

Redeeming the Splendor of Africa from its Deadly Zone: A Case of South Africa

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to conceptually analyse and assess the competency of the public servants towards redeeming the splendor of Africa in a South African context. Africa as a continent is well known about its splendor decorated by various rich resources. Surprisingly, the continent is prominent about the scourge of dire poverty. That radiate the assumption that relative majority of African countries are fronted with problems such as poverty and hunger in the midst of rich resources. That is so ironic because most of African countries have retained their power from colonial powers and other related aspects of oppression such as apartheid. Consequently, in the years of colonization, Africa did not have the power to emancipate people from slavery, hunger and poverty as well as not having the ability to materialize the existing resources, but that time is in the past. Ironically, in the current dispensation hunger and poverty is still unabated irrespective of gaining democratic power. It could be argued that perhaps public servants in the modern society are bamboozled by misusing of power. Perhaps African leaders and public servants are consumed by egotistic megalomania hence driven by self-centered approach. Evidently, there is a misusing of resources for serving self-interests by public servants. For case in point, most of government officials are perceived to be enriching themselves through corruption at the expense of the public interests. Thus, the roles, capabilities and competencies of public servants can be questionable in that regard. Hence, the conception of the paper, through literature based analysis, is to assess the competency of public servants towards redeeming the splendor of Africa. Accordingly, the paper argues that all the abominated deeds are exacerbated by inefficient and incompetence of public servants, favoritism, corruption and political patronage which are fundamentally circumventing constitutional principles and the rule of law. The paper concludes that those who are in the highest authority in government carry the responsibility to shift Africa from its peril and regain its splendor in the best interest of the electorates.

Keywords: Administration Capabilities, Africa, South Africa, Public Servants

1. Introduction

Africa as a continent is well known about its splendor decorated by various rich resources. Africa is rich in gold, diamonds, oil and many other coveted resources (Africa in Fact, 2012). However, is ironic that in the midst of such rich resources Africa has not yet managed to capitalise on its wealth despite its sluggish and promising growth of development in recent years (Africa in Fact, 2012). Africa is a continent in which relative majority of people are believed to be trapped in the chains of poverty, hunger and unemployment whilst the continent is prominent by its rich resources (Arndt, McKay & Tarp, 2016; Seleteng & Motelle, 2016; Zoogah, Peng & Woldu, 2015; Randall & Coast, 2015). Then there is an assumption that radiates the fact that relative majority of African countries are fronted with problems such as poverty, hunger and unemployment in the midst of rich resources. Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn that the aforementioned sentences provide a contradicting portrait looking at

the poverty situation and rich resources of African countries. The question is: how is it possible that people are trapped in the chains of poverty, hunger and unemployment in the presence of precious rich resources?

In the midst of such, it has been put on record that public sectors of African countries should spearhead the socio economic development challenges in order to curtail the increasing level of poverty, inequality and unemployment (Arndt *et al.*, 2016; Seleteng & Motelle, 2016). This has proved to be an exercise for the public servants since the triple challenges keep on adding up yearly. Conversely, the most pressing conundrum that African leaders and/or public servants experience today is the incompetency of administration, self-centered, misuse of power and resources and *inter alia* in various public institutions as well as the absence of sustained consistence of economic growth and job creation (Zoogah *et al.*, 2015; Kauppi & Van Raaij, 2014). Dealing with such issues could be perceived as a way of curtailing the

high level of poverty and improve living conditions; thus, it will retain the splendor of Africa. In the light of that, public servants are the relevant candidates to carry out the responsibility in that regard. On the contrary, it is not what is transpired in the 21st century, where public servants seem to be having their own agendas at an expense of the public interests. Fanon (2017) alluded that the pitfalls of consciousness in ethics and conduct by public servants is a contributing factor for tarnishing a good image of Africa. Furthermore, according to Fanon (2017), public servants today chant the slogans of independence and when questioned about their economic status of their country they are incapable of answering because they are ignorant and they leave the rest to the future. Today public servants do not view their positions as the way of serving the electorates, instead they view their positions as a status and as a way of self-enrichment (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000).

In accordance with that, the purpose and the objectives of the paper are to analyze and assess the competitiveness of the public servants towards redeeming the splendor of Africa using South Africa as a case. The paper analyzes and assesses the issues of corruption in Africa; however, South Africa context has been taken into account and cognizance due to the recent scandals and acts of corruption that has been prominent globally. For example, the issue of state capture, acts of corruption by the public officials, just to mention the few. The reason for considering South Africa as a case study, is the fact that South Africa's developmental state is perceived to be a better off looking at other African countries. Hence, it is believed that other African countries look up to South Africa for their developmental purposes and success (Makgalancheche, 2008). Thus, the paper seeks to argue that public servants have an obligation to remove Africa from its deadly zone.

