the discussion of indirect and direct models of colonial rule in the introductory section of this paper. The British system had the privilege of appointing the chief and their councillors to strengthen the policy of the metropolis.

Cameroonian public administration on the other hand represents a single reality because of the political history the country went through. The merger of three administrative cultures (German, French and British) assisted the post-colonial Cameroonian government to apply the model of direct rule. In 2004, the government introduced legislation to implement decentralisation. However, the political system in Cameroon still ensures that all political power rests with the president. The president appoints the governors of the various provinces as well as the senior government officials.

As for public administration in the DRC, the model that has been applied for the past few years is based on the centralisation of power in the capital. In other words, there is direct rule in the DRC. The government has suggested that the decentralisation system of governance should be put into practice but the implementation of this decision still lacking. To change the past patterns of poor governance in Cameroon and to a large extent the DRC, there has to be in place, a clear and practical vision which has realistic goals.

## **6. Conclusion**

A comparison of the public administration cultures in French-speaking and English-speaking countries in Sub-Saharan Africa provide a degree of understanding of the legacy of colonialism. British colonies were generally placed under indirect rule whereas French colonies were governed in terms of the model of direct rule. All four countries that were selected as case studies have made public sector reforms since independence, but political transformation has played a major role in their current governance. The study shows that the English-speaking countries (Ghana and Nigeria) are better advanced in terms of public sector reform when compared to the two French-speaking states (Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo). Many problems remain in these four countries such as corruption, nepotism, tribalism and others which the paper has not discussed. These have had a negative impact on the advance of public administration in all four of these SSA countries.

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