CHAPTER 3

The need for public led interventions in addressing African technical infrastructure capacitation.

PART I

3.1 GLOBALISATION AND FREE TRADE

The use of the term globalisation is both recent and increasing in popularity. Globalisation, Wolf (2005:13) argues, 'is a hideous word of obscure meaning…that came into ever–greater vogue in the 1990s'. In spite of such widespread popularity, any attempt made to describe the phenomenon called globalisation, according to Jreisat (2002:6) 'is like defining the wind'. Arriving at a definition for globalisation is 'no trivial task' according to Wolf (2005:13). 'There is much background noise' in globalisation according to MacGillivray (2006:12) who also contends that, 'not all of it [is] so easy on the ear'. Legrain (2003:9) further attests that 'globalisation is a process, not a destination'. Jreisat (2002:6) points out that 'one feels it and recognizes its effects more than one sees it'. Farazmand (1999:513) further amplifies the impact of such effects and points out that in the new global environment it is 'possible to produce a product anywhere, using resources from anywhere, by a company located anywhere, to be sold anywhere'.

Productive benefits flowing from the globalisation paradigm are highlighted by Lall (2004:189) who asserts that it is 'the most pervasive and powerful influence on industrialization today'. Luke (2005:234) argues that the needs of the global consumer, as perceived by marketing experts and promoted by the global advertising media, 'allow firms to set about making more and more commodities hitherto inaccessible in many markets available to all who desire them'. With reference to globalism in its topical manifestation, Jreisat (2002:6) is concerned that 'its future trends are unpredictable in many vital aspects'. Such unpredictability also creates victims as is increasingly now being realised.

Not all impacts of the global phenomenon are either intended or beneficial. Dunkley (2004:6) points out that '[g]lobalism is complex, with crosscutting impacts'. With the focus on trade between Sub–Saharan Africa (SSA) and the United Kingdom, McWilliams provides some tangible and convincing evidence that at least this part of Africa is at once very much involved and, as will be shown later, not always positively impacted upon by global developments. Findings from McWilliams (2007:17) indicate that consumers in the United Kingdom 'spend over £1 million (US $2.4 million) daily on produce imported from SSA'. The same research has also found that 'seventy percent of the green beans grown in Kenya go the UK and 87% of the UK's green bean imports come from five African countries' (McWilliams, 2007:17). One might wonder how such perishable produce can be delivered to a discerning customer, more than seven thousand kilometres away, in sufficient time to ensure that the produce is still fresh enough for consumption. The answer is provided by the exponential increase in the availability of technology that allows rapid communication of the requirements in the first instance. Such communication technology is supported by the sophisticated packaging and transport arrangements that are now available at a cost that makes their use commercially viable.

The ever increasing manifestations of the new form of the globalised world hold important consequences for African traders. Brown and Sander (2007:2) report that owing to technological improvements and more open capital and consumer markets over the last two decades, large supermarkets based in Europe are now 'global sourcing companies'. McWilliams (2007:17) reports 'almost half of the imports sent into UK by air come from [Sub–Saharan Africa] SSA'. With the strong dependence by African economies on agricultural produce as a means to generate external revenue this could be, as some African countries have already realised, a major opportunity for positive change. Unfortunately, as will be shown later in the research, there are also major challenges confronting suppliers from these same developing countries in Africa.