2. Re-Visiting What Worked and What Did Not Work

Africa is rich in gold, diamonds, oil and many other coveted resources (Africa in Fact, 2012). With the fact that Africa is teeming with oil, diamonds, gas, platinum, gold and other minerals, Africa remains the world's poorest continent (Africa in Fact, 2012). With such rich resources, Africa has not yet managed to capitalize on its wealth; for case in point, infrastructure is underdeveloped, people languish in poverty, hunger and unemployment rate hiking (Africa in Fact, 2012). Furthermore, despite the

promising growth in recent years, Africa with almost 15% of the world's population contributes less than 3% to the world's GDP while in surrounded by rich resources (Zoogah *et al.*, 2015). Within that context, attempts have been made to alleviate and eradicate the pressing conundrums that African countries are faced with. Looking at the major challenges in Africa, African Union through the Constitutive Act and the agenda introduced the programme for development in a quest of retaining the splendor African countries thereof. For that reason, New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was introduced for the purpose of improving governance and leadership in the continent (Makgalancheche, 2008).

The purpose of introducing the programme was to ensure a good leadership and governance because the two are good for economic and development growth respectively. One of the mechanisms that sound is the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), that focus on the countries' self-assessment on socio-economic and political governance matters. This is an assessment that results in the potential partnership between the government and its people. For the purpose of retaining the splendor of Africa, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) for a better use of mineral revenues for economic growth and poverty alleviation. In contrast, demanding transparency from governments and corporations is not enough for economic growth and distribution of wealth due to African public servants that are clothed with corruption and serving self-interests. Therefore, Africa in Fact (2012) regard EITI as an initiative that lacks teeth because ten years since its launch it has never played a role in retaining the wealth of Africa, perhaps until today. The programme and mechanism are meant for compliance and adherence by the public servants for better economic growth and development. Conversely, this is not what is perceived in African leaders and public servants, as the eminent of act corruption is evident. It can be argued that countries that do not have the root of mechanism and programmes to adhered to can easily perish. Is like a tree with roots that do not reach water and it ultimately weathers and dies.

3. Corruption in the Public Services of Africa

The main role of public servants is to preserve the public interest through commitments of the government of the day in integrity, trust, provision of

services, transparency and accountability (Caiden, 2017; Braendle & Stutzer, 2016; Peters, 2009). However, this can be done through ethics that seems to be gaining prominence in the discourse of public services (Pillay & Sayeed, 2017; Hassan, 2015; Dorasamy & Balkaran, 2012; Dorasamy, 2010). According to Hassan (2015), ethics refer to the standard which guides the behavior and actions of personnel in public institutions and which may have referred to as moral law. Ethics and ethical conduct are gaining prominence in the discourse of redeeming the splendor of African governance (Hassan, 2015). That is because of the perception that the standard of ethical conduct by public servants is declining due to corruption, maladministration, protecting incompetence, bribery, patronage among others (Hassan, 2015). All the activities constituting unethical conduct are a result of a loose on guarding public interest and resources (Pillay & Sayeed, 2017; Walumbwa, Hartnell & Misati, 2015). Accordingly, there is an exploitation of resources that were meant to support the socio economic development of the nations and its people. Therefore, poor and dishonest management of public affairs and immoral acts are among the most manifestations of unethical conducts that impedes the regaining of the splendor of Africa (Hassan, 2015). These should be taken into cognizance, the costs of misconduct, unprofessionalism, inability among others that the public servants possess when it comes to guarding public interest and resources. These costs are the result of loss of trust and confidence in public institutions and effective utilization of precious resources which meant to support the economic and social development of the people.

In essence, public servants are seen as the drivers of the socio economic development in providing basic services to the poor and the most disadvantages communities. They are the drivers of change and play a pivotal role in the emancipation of people from the vicious circle of poverty (Peters, 2009). It is the duty of all public servants to ensure that the public's money is spent as efficiently as possible and that programs are provided effectively, without discrimination or prejudice, with transparency and without waste of money or resources (Coetzer, Bussin & Geldenhuys, 2017). It is in Africa that the most impoverished people are the first citizens which are the majority of the total population (black people) (Arndt, *et al.*, 2016). Unfortunately, ratings in corruption and the behavior of the public

servants are unlikely to reverse the imbalance of the past. This is because public servants are also perceived to be playing part in exacerbating such impoverishment through the acts of corruption (Blundo, de-Sardan, Arifari & Alou, 2013). Whilst, the relative majority of Africans rely more on the government and public servants for improving their lives, it can be alluded without doubts that unemployment, poverty, inequality and hunger are still unabated although the power has been given to the new government. However, a question can be posed, what are Africans free from having faced with such dire challenges in the midst of vital and precious resources.

4. Effects of Corruption on Development: South African Context

It is an apparent case that, after the years of imperialism, colonialism, apartheid and oppression, the independence of African countries was perceived to be the driving force towards re-shaping and recovering the socio-economic development in the best interest of the people (Seleteng & Motelle, 2016). For case in point, the establishment of new South Africa in 1994, the government devoted the efforts towards enhancing the lives of the people through promulgation of new rules and regulations (Clark & Worger, 2016). It was the role of the newly elected government in 1994 to recover what has been lost during the apartheid. That is through the attempt of eradicating apartheid regime operations for swiftly and better moving to redemption. Ironically, there were reported scandals about relative majority of public officials being alleged of corruption. According to Navot, Reingewertz & Cohen (2016), corruption is behavior of public officials which deviates from accepted norms in order to serve private ends.

In Africa corruption reflects more general of unethical leadership and bad governance found throughout the continent (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2015; Hope, 2000). That result in ineffectiveness and incompetency of public servants. Thus, the ineffectiveness and incompetency of public servants are a result of the crisis in the redefinition of the role of government and new policies thereof (Salitere & Korac, 2013). The fact remains that the pervasive of the phenomenon corruption has an effect on the developmental future in Africa. Thus, corruption has and is been a major contributing factor to Africa's sluggish pace of development (Pillay &

Sayeed, 2017; Navot *et al.*, 2016; Hope, 2000). In that regard, corruption is a phenomenon that was, is and will possibly make its presence felt (Pillay & Sayeed, 2017). It is therefore impossible that corruption will ever be fully dealt with because it has reached cancerous proportions that hinder developmental progress (Purcell, 2016; Hope, 2000). As a result, the pandemic of corruption in Africa has extreme negative impact on socioeconomic development and the fight against poverty. For example, the effect of corruption in South Africa has constrained development of the national economy and has significantly inhibited good governance in the country (Pillay, 2004). According to Pillay & Sayeed (2017), corruption serves as a barrier to accomplish sustainable economic development and undermines ethical values. There is a lost estimated amount of money that is reported annually through corruption. Corruption exists wherein political patronage is a standard practice than professionalism or merit system (Prabowo & Cooper, 2016; Purcell, 2016). Although, the South African government has been in a quest to fight corruption the problem has always been perpetuated by political design when it comes to who should hold power (Pillay, 2004). The political design and influence can also be perceived as one of the contributing factors that hike corruption. Therefore, political influence and economic changes erode or does away with the legitimacy of the government and lead to poor governance (Saliterer & Korac, 2013). In essence, political influence becomes the enemy of basic principles in public administration. As a result, corrupt public servants perpetuate high levels of impoverishment and inequality (Saliterer & Korac, 2013). Within that context, it could be avowed that corruption can frustrate the economic hubs and the development headway of any country if it is not dealt with. There are few corruption incidences that substantiate the logical argument of this paper in a South African context as the cases in point:

4.1 State Capture

The typical definition of state capture implies the way in which formal procedures such as laws and social norms and systems of government are being manipulated by the private individuals and firms to be able to influence the government policies and laws to work in their favor (Innes, 2016; Hall & Kepe, 2017). Thus, state capture is when the private entities and individuals collude with the public servants or government officials to negotiate the deals

and contracts that will satisfy their private interest (Innes, 2016; Martin & Solomon, 2016). Where there is state capture, there are various issues where one can realize the problem of resources that is not owned by the continent or a country itself (Martin and Solomon, 2016). State capture in essence is the actual fact of controlling the wealth and dictating the development (Bhorat, Buthelezi, Chipkin, Duma, Mondli, Peter & Swilling, 2017; Innes, 2016). Then that raises a question of the capabilities of public servants, good governance and leadership.

In South Africa companies such as BHP Billiton, SABMiller, Anglo American and Sasol, Rupert family, Bruno Steinhoff, Christo Wiese among other entities utilize the resources that belong to the country in the absence of the good governance and public servants (Bhorat *et al.*, 2017; Martin & Solomon, 2016). It can be argued that those are the results of state capture. State capture can be seen as the biggest criminal that tarnishes the splendor of South Africa and Africa. State capture is of no difference from corruption because it exploits resources which can be used for social and redistribution of wealth programs for socio-economic development (Bhora *et al.*, 2017; Innes, 2016). This noiseless coup impacts directly on the poor people by diverting away from social delivery programs that are designated to enhance and promote human rights (Martin & Solomon, 2016). State capture is not confined or limited to shady deals but inclusive of every private entity and individuals that monopolize the country's wealth (Bhora *et al.*, 2017).

4.2 Corruption Scandals that Rocked South Africa

The problem of corruption in South Africa is believed to be pervasive due to irregular expenditures on procurement processes which exacerbated and influenced by political corruption. Within the context of this paper, the municipalities, NGO's and state owned entities are selected case for radiation of irregular expenditure as a result of corruption. King (2014) articulates that the auditor general in 2011 reported approximately R800 million that has been awarded in tenders to municipal officials and their families. King (2014) reported that irregular expenditure of R2.429 billion was acquired by 17 auditees in Free State in the year 2013-14. During 2013-14 Free State had nearly 60% of the auditees which had resulted in the findings of unfair procurement process and had irregular expenditure

of R11.351 billion (Kauppi & Van Raaij, 2014; King, 2014). The irregular was due to non-compliance of public servants and political patronage with the supply chain management (Kauppi & Van Raaij, 2014). This connotes that in the supply chain management illegal and mismanagement of finance is a big problem. It is without doubt that the corruption watch always promulgates that political patronage and public servants are the advocates and drivers of corruption (Pillay & Sayeed, 2017; Hope, 2004).

A rampant corruption in the Mbombela local municipality is highlighted by the Auditor General report that shown R47 million has been lost due to fraud and incompetency of personnel (King, 2014). On the other hand, corruption led to Kokstand local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal with devastating, shocking water shortages, poor sanitation among other challenges (King, 2014). Moreover, it is alleged that the municipal manager of Kokstand has been implicated through engaging in corrupt activities which led to a deficit of R39 million and service delivery failure (King, 2014). It was probed and found that the municipal manager had awarded lucrative contract about R281 1375 to a pal who had a BEE front company (King, 2014). Meanwhile, state owned enterprises also face serious allegations of corruption. Accordingly, Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa had irregular expenditure of R790 million picked up by auditor general and Transnet awarded R50 billion tender for freight locomotives illegally or unlawfully to the Gupta-linked company Tequesta (Pty) Ltd (Tkachenko, Yakovlev & Kuznetsova, 2017). The report also implies that approximately more than R11.7 Billion, from Eskom has been awarded to a gupta company which is Tageta Exploration and Resources (Pty) Ltd (Tkachenko *et al.*, 2017). These state owned enterprises should be the driving force to improve the image and social welfare of the country, conversely is a different story.

Another example that radiate corruption in South Africa are NGO's. One example is the Life Esidimeni tragedy that has been under the spotlight that reflects corruption. Thus, in the year 2015 October, the Gauteng health department had ended an outsourced care agreement with Life Esidimeni in order to cut costs and give effect to a policy to deinstitutionalize psychiatric patients (Capri, Watermayer, Mckenzie & Coetzee, 2018). Capri *et al.* (2018) reported that some 1 300 patients were relocated to the care of their families, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other hospitals. The process

was subsequently found to have been a total fiasco. This has led to the death of 144 patients who died because of poor health facilities and negligence (Capri *et al.*, 2018). This misfortune tarnishes the overall health system of the country. The observations have made it clear that, some of the health institution still experience shortage of health facilities that lead to poor life expectancy of the South African citizens. Then all of these scandals lead to destructive for any developments because corruption distorts income circulation, deters investment, imposing incompetent rules and tarnishes democracy and ethics. As a result, one can argue that all the abominated deeds are driven by self-serving interests. The squandering of public coffers should have served the interest of the people and enhance their living standards and service delivery but it seems as the public servants are not intended to ensure that. In essence, to ensure the magnificence of African countries, public servants should use the public coffers to enhance the education system, health system, infrastructure, the economy, agricultural production and tourism sector. It can be concluded that the challenges that hinder the restoration and headway of development revolves around the incompetency, corruption, self-serving interests *inter alia* of public servants.

5. Perspectives About Public Servants

Over the past several decades, the competency of public servants in Africa has been the most contentious issue with regard to how they perform their duties (Coetzer, Bussin & Geldenhuys, 2017). That overlapped in the 21st century where there is a problem of power to emancipate the people from hunger and poverty (Seleteng & Motelle, 2016; Randall & Coast, 2015). According to Fanon (2017), the reason for failure to deliver Africans from socio-economic issues is on the basis of public servants in the modern society being bamboozled into the misusing of power. This lead to incompetence and underperformance of many administrative institutions where corruption is seen a dominating factor to be dealt with (Salitere & Korac, 2013). Public servants today are driven by greed to an extent of being negligence of their duties, roles and responsibilities (Navot *et al.*, 2016). It is apparent and vivid that, at the current juncture, public servants are no longer serving the best interest of the electorates in a full force, but they put their interest at the forefront and are pompous (Navot *et al.*, 2016). In other cases, the concept of cadre deployment in

the context of public servants seems to be a perpetuating factor for incompetence and nepotism in a quest to reclaiming and redeeming the splendor of Africa (Purcell, 2016). If public servants remain the realms of intellectual rhetoric only and be the monopoly of ideas, they will lose sight of the bigger image and the importance of responding to daily demands of service conveyance. Expectedly, public servants should make it a point to ensure that service delivery is of utmost and apex priority to save people from deadly zone. The citizens of the country have selected and put their hope in the public servants to be the ones responsible for removing and uplifting the most disadvantages communities from the chains of poverty (Peters, 2009). As a result, the public servants in the modern world should ensure that the right, equality and dignity of the electorates are prevailed and protected. It is with no doubts that public servants and politicians in Africa do not have self-conscience to serve their people with humanity and restore the faith in government to reclaim what has been the magnificence of Africa (Braemdle & Stutzer, 2016). Thus, to reclaim the splendor of Africa, public servants should be intellectually conscious and be competent in their daily duties. They must adhere to the ethics and ethical conducts that is a guide on how to behave when it comes to the issues of socio economic development in Africa.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be concluded that African leaders are the protectors of the services to meet the needs of the citizens after colonial rules and other systems of oppression. That long period has passed, but Africa is still striving for good governance and leadership as well as development to redeem the image and splendor of the African continent. It is ironic how Africa has been striving for development after a long period of freedom and with rich resources it possesses. It is also so amazing that African people are perceived to be the most vulnerable people to cope with the changing economic conditions, weather conditions, environmental and social conditions in the presence of the rich precious resources. The problem is no longer the oppression, slavery, colonialism or whatsoever, the problem lies on the good leadership and governance by the public servants who tend to be greedy, corrupt, serving own self-interests amongst the other. That is exacerbated by inefficient and incompetence of public servants, favoritism and political patronage which fundamentally circumvent constitutional principles and the rule of law. That is

the reason why the paper is adamant to the notion that the image and splendor of Africa is tarnished by its public officials. It can be avowed that the behavior is more on opportunistic maximization on accessing public resources and services for self-serving interests. Therefore, redeeming the splendor of Africa from its deadly zone requires a unit and collective to deal with issues of corruption.

The paper does not dispute the mechanisms and programmes initiated in Africa for development. However, it highlights the problems that hinder development and the retaining splendor of Africa, which is self-orientated leadership of public servants. Thus, the paper recommends that the very same mechanisms and programs can be impeccable for Africa's development if the attitude and abominated acts that ultimately gave birth to corruption and serving own-interests can be dealt with. The rule of law should be applicable in this regard irrespective of the position of public official. As a result, that will restore a measure of trust, confidence and integrity in public institutions and the constituency to safeguard better redemption of Africa. Hassan (2015) articulates that good leadership and governance with ethics and ethical conduct of public servants ensure a better public services respond to citizens' needs. Noting the growing of corruption, it is recommended that there should be awareness for effective anti-corruption measure to retain the splendor of Africa, particularly to public servants. There is a need to consider the effective leadership on the basis ethics and ethical conduct. The injustices and abominated act of corruption should be dealt with for the purpose of regaining the green leaves and splendor of Africa. Therefore, one can argue that perhaps a sluggish of development in Africa is instigated by the kind of leadership possessed, where relative majority are seen in the act of corruption, serving own interest among others by the public servants. Accordingly, if relative majority of African countries looked up to South Africa for the developmental enhancement, then corruption should not be perceived as a norm and major decisions should be taken to deal with it.

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