

Globalisation and the Nepadisation of Standards and Protocols

An African Perspective to Create and Maintain a Supportive Technical Infrastructure Capacity

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ABSTRACT

Governments could previously regulate foreign goods coming into their local market through using subsidies or quotas. In some African countries and with the Nepadisation agenda in place, import levies were and in some cases are still substantial sources of government income. The international community now appears to broadly agree that free trade is a better way to encourage stronger economies. Opening national markets is a strategic imperative with important roles for both the national government and the domestic public and private sector.

INTRODUCTION

The opening of African markets to increased foreign trade is an important and strategic imperative with many consequences. The international community, and many African commentators, appear to agree that free trade is the preferred way to encouraged strong African economies and the subsequent facilitation of technical infrastructure. For a very long time, African countries have been encouraged with the support of the donor communities to establish a single public body to address standards-related issues.

Farasmand and Pinkowski (2007) cautioned that “The dramatic changes of the last 25 years have shaken up the entire world and produced profound changes and transformation in government, political systems, governance, public administration and

civic society-state relations...". With the inception of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), a new and cryptic form of globalisation has emerged under the Nepadisation doctrinaire.

In another vein, and in the understanding of what Mills sees as globalisation, he notes

That I should be sitting in a coffee shop in London drinking Italian espresso served by an Algerian waiter to the strains of the Beach Boys singing I wish they all could be California girls . . . or hanging around a pub in New Delhi that serves Lebanese cuisine to the music of a Filipino band in rooms decorated with barrels of Irish stout, a stuffed hippo head, and a vintage poster announcing the Grand Ole Opry concert to be given at the high school in Douglas, Georgia. Some Japanese are fanatics for flamenco. Denmark imports five times as much Italian pasta as it did ten years ago – the classic American blond Barbie doll now comes in some 30 national varieties – and this year emerged as Austrian and Moroccan. (Mills 2000:56)

Mills gives very tangible examples of the outcomes that many attribute to the phenomenon *Globalisation*. Globalisation has manifested itself in a number of ways, including increased global trade, travel and tourism, an increasingly common consumer culture, increasing international migration and technological advancement. Has this explosion in technology and associated trade in new products and services translated into increased prosperity and opportunities for Africa? Litha Musyimi-Ogana (in Mills 2002:67) argues that "Africa is reaping few, if any, benefits from globalisation". A dramatic example using 2002 economic data is provided by Mills (2002:68) who notes that "the level of GDP of 40 of 48 sub-Saharan African countries is below the turnover of the 500th ranking company in the Fortune 500 index. Major inequalities are therefore part of the so called *new world order*."

These trends create both positive and negative consequences for developing countries including those in the Southern hemisphere and of course, nearer to home, Africa. The previous World Bank President, James D. Wolfensohn (2000:308) recognised this problem and characterised "globalisation as an opportunity, and poverty as our challenge". Stewart (1999:106) is also optimistic and claims that the "expansion of the world market means that, despite the presence of structures and processes which favour Northern economies, there are opportunities for developing nations and their companies to produce and trade a variety of goods and services".

Governments could previously regulate foreign goods coming into their local market through using subsidies or quotas. In some African countries import levies were and in some cases still are a substantial source of government income. The international community now appears to broadly agree that free trade is a better way to encourage stronger economies. Opening national markets is a strategic imperative with important roles for both the national government and the domestic public and private sector. Ngoatje (2006:190) for one opines that "trade is accepted as a catalyst for economic growth and development". As in other activities, someone needs to take responsibility to determine what is required both initially and continually to ensure success. Mills (2000) points to the important role of the state in the globalising world. Mills (2000:7) argues that "policies still require effective strategies for implementation to enable states to engage advantageously with the global environment". What role can African states play in identifying and assisting in the facilitation of such



opportunities for the benefit of their citizens? Could such a complex role be made easier through cooperative effort with like-minded states in a vehicle such as NEPAD?

The need by governments to regulate, has created the situation that exporters often face voluminous paperwork, complex formalities, and many potential delays and errors. Hill (2002:485), quoting a United Nations (UN) report on trade and development, notes that “a typical international trade transaction may involve thirty different parties, sixty original documents and three hundred and sixty document copies, all of which had to be checked, transmitted, re-entered into various information systems, processed, and filed”. This, plus specific technological factors for a product, can have very different consequences for exporters.

If the exporting company requires proof of compliance to an international (or local) standard and does not have access to a sufficiently developed, recognised and appropriate national technical infrastructure, retesting may be required on delivery with the inherent delays and associated costs. It is interesting to note that such difficulties are not only experienced between African exporters and developed countries but also in inter African trade as well. If increased trade between African states is to be realised then major work is required in this area. One only has to look to the European Union to gain insights as to how much work may be entailed to make such an expectation turn into reality.

An interesting but critical by-product of the current form of globalisation is mentioned by Farazmand (1999:513) who notes that the “global corporate structure has also produced...a new level of organisational elite that tends to influence public policy and administrative decisions virtually anywhere on the planet”. One important reason for the existence of such specialised individuals is reported by Harris and Fleisher (2005). These authors (Harris & Fleisher 2005:xxxiv) argue that the worth to commercial organisations of getting a word change to, or special exception inserted in, regulations “can be worth millions of dollars, euros or pounds”. Another reason why large private sector multi-national corporations (MNCs), who are based predominantly in developed countries, have identified the need for such a role, is perhaps answered by earlier research undertaken by Welch and Wong (1998).

These authors (Welch & Wong 1998:43) point out that “Governments and their bureaucracies, are not only increasingly aware of global pressures...they are increasingly making decisions that incorporate global constraints and opportunities into their own domestic agendas”. Fuhr (2001:424) raises a similar issue and not only declares that “globalization makes the traditional spheres of policy making and governing in sovereign states more porous” but continues “International organisations; transnational policy co-ordination among governments and new global public policies may constrain policy making by nation states in several critical areas”. If MNCs see the benefit of such activity, what about African states?

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND TRADE FACILITATION

Emmerich (in White 1955:12) identifies a leading role for the public administrator in successful implementation of policy which obviously also includes trade and industrialisation. Emmerich (in White 1955:12) argues that the first task is for a public administrator to gain a deep, insightful understanding of “all the huge array of disciplines which enrich our complicated

environment”, followed by “knowing which are relevant to its several missions”. Given the complexities of modern government in just the narrowly selected area of study, a high degree of technical specialisation is obviously required. Such insight is then used to “evaluate and interpret the contributions of each ingredient” and finally to “blend these components into a new element which will often be unlike any of its parts”. Given that the conditions confronting the majority of, if not all, African states are similar, there is much to commend that such an activity become a public administration task under the auspices of NEPAD. Co-ordinated and co-operative efforts in such specialist activities are especially important when one considers both the African context and the very sophisticated technical infrastructure required by developed countries to address the standards and regulatory issues that confront all African exporters. Naidoo and Kuye (2005:624) attested that “a new view is emerging on the role of the South African public service” namely “that it is not only the public service’s obligation to provide services but to oversee that they are actually delivered”. Such a role, in the context of the subject under discussion, involves not only defining an initial and on-going public administration contribution but also creating the necessary conditions for attracting, engaging and ultimately leading and co-operating with the private sector and other important stakeholders. The creation of suitable structures and processes to guide the work of such administrators is pivotal to success. If such effort is required of one state, South Africa, in one of the Regional Economic Co-operations (RECs) of NEPAD, SADC, why not share experience and knowledge both within the REC and also within NEPAD?

Moving to the specific role of the state and public administration in the research topic, some fundamental issues are uncovered. Is the topic at hand a Public Administration problem? A clear definition of the boundaries of the field of study and its application would assist. In attempting to describe public administration, Fesler (1980:2) notes *its paradoxical nature*. Such difficulty is also highlighted by many other authors writing on the subject of Public Administration both before and after Fesler (Henry 1986:41; Jordan, 2006b:634; Lanham 2006:605; Rainey, Backoff and Levine 1976:234; Rugge 2007:115; Thoenig 2007:89; White 1955:4). Such fluidity also would suggest that trade facilitation activities can safely be included within its mandate even though some economists might take exception.

The public administrator after all has to shoulder a lot of the responsibility for ensuring that government commitments made at such bodies as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) are actually carried out. Another reason for including trade related issues under the purview of public administration is that the subject and science aims at being practical. Public Administration is one of the few social sciences that explicitly try to be prescriptive. Another important reason is that it strives for inter-disciplinarity. (Raadschelders, Wagenaar, Rutgers and Overeem 2000:782).

In attempting to unpack these issues from an African Public Administration perspective it is prudent to note the concern of Welch and Wong (1998:42), who have identified “a gap between public administration research and practice in Western and non-Western nations”. The same authors (Welch & Wong 1998:42) also point out that “ironically these gaps are occurring at a time in which the global environment is subjecting most governments to a similar set of global pressures”. With reference to the state, Freysen (1999:60) argues that its purpose is to have a positive impact on the community through the promotion of the *self-development of the individual*. The same author (Freysen 1999:29) asserts that *service delivery* by the state is not only necessary for the enjoyment of rights – it also secures those

rights. These sentiments are echoed and further amplified by Stewart (1999:128) who notes that “a well-organised, efficient, and development-oriented government and public service is necessary for the state to play a development role”. Is it therefore only the privilege of developed country citizens to be able to actively participate in the global trading arena and gain the associated economic benefits? Surely it is time for the African states to claim their rightful place in the global economy on behalf of their citizens? In a similar vein, White (2004:59) states that the role of administration in the modern state is profoundly affected by the general political and cultural environment of the age. Welch and Wong (1998:43) caution that “(t)he global environment should not be ignored as an influential force for bureaucratic change and decision making”. Instead of continuing to be the victims of globalisation, NEPAD could offer a chance to redress some of the past difficulties.

Developing countries in Africa have been encouraged over a period of many years, and often with external donor support, to establish unified public bodies that create and also participate in the harmonisation of standards, perform a technical regulatory function on behalf of their government in terms of legislation, and also provide test and/or inspection and certification services to prove compliance with both national and, where appropriate, internationally harmonised standards. They are typically given the name of the *National Bureau of Standards*. Many African states, regardless of size, have such a public funded body. The need for producing national standards, often an expensive process, and the subsequent activity to prove compliance to such standards, a potential source of revenue, unfortunately can easily create the potential for a conflict of interest. This is especially true when additional revenue is required to supplement scarce and decreasing public funding, which is almost always the case for such organisations whose significant but indirect impact on the economy is difficult for some to grasp.

Over time, and in order to ensure financial sustainability, some of these publicly funded organisations have further developed their service offerings, perhaps not always in the long term interest of national objectives. This is especially true regarding the promotion of an appropriate private sector involvement in conformity assessment. The increasing trend of local adoption of internationally harmonised standards does place the future role and scope of work of such bodies in question. These organisations have also historically taken a leading role in providing technical support for African States in the area under investigation. A key question therefore surrounds the future role that these organisations should initially and continually perform, versus that of the private sector. Work by Jreisat (2002) is also important given that many of these organisations in Africa were created as replicas of similar institutions in developed European countries. Jreisat (2002:70) points out that just because a “particular structure performs certain functions in one government” one should not automatically assume that the corresponding structures will perform the same functions in all governments. Jreisat (2002:70) also warns against the assumption that such transplants “will perform with the same degree of competence and ethics across systems”. Another important point in this regard is mentioned by Antonsen and Jorgensen (1997:338) who contend that “because of the varying age of public organisations and their relatively high immortality, some organisations lose their reasons for being public and remain so simply by tradition”.

Developing countries are normally standards takers not standards makers. The cost of over printing an international standard, and then distributing such as a local agent, is

relatively small compared to the typical annual budget of such a body. The counter argument is that, especially in developing countries, many of the experts involved in the development of such standards, either locally or internationally, and their subsequent initial interpretation and assessment are specialist public officials, employed and trained by such bodies. There is a need therefore to balance the views of the expert staff of these African standards organisations in both regional and international discussions on the technical issues surrounding trade facilitation with other stakeholders to ensure that decisions reflect current realities rather than serving narrow or even self-interests. Their influence for instance can clearly be seen in the NEPAD document which stresses the need to establish organisations on national standards in African countries' (NEPAD 2001:51), 'establish standards bureaux (NEPAD 2001:52), and 'tackle trade barriers in international trade through the improvement of standards' (NEPAD 2001:55). Although partly true, it is unfortunately not the whole picture.

The public sector and public administration in particular, obviously has a key role in creating initial technical capability and capacity. With reference to the research topic, increasing direct foreign and local investment is predicated on issues such as the availability of a sound conformity assessment infrastructure. It is vital that production facilities located in Africa can cost effectively prove compliance with international requirements, especially in respect of environmental and social issues. This trend in turn can be expected to boost the demand for more sophisticated conformity assessment capability and services. Jreisat (2002:70) argues that 'In order to meet its obligations, a government needs specialised institutions'. It is proposed that an initiative under NEPAD could offer the chance for African countries to share the burden involved in creating and maintaining such specialised capacity in all of its many facets.

GLOBALISATION, AFRICA AND AFRICAN TRADE

If African governments are serious about creating an enabling environment for export led growth, it is obvious that well considered, appropriately timed and funded public administration led interventions are required. These interventions cannot just be incentive driven but must also be appropriately supported by credible technical support from public institutions. It is clear therefore that public administrators have a collective and major role in ensuring that the intentions of their political leaders in this area are successfully carried out and achieve the desired outcomes.

The growth in global trade, and the need to adhere to a set of uniform / common rules, places enormous pressure on governments, especially those of developing countries in Africa. As parties to international conventions and treaties, they need to intelligently participate in the creation and application of international, trade related, regulations and standards. But what about those countries, such as those in Africa, who are individually unable to exercise this responsibility but are subject to its far reaching consequences? Given the imbalances in the current global environment, what are *firstly* the trade related policy issues that jointly face African States and *secondly* how can co-ordinated African state intervention and African public administrators play a larger role in improving the situation? A specific problem for instance is that African exporters frequently face difficulties in gaining access to foreign



markets due to requirements to have products tested and assessed in the importing country to ensure they meet local regulatory requirements.

As Ngoatje (2006:41) points out “Current trade rules create serious barriers to the processing and value adding that Africa needs in order to speed up economic growth”. A further reason why this is a serious problem is provided by the same author (Ngoatje 2004:41) who asserts that as far as Africa is concerned, trade is accepted as a catalyst for economic growth and development.

Pongsiri (2002:490) is of the opinion that “regulation is a key element to maintain competitive market discipline on public service provisions in developing countries”. Henderson and McGloin (2004:392) also emphasise the need “for the establishment of a legal framework involving a complex mixture of regulatory activity” and continues “these legal frameworks function to reduce opportunistic tendencies”. The same authors (Henderson & McGloin 2004:392) note that “without these legal frameworks, disputes are likely to occur and projects can and will be delayed”. Using the framework of Western civilisation: as a basis, White (1955:5) notes that there are basically two great systems of government administration. The one *Anglo-American* is characterised by a preference for *self-government in local communities*. The second, *French* is characterised by a *dominance of national over local authorities*. With reference to the American tradition of Public Administration, Langrod (1961:72) notes that “business management, unknown and neglected in the European tradition, became for a time the American model for, and big brother to Public Administration”. All of which is important contextual information given the history of colonial domination within Africa and dealing with the legacy of such administrative systems that are largely still in place. Given the current thrust by the WTO and others, donor related activities in the area of technical capacity building will continue, but tangible benefits will remain variable.

As companies in Africa grow from serving the needs of the local consumer they will be faced with issues accessing other markets that can only be solved by the local availability of appropriate technical support. Governments in Africa, as elsewhere, can no longer prevent competition by means of tariffs. A growth in technical requirements can be expected. African countries need to embrace regional solutions for their technical needs, especially in the area of conformity assessment. Given the long lead times between conception and realisation of projects of such a specialised nature, it is vital that African states identify their needs for technical capacity building for trade facilitation as a priority project and commit appropriate human and other resources to it. Experience has shown that technical infrastructure capacity building and strengthening projects are by no means short term in nature and require large amounts of on-going capital and operational expenditure.

Herbert (2004:2) argues that “Nepad cannot claim sole credit, but it has contributed significantly to sensitising the world about African issues, such as trade”. Based on and building onto such sensitisation a logical next step would be some sort of coordinating role for NEPAD as far as African governments and their related public administered infrastructures in ensuring that manufacturers and service providers from the region also gain more of a share in future from the fruits of globalisation rather than the consequences of marginalisation. Although logical, such an outcome is not automatic. Herbert (2004:4) also points out that African leader remain unable to define clearly what Nepad is. The same author contends that many descriptions have been offered but also notes that

they fail to answer two questions that are essential to any plan...what specifically does the plan propose to do and who will do the doing? A self-help philosophy is nice, but how does that translate into concrete action? (Herbert, 2004:4).

In the African context, previous interventions focused on the problem also need to be carefully considered in order to ensure that previous mistakes are not inadvertently repeated. Research by Nwafor (2003:3) reminds us that in Africa “(i)t was generally believed that after independence, the apparatus of state would be used to eliminate mass poverty and deprivation and generally improve the quality of life of Africans”. Hartzenberg, Hoffman, Abeasi and Mbumba (2007:3) also mention the same public sector led strategy but add that “Governments gave the impression (and indeed some governments still continue to act that way) that they can do it single-handedly and provide all the development needs of their respective countries”. These authors (Hartzenberg *et al.* 2007:3) continue “it was not the best approach because it ignored the tremendous potential of the private sector as a credible partner or ally in the development equation. This is what has become known as making the private sector the engine of economic and social growth” (Hartzenberg *et al.* 2007:3).

Research by Bayliss and Hall (2002:4) has found that “private sector options should not be pursued where government stewardship is not able to enforce quality levels”. All of which point to the careful balancing act required of African governments between opening markets, providing appropriate publicly funded technical infrastructure and encouraging the private sector to take an active and increasing role in service delivery, while remaining ultimately accountable to the larger electorate.

The need for African states to satisfy ever increasing expectations of ordinary citizens regarding tangible personal benefits flowing from greater global inter connectivity coupled with coping with the relentless pressure by the developed nations for greater access to African markets would imply a greater co-ordinating role for NEPAD. This could only occur as part of a delegation of responsibilities by these states in certain of the identified technical support areas. It is vital therefore that a role for NEPAD be clearly enunciated in this regard.

With specific reference to the needs of African countries, the research previously quoted from (UNIDO 2006:1) points out that “most countries in Africa have failed to reap significant benefits from trading opportunities in expanding markets” noting that “African markets are too constrained for adequate industrial expansion” and stressing that African producers of goods and services “require access to global markets if vital increases in employment and income levels are to be achieved”.

A possible reason as to why this might be so is provided in findings from Jun (2000:281) who reports that “since the 1990s, economic globalisation has further contributed to market rationality and competition’ which, the same author contends, ‘is a basic characteristic of global free trade” (Jun 2000:281). A view that is challenged in part by Jackson (2001:11) who points out that “despite general opinion to the contrary there is no strong theoretical analysis to support the case that competition is good”. Luke (2005:232) highlights the existence of “premises of technology utilisation, managerial centralisation and profit generation now driving advance corporate capitalism”.

Thoburn (2000:4) declares that Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, has been slow to participate in globalisation. The same author (Thoburn 2000:4) points out that even though



“world trade has been rising faster than world output consistently since the second world war, this has not been true of Africa”. Kotze and Steyn (2003:86) also refer to Africa’s inability to capitalise on the process of globalisation particularly over the last twenty years. The same authors (Kotze & Steyn, 2003:86) also note the double impediments of a continuing loss of resources and less than optimal terms of trade. Giving an example from South Africa that supports these assertions, Abbot, Roberts and Robins (1999:37) contend that “tough residue regulations and stringent phyto-sanitary controls make access to the US market difficult and are perceived by much as disguised protectionism”.

Turning to another major market for African produce in general, Europe, the same authors (Abbot *et al.* 1999:37) assert that the competitiveness of South African business is also hampered by agricultural subsidies. Given that these are both major markets not only for South, but also the rest of Africa one wonders how our neighbours are going to cope when one realises that South Africa has very sophisticated technical support infrastructures in place. Such is not the case, with rare exceptions, elsewhere on the continent. While noting that South Africa has been successfully competitive, Nwonwu (2006:11) is of the opinion that because the vast majority of the other African states “are suffering from technological backwardness, they only have the limited option of exporting primary agricultural commodities ‘with consequent low export earnings”.

The current reality facing Africa of increasingly difficulty in accessing international markets and benefiting from globalisation is the cause of desperate measures. Nwonwu (2006:2) also argues that the various African states are almost forced “to adopt strategies that would contrive the realisation of economic growth and sustainable development”.

THE NEED FOR AFRICAN STATES TO CREATE AND MAINTAIN SUPPORTIVE TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO ASSIST IN GREATER MARKET LIBERALISATION

Responsible governments, including those in Africa, want to seize the benefits of globalisation for their nationals, i.e. larger markets and greater income for their local industries and lower prices for their consumers. The pursuit by a developing country government of such a laudable objective needs a carefully thought out strategy balanced by the understanding of the phenomenon of globalisation. Both Gill and Van der Pijl (quoted by Stewart 1999:106) assert that the “present Northern-controlled world order is the product of specific political strategies of elites – particularly business and political elites – who have over the last half century built up institutional conditions favourable to Western countries and transnational corporations”. Such strategies would obviously require both a political and administrative component. The challenge is to achieve such an objective whilst limiting unintended consequences of any downstream actions such as higher safety risks, due to inferior quality imported goods, for the local consumer. At issue therefore is the role that African governments and related public administered infrastructures might play in ensuring that manufacturers and service providers from the region also gain more of a share in future from the fruits of globalisation rather than the consequences of marginalisation.

Sophisticated technical requirements are obviously a major concern to developing countries, including those in Africa, due to their potential to negatively impact exports

from this region. This concern has also been identified by NEPAD. The need to establish organisations on national standards and harmonise the technical regulatory frameworks of African countries (NEPAD 2001:51) are specifically highlighted. The current global focus on the role of internationally harmonised standards in trade facilitation logically leads to the issue of how does one satisfactorily prove compliance of an African product or service against such a standard? To ensure that products or services comply to a technical regulation or standard increasingly requires some sort of credible conformity assessment, e.g. laboratory testing, inspection or third party certification. A global demand has therefore been created for appropriate mechanisms that allow both for independent proof of the competence of both conformity assessment bodies and the integrity of the associated national technical support infrastructure. NEPAD (2001:51) has identified the need to “acquire membership of relevant international standards organisations”. This strategy is required in order to “give Africa a stronger voice in these bodies”.

The father of modern economics, Adam Smith (2003:xviii), expressed concern as far back as 1776 that “merchants and manufacturers, pursuing their own self-interest, would orchestrate government regulation ...to their advantage”. It is interesting therefore to note that, in Africa at least, the previously mentioned public providers of conformity assessment services could potentially be just as problematic. This is especially important if one considers that much effort and donor funding, encouraged by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), is currently focused on creating such sustainable technical infrastructure in developing countries, particularly in Africa. Although the role of the private sector is recognised as being important, little is actually being done to create conditions for a more active role on their part. Another difficulty is that in many cases, substantial income from levies is generated against regulations and then used to provide income for most public standards bodies.

As African states try to better integrate into the wider, and brutally competitive, global economy such challenges will not decrease. In facing this challenge there are several further issues. One is how should a country migrate from donor or government driven creation of publicly administered technical support capacity and delivery to encouraging an appropriate mix of public/private institutional capacity where required? A related issue is how to address sustainable private sector conformity assessment service provision in such a highly technical and potentially expensive field?

African governments, with appropriate public sector support, also need to address the issues of differing standards and support offered to competitors in the appropriate international forums like the World Trade Organisation. They also have to ensure that there are appropriate domestic systems in place to back international negotiating positions. African governments certainly cannot be seen to be asking others to do one thing while applying different norms domestically. African governments, through the judicious use of the public sector, also have a key role at least initially in the creation of domestic and/or regional technical capability and capacity. Increasingly direct foreign and local investment is predicated on issues such as the availability of a sound conformity assessment infrastructure. It is vital that production facilities located in Africa can cost effectively prove compliance with international requirements, especially in respect of product quality and environmental issues.



THE ROLE OF AFRICAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Moving to the responsibility for, and implementation aspects of public administration, Henry (2007:42) maintains that “government will remain the central institution”. The same author also notes that with regard to the type of institutional setting, public, non profit, or private within which public administration will be done is more open to alternatives than ever before (Henry 2007:42). Kennedy and Hobohm (1999:1) assert that “The private sector has become the central focus for the economic development of African countries in recent years. Two factors account for much of this new emphasis: the failure of public sector-led economic development and the rise of globalization”. Pauw, Woods, Van der Linde, Fourie and Visser (2002:19) point out that “Many economists agree that there is a phenomenon called market failure.” This, they state, “means that not all goods and services that the members of a community need or want will ever be produced on an individual payment basis”. (Pauw *et al.* 2002:19). This is definitely the case as far as technical infrastructure is concerned, not only in South Africa where it is already well advanced even compared to developed countries, but also in the wider African region.

Outside of South Africa, current activity in the area of conformity assessment relies mainly on funding the normally under developed infrastructure of the various national Bureau of standards based on their assessment of the current country needs. Private sector development of conformity assessment bodies, if considered at all, is largely seen as an unrelated and even unwelcome activity and effort is certainly not focused on producing a sustainable private sector component. This leads to the creation of specialised public capacity that ultimately impedes the creation of a sustainable private sector in this area while actively discouraging any chance of growth. (Nzwei and Kuye:2007)

Several approaches to the provision of conformity assessment are currently being mooted by such influential bodies as the World Bank, the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Union (EU). These proposed remedies fall, simplistically, into two categories. One is private sector dominated and based on an underlying philosophy of control by the so called market forces of competition. This approach is enthusiastically driven in international forums, largely, by the United States. The second, the so called *New Approach* including sophisticated regulation and, in most cases public funded, conformity assessment activity is preferred by the European Union. They promote this view for at least two reasons. One is the inherent risk from incorrect but cheap test results.

A second is the legislative need as contained in European Directives for public institutions within Europe to take appropriate responsibility for protecting the welfare of their citizens. Stone’s (2004:571) assertion that “Two contradictory interpretations cannot both be true...and political life is full of them” sums up the situation exactly. African industry needs to export to both of these important markets complete with their *contradictory interpretations*. There is a need therefore to determine if there is a cost effective way, as a developing country exporter, to satisfy these apparently conflicting but entrenched export market philosophies.

Research by Bayliss and Hall (2002:4) has found that “without appropriate government stewardship and regulation there is a risk that informal private markets may provide low-quality service”. They conclude that by implication “private sector options should not be

pursued where government stewardship is not able to enforce quality levels". Nzwei and Kuye (2007:198) assert that "Prescriptions of neo-liberalism cannot be cut and pasted into development planning without considering the unique national and regional character". This implies a far greater responsibility for governments seeking assistance to more fully understand what they want to achieve, how they would determine success and if the proffered remedies offer a solution.

From a public administration perspective, Farazmand (1999:517) is of the opinion that "the globalizing state has forced public administration to do more with less". Stewart (1999:106) for one does not see this as particularly problematic and asserts that "despite the presence of structures and processes which favour Northern economies, there are opportunities for developing nations and their companies to produce and trade a variety of goods and services". Unfortunately Stewart does not then elaborate how a developing country can actively participate at the international level to protect its interests. The need to simultaneously research policies and frameworks that would benefit its citizens is a further complication. If the previous two tasks were not enough, to these must be added the successful on-going implementation of such policies.

Such complex and interlinking activities need to be managed whilst coping with increasing demands for the rationalisation of both the services government provide and the public officials required to execute such tasks. Each one of these activities is significant. The efforts required to try to perform them simultaneously in a co-ordinated fashion that achieves the desired benefits whilst minimising unintended consequences defy the imagination. All of which causes Stiglitz (2007:21) to posit that globalisation creates a far greater need for countries to act together to solve their common problems.

Should developing countries in Africa blindly follow the current global *status quo*? There is sufficient evidence that unless African states become more active in the international trade arena and shape it towards better serving their own interests, then even more misery above that which is currently experienced is not far away. They cannot rely on the good intentions of the private sector whose *raison d'être* ranges from self-preservation for small or newly emerging businesses at one extreme to global domination by the large MNCs in brutal competition with each other at the other end of the spectrum. Neither of these two extremes easily accommodates an altruistic outlook as far as developing countries or their domestic industries are concerned. This would suggest an important role for public administration in general and governments working independently or together on mutually beneficial strategies in particular.

At issue therefore is the role that African governments and related public administered infrastructures might play individually and co-operatively within a framework such as NEPAD. The ultimate goal being to ensure that manufacturers and service providers, as well as current and potential consumers from the region gain more of an appropriate share from the fruits of globalisation rather than the bitter consequences of marginalisation. Given this expectation coupled to the continued call by developed nations for greater access to developing country markets in organisations such as the World Trade Organisation, it is vital that a role for African Public Administration and public administrators working within the framework of NEPAD be clearly enunciated.

Of direct relevance to African public administration and the associated public institutions are the findings from Raadschelders (2000:381) who declares that "the influence of the



West on African government is not only visible in the pursuit of Western style reforms but also continues to be visible in the usage of Western-based theoretical frameworks for analyzing reform". Jreisat (2002:121) challenges such a generic strategy and argues that the "administrative concepts and techniques evolved in the context of the social, economic, and political conditions of Western countries are not fully valid or applicable in the new contexts". That the concerns of Jreisat are valid is underlined by Nzwei and Kuye (2007:205) who report that "policies from the North may be well intended, there have been no conclusive research evidence that they have worked". A good reason why this may be the case is provided by Haruna (2004:202) who contends that 'because public problems are *wicked*, there can be no quick fixes.

The current problem is that South Africa is currently the only country in Africa that has fully developed the sophisticated infrastructure required to prove equivalence of conformity assessment activities. South Africa's experience could provide valuable lessons for those donors and recipients that think that technical infrastructure capacity building and strengthening projects are a short term remedy. Pollitt (quoted by Mathiasen 2005:667) provides some sage advice in this regard. Pollitt argues that "What works and what does not tends to be heavily context-dependent. That is to say, a technique or organisational structure that succeeds in one place may fail in another" (Mathiasen 2005: 667).

CO-ORDINATION OF AFRICAN TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AS PART OF NEPAD

The initial and ongoing role of both private and public funded conformity assessment activity, and supporting technical infrastructure, is an important component in creating holistic solutions for Africa in addressing Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). There are important consequences regarding both provision and non-provision of conformity assessment services for African countries, as they try to better integrate into the wider, and brutally competitive, global economy.

In facing this challenge there are several issues. One is how should a country migrate from donor or government driven creation of publicly administered service capacity and delivery to encouraging an appropriate mix of public/private institutional capacity? A related issue is how to address sustainable private sector conformity assessment service provision in such a highly technical field?

Melber (2004:4) expresses doubt about a meaningful role for NEPAD. He claims that "NEPAD remains controversial among leaders of African states. It has also utterly failed to gain approval from many stakeholders". A factor that is indispensable for the success of Nepad' according to Ngoatje (2006:41) is the role of partnerships between Africa and the richest countries of the North. It might be useful to also stress the need for appropriate partnership with the richest country in the South of Africa?

Ngoatje (2006:41) does argue that such partnerships need to be grounded "on mutual respect, dignity, shared responsibility and mutual accountability". Essential advice given South Africa's past traumatic relationship with many African states, but also that currently South Africa is one of only two African states (the other is Egypt) with the standards, metrology and accreditation functions fully separated as envisaged by the NEPAD document.

Such a separation has been a slow, painful and relatively expensive exercise that mimics developed European countries but would be impossible to replicate in many African states. Regional provision of such facilities is also mooted by NEPAD.

A regional accreditation service has only just begun in one of the NEPAD RECs, SADC, supported by both South African and Norwegian funding. The lessons learnt from the South African and SADC initiatives in the area of technical support structure creation and maintenance are investigated and compared to the current work at the NEPAD level in order to extract guidance and lessons for future work in this important area.

CONCLUSION

In the final summation of this article, we contend that South Africa is currently the only country in Africa that has fully developed the sophisticated infrastructure required to prove equivalence of conformity assessment activities. At the same time, this article has presented an overview of the emergence of a new form of globalisation and its impact on African countries that seek to grow through inter and intra-regional trade and development, properly as NEPAD. Robustly stated and given the focus of the article and the role of public administration and trade facilitation, there is the need for African states to corporately and individually address the issue of supportive technical infrastructure as this has been identified as an important area of activity under the umbrella of NEPAD and the Nepadisation process. This article has created a panacea for the role of African public administration as a vehicle for a constructive public policy infrastructure implementation strategy. The current role identified for NEPAD and its limitations has been presented with some of the accompanying challenges that are foreseen.

At the issue therefore, is the role that African governments and related public administered infrastructures might play, individually and co-operatively within a framework such as NEPAD, in creating the appropriate environment for African manufacturers, stakeholders and service providers to gain from participation in international trade and infrastructural development.

The debate continues in global and continentally Nepadised contexts.

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