The impact of globalisation and more open markets on developing nations in general is addressed by the research of Hopwood, Mellor and O'Brien (2005). Using economic data for countries collected over a period of nearly fifty years, Hopwood, et al. (2005:48) show that 'the gap between the richest 20% and the poorest 20% has widened substantially'. Goonatilake and Kaeser (2006:1) point out that both the increase in volume and any associated developmental impact flowing from developing to developed country markets 'has been limited'. Closer to home, research by UNIDO (2006:1) provides evidence that 'Africa's share of world exports has fallen from 4.5% to 2.4% in the last 20 years'. Hutton–Wilson (2007:12) reports that during 2006, the 50 African countries reached 'a combined GDP of just over US1 trillion for the first time'. That this is no cause to rejoice is highlighted in the same report. Hutton–Wilson (2007:12) notes that the figure equates to approximately 2% of global economic activity. Even more disconcerting is the fact that the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) now stands at US$48 trillion (Hutton–Wilson, 2007:12). With so much growth, a reasonable and obvious question is why has Africa not been able to capture more of a share of the benefits? One possible reason is identified by Brenton and Hoppe (2006:157) who note that, according to World Bank estimates, 'the cost of doing business in Africa…is as much as 40 percent higher than in other developing regions'. The global exploitation of Africa is highlighted by Stiglitz (2007:11) who notes that 'during the years of colonialism the world took its resources but gave back little in return'. Political fragmentation in Africa coupled with the legacies of colonialism that exacerbate an already desperate situation are addressed later in the study.

The need to successfully participate in the international market is, according to Chen, Otsuki and Wilson, (2006:3), 'increasingly critical to job creation and poverty alleviation in developing countries'. The global movement from 'protectionism to liberalization' of markets has, according to UNIDO (2006:1), 'opened up opportunities for the advancement of trade and industry'. Goonatilake and Kaeser (2006:1) report that, unfortunately, such opportunities have been underutilised by developing countries. Possible impediments, according to Lall (2004:196), are 'the inability to apply new technology' and/or even more interestingly 'because of trade barriers and subsidies in the industrial world'. Findings by UNIDO (2006:2) indicate that 'barriers to trade with developed countries are estimated to cost the developing countries $100 billion a year – approximately twice the amount provided in aid each year by the rich countries'.

Evidence that a substantial part of the existent playing field for global trade is not level is provided by Stewart (1999:106), who claims that 'areas not covered by free trade principles are very large'. Stewart (1999:106) argues that such areas 'are controlled by the rich industrial countries through their political and economic power'. Even with a level playing field, Goldsmith (1996:255) cautions that 'when the strong confront the weak on a level playing field the result is a foregone conclusion'. Another major role player in today's global trade environment is identified by Fuhr (2001). Fuhr (2001:424) points out that 'the omnipresence of an international private sector intensifies the demand for institutional arrangements that promote market–led development'. Feinstein (2007:245) points out that 'corporations have become increasingly more powerful actors in society', adding that their 'impact and influence on the public sector is wide–ranging and profound'. The impact of such demands on both the domestic and international trade environment is mentioned by Welch and Wong (1998). Global trade agreements, according to Welch and Wong (1998:45), can 'have even greater influence on a country's economy than any of the domestic economic institutions in each individual country'. The global environment, the same authors (Welch & Wong, 1998:43) caution, 'should not be ignored as an influential force for bureaucratic change and decision–making'.

In order to seize the benefits of larger economies of scale, MNC's prefer to operate in countries that share essentially the same technical requirements for their products and services. Lack of harmonised technical specifications for the same product within different countries leads to increased costs, which can make a product uncompetitive in a particular market. Another and increasing area of concern for MNCs is the need to comply with differing national environmental legislation either during production or in the later use of the product or both. Abbot et al. (1999:26) contend that because 'environmentally–driven trade is relatively new, fast–moving and far from maturity' there are various different policy frameworks that 'provide many incentives for unsustainable production and trade'. The same authors (Abbot, et al., 1999:26) also note that the present reality is that '[m]any environmental initiatives are also in competition with one another, with different visions of the future, for example, integrated pest management and organic farming'. This is a significant problem for those African countries that still have a significant portion of their export trade based on agricultural produce.

3.2 THE ROLE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

3.2.1 Critical issues in public administration

In order to investigate the role of public administration within the area of research, it is important to make a distinction between two different uses of the term. The first use regards public administration as a phenomenon as applied by governments and their public servants in their daily tasks. The second use, sometimes identified in literature by the capitalized 'Public Administration', refers to a distinct academic field studying public administration as a scientific endeavour in order to increase knowledge. The difference between these two activities needs to be clearly understood. Public administration, according to Marini (2000:5), combines the activities of the 'practice and study of the professional formulation and influence of public policy' followed by implementation 'on behalf of the public interest of a society, its civic subparts, and its citizenry'. Such a division partly describes the difference between the academic study of public administration and actual practice.

In addressing the study of public administration, Welch and Wong (1998) identify the emergence of 'two main methodological trajectories' which the authors call 'traditionalists' and a more recent group the authors call 'revisionists'. According to Welch and Wong (1998:41), the traditionalists treat bureaucracies as a subsystem operating 'within the political, economic and social context of a particular nation'. The aim of these studies is to describe and explain why 'bureaucracies are what they are and why they do what they do' (Welch & Wong, 1998:41). More recently, and in an attempt to improve scientific integrity, the revisionists have studied bureaucracies to identify and analyse both universal phenomena and differences after which a 'context is then formed around the findings of research' (Welch & Wong, 1998:41). Such developments have unfortunately not 'helped develop theory that is more applicable to or informative for non–Western nations' (Welch & Wong, 1998:41). More worrying is that Welch and Wong (1998:41) argue that it is also 'creating a gap between public administration research and practice in Western and non–Western nations' at the time when 'the global environment is subjecting most governments to a similar set of global pressures'. Welch and Wong (1998:42) therefore suggest that the 'identification of a set of environmental pressures common to all nations and their subsequent inclusion into a theoretical model for analysis may serve to reduce the theoretical and application gaps' that their research has identified.

Another important issue for public administration is its pervasion by private management principles. Frederickson and Smith (2003:114), for instance, note that 'modern principles of entrepreneurial public management are now nearly a hegemony in the practices of public administration'. They (Frederickson & Smith, 2003:114) inform us that such doctrines are collectively known as 'New Public Management (NPM)' and are 'presently [sic] very influential in the practices of public administration'. Past tendencies in Africa for donor funded activities based on foreign philosophical approaches are at issue. Frederickson and Smith (2003:114) inform us that NPM not only has a 'particularly strong base in Western Europe…as well as in the United States' but also that the OECD 'encourages countries to adopt its principles'. Previous experience has shown that polices adopted and promoted amongst OECD members ultimately form the agenda for similar work by the United Nations and its related agencies such as UNDP and UNIDO. Both UNDP and UNIDO are very active in Africa in the area being studied. What is troubling is the conclusion reached by Frederickson and Smith (2003:114) that '[o]nly time will tell whether the principles of New Public

Management will deliver their promise'.

Administration is an art, according to White ([1926] 1955:2), that involves the 'direction, coordination, and control of many persons to achieve some purpose or objective'. With this definition in mind, the same author declares therefore that 'an administrator is consequently one who directs, coordinates, and controls the activities of others' (White, [1926] 1955:2). Writing over a decade later, Gladden is not as confident to offer such a clear and concise definition as that offered by White. Research by Gladden (1966:11) has found that 'administration…is not easy to explain, and different writers on the subject offer different definitions'. Simon, Smithburg and Thompson, (1950:3) writing over fifteen years earlier do not seem to have any difficulty in claiming that 'administration can be defined as the activities of groups cooperating to accomplish common goals'. Moving nearer to the present, in 2006 Goodsell circumscribes the difficulty of definition by focusing on describing its role. According to Goodsell (2006:633), administration 'is a social asset at the core of democratic governance' and as such 'makes critical contributions to society that go unnoticed'. Such a description brings us very much closer to the public side of administration.

A further reason to study public administration as a particular academic exercise is amplified by Robbins (1980). Robbins (1980:69) contends that the study of public administration provides 'tools of knowledge and skill' to present day and future incumbents of 'management or supervisory positions in the public sector'. If this appears to be a straightforward task, Fesler (1980:15) notes 'the study of the study of public administration should by now have yielded stable principles' but this is still not the case. Fesler (1980:15) offers a partial explanation by mentioning that knowledge generation activities in public administration 'have not been funded and sorted out in a way that permits confident generalization about the wide range of problems encountered in public administration'. Jordan (2006a:563) is more controversial and comments that 'for decades now, public administration scholars have laboured tirelessly to solve the perennial and pressing questions of administrative responsibility, namely 'who are administrators responsible to?' and 'what are administrators responsible for?'. According to Jordan (2006a:563), ‘neither of these questions, despite the literature available within the Western context …are [sic] sufficiently resolved’.

In attempting to explain the term public administration, Pfiffner and Presthus (1967:7) postulate a definition as ‘the coordination of individual and group efforts to carry out public policy’. Policy is, however, ambiguous, according to Sharkansky (1975:4), who argues that it can be interpreted as ‘a proposal, an ongoing program, the goals of a program, or the impact of a program upon the social problems that are its target’. Whatever difficulties arise in definition, Fesler (1980:3) asserts that policy comes first. A policy is then followed by administration. Administration, according to Fesler (1980:3), achieves objectives such as ‘altering the behavior of citizens toward conformity with the statutory mandates and delivering promised benefits to the intended beneficiaries’. With reference to the identity of the ‘intended beneficiaries’, public administrators, according to Henry (1986:47), now appreciate ‘that the public in public administration…must be cast into philosophic, normative, and ethical terms; public becomes that which affects the public interest’.

If the ambiguity already identified were not enough, White had already identified, in the first American text in public administration, the need to be careful in offering limited definitions of the subject. White ([1926] 2004:57) posited that public administration involved the ‘management of men and materials in the accomplishment of the purposes of the state’. White ([1926] 2004:57) is very careful to point out that the definition offered ‘leaves open the question to what extent the administration itself participates in formulating the purposes of the state, and avoids any controversy as to the precise nature of administrative action’. Research by Fesler (1980:2) also found difficulties in finding an exact definition for the subject of public administration. Fesler offered the following examples in order to better inform the reader as to why an exact definition was so problematic. According to Fesler (1980), public administration is not something that is easy to generalise. Anticipating Welch and Wong (1998) the author (Fesler, 1980:13) suggests the need to carefully consider the fact that ‘public administration is timeless but is time–bound, it is universal but is culture–bound and varies with situations, and it is complex but is intelligible only by a simplified model or a step by step combining of such models'. Fesler (1980:2) also notes that 'it is other things as well, but these provide sufficient orientation and offer enough paradoxes to introduce the subject'. According to Pesch (2005:178), another source of confusion is that public administration 'incorporates two meanings of publicness at the same time'. Pesch (2005:178) argues that one role of public administration is that of an economic agency in that it manages and produces goods and services. The other role of public administration, according to Pesch (2005:178), is acting in response to the public interest by formulating laws and policies.

An African perspective is offered by Haruna (2004:204) who also warns against too prescriptive or restrictive a definition for the subject of public administration arguing that this would be 'insufficient for meeting the challenges of complexity, fragmentation, uncertainty, risk, and conflict facing contemporary civil societies and polities'. A South African standpoint is offered by Hanekom and Thornhill (1993:57) who assert that public administration is a 'comprehensive and peculiar field of activity'. They (Hanekom & Thornhill, 1993:57) add that it involves 'numerous activities or functions…aimed at producing goods and rendering services for the benefit of the community'. Another South African, Cloete (1994), tackles the subject matter from the slightly different perspective. Cloete (1994:57) refers to the creation, maintenance and operation of public institutions and points out that these perform a 'variety of activities, also known as functions or processes...collectively known as public administration'. A further South African perspective is provided by Pauw (1999:22), who defines public administration as the 'organised, non–political, executive functions of the state'. He (Pauw, 1999:22) also points out that there are 'numerous other definitions – some focus on policy, some…classes of activities, some…institutions and bureaucracy'. Overly mechanistic definitions for public administration are challenged by Thoenig (2007:96) who points out that 'change processes such as globalization and issues such as economic development suggest that governmental organizations are also vehicles for social and political identities, not only passive technocratic machineries'. In a similar vein, Goodsell (2006:634) reminds us that the agencies of public administration 'constitute great engines of rule and response in governance' and that 'their success contributes crucially to the building and maintenance of the public trust underlying democracy'. The same author (Goodsell, 2006:634) also poses a challenge by asking public administration 'to see itself as a major contributor to democratic life'. This is deeply significant given the African context of the study.

3.2.2 The evolution of European and American public administration

Given the colonial past of Africa together with the accompanying transplanted public systems, a review of the implications thereof is important. Such a review should allow a deeper understanding of the many complexities of the subject matter and reveal how these might assist in the study at hand. Raadschelders, Wagenaar, Rutgers and Overeem (2000:775) admonish public administrators not to 'reinvent the wheel', pointing out however, that 'without a grounding in history, such re–invention will continue'. With such encouragement, the focus of the study now turns to the history of public administration.

Traditionally public administration, as noted by Rugge (2007:115), 'has been conceptualized as distinct from and often as the opposite of politics'. Rugge (2007:15) also points out that 'such a distinction is very problematic in theory and separation has proved more than problematic in practice'. In spite of the difficulty associated with such a distinction, Rugge (2007:115) asserts that such a separation 'strongly contributed to shaping and animating public administration throughout the past two centuries'. A similar view was posited many years earlier by Sayre (1958:103), who noted that 'in the pioneer texts…politics and policy were separate from administration'. There are two basic functions in all governmental systems, according to seminal work by Goodnow ([1900] 2004:36), who argues that these are (1) the 'expression of the will of the state and (2) the execution of that will'. Goodnow ([1900] 2004:36) elaborates about the 'separate organs' in all states that are responsible for the 'discharge of one of these functions…respectively, Politics and Administration'. Robbins (1980:39) reports that White was arguing as long ago as 1926 'that administration should be separate from, and not intrude upon, politics'. According to Robbins (1980:39), White bases his argument on the fact that 'the field of administration is a legitimate discipline, lending itself to scientific study'.

With reference to the United Kingdom in the mid–nineteen century, Rugge (2007) gives some very practical reasons for the 'politics / administration dichotomy'. Rugge (2007:115) indicates that as Ministers struggled to cope with the detail of the portfolios that they were responsible for, civil servants were confronted with an ever–increasing workload that was both technically intensive and complex. Such developments (Rugge, 2007:115) logically led to 'the establishment of a permanent civil service was largely prompted by the want of personnel with an entire and stable devotion to the administrative work'. A further refinement, according to the same author (Rugge, 2007:115), was that the civil service so created was 'neutralised' in order to provide 'a solution to possible frictions between politicians and bureaucrats'. The positive impact of such neutralisation was that 'whatever the party in power, administration would steadfastly follow its policy' (Rugge, 2007:116). An interesting comment by Rugge (2007:118), in the light of the research, is that '[t]here is no doubt that government [in the United Kingdom] reacted to direct or systemic pressure to provide the infrastructure necessary for economic development'.

With the clarity obtained on the difference between politics and public administration, attention can now focus on public administration aspects. 'Within the framework of Western civilization', White ([1926] 1955:5) points out that two great systems of government administration have developed, 'One is the Anglo–American…self–government in local communities…The other is the French…dominance of national over local authorities'. The relevance of such information to Africa, given its colonial past, is obvious and could assist in understanding why regional integration of different legislation might be problematic.

The existence of a separate European concept of public administration is questioned by Rutgers and Schreurs (2000:621), who contend that '[t]here is no such thing as a well–developed European concept of public administration'. Rutgers and Schreurs (2000:623) argue that understanding came through an evolutionary process among the various European states. Such a consensus building process has gradually led to the establishment of 'principles for public administration shared by EU member states with different legal traditions and different systems of governance' (Rutgers & Schreurs, 2000:623). A similar process can be seen in other key areas within Europe such as harmonised technical requirements. Such processes, even at the national European level, according to Agatiello (2007:69), require both 'sustained political determination' and a foundation of 'widespread national consensus'. Owing to the nature of consensus building even at the national level, let alone among such a richly diverse group of countries with long and cherished traditions, this is a long and tedious process.

Once a consensus has been reached and appropriate legislation enacted it is then legally binding on each member state of the European Union. It is not difficult to imagine what then confronts non–European states faced with the output of such arduous processes in terms of negotiating bilateral agreements, including trade, with the European Union. Aid supported training and support are then offered as a solution to allowing others to understand and comply with such regulations. Given the advice of Hartzenberg, Hoffman, Abeasi and Mbumba (2007:4), that complying with the various and technically challenging regulatory requirements of the 'European Market should not become a cornerstone for Africa, other markets should also be considered as important (for example, the US market)', it is wise to consider whether such an option is any easier.

In the United States, the practice and study of public administration developed separately and in isolation from European practices. The Americans, according to Langrod (1961:69), 'developed a science of Public Administration of its own'. Pesch (2005:71) also contends that the study of public administration in continental Europe, seen as a branch of law, is different from that in the United States where it 'became an independent academic field before it did in other countries'. The fundamental differences in evolution of public administration in Europe and the United States, according to Pesch (2005:71), are due to 'the American version of the doctrine of the separation of powers, which differs essentially from the Continental–European version'. A problem with the American approach, according to Langrod (1961:69), is the lack of 'knowledge of what was done elsewhere in the past in dealing with similar problems'. Welch and Wong (1998:40) hold a similar opinion and contend that 'American public administration is not considered to be either informed by international theoretical perspectives or very adaptable to other national contexts'.

Raadschelders, et al. (2000:786) contend that there are two further issues that need to be considered with respect to American public administration. The first issue (Raadschelders, et al., 2000:786) raised about the American approach is that it is 'overshadowed by administrative management and its enthrallment with science and rationalism'. Raadschelders, et al. (2000:786) rightly claim that 'administrative history could help to strengthen the interpretative tradition that was so characteristic of the days that the study of public administration was part of the study of law'. A European perspective is self–evident in these remarks. The problem of exporting public administration principles from one part of the world to assist others is embedded in the above points of view and was addressed by Sayre nearly fifty years ago. Public administration doctrine and practice, Sayre (1958:104) argued, is both culture and time–bound, a view reiterated by Fesler, who more than twenty years later (Fesler, 1980:17), reported that 'Western models have proven not very suitable points of departure for the understanding of the role of the bureaucracy in non–Western political systems'. Greater insights were required, according to Fesler (1980:17), owing to the 'significant and inadequately understood differences [even] among the administrative systems of the developed countries of the West'. The transportability of principles of public administration, as originally suggested by White in 1926, has also been investigated by Henry (1986). According to Henry (1986:41), White had thought that such principles would be as 'useful a guide to action in the public administration of Russia as of Great Britain, of Iraq as of the United States'. Henry (1986:41) notes that 'cultural factors could make public administration on one part of the globe quite a different animal from public administration on another part'. Moving closer to the present time, and with reference to the globalisation of public administration, Welch and Wong (1998:40) claim that freer availability of literature on the subject has only served to highlight its 'parochial nature'. They (Welch & Wong, 1998:40) note that the majority of the literature available at that time, nearly ten years ago, 'was written to apply to one nation or to a small group of similar countries'.

In the context of Africa, Haruna (2004:188) identifies the emergence of a 'dominant administrative model, employing market–oriented solutions to government failures'. He (Haruna, 2004:185) also notes that the model is 'based on the culture of the market, management principles, and neo–liberal ideals' and 'tends to equate economic liberalization with good governance'. The same author (Haruna, 2004:197) challenges the emerging model for its lack of sensitivity to 'diverse and multicultural populations with different traditions and social norms'. A similar concern is expressed five years earlier by Farazmand (1999:518), who encourages public administrators to 'resist the market based concepts of treating citizens as consumers and degrading them to market commodities'. Such a call is better understood if considered together with the advice of Fuhr. Fuhr (2001:436) asserts that 'better–informed and better–connected citizens are likely to push their states more strongly towards better public management, better service provision, broader political participation and democratization'. It is perhaps tragic that such desirable outcomes, often given as the cornerstone for future African development, are completely at odds to the public administration strategy now globally promoted as "the" solution. The same problem is neatly described by Haruna (2004:189), who points out that 'much administrative theorizing is narrowly circumscribed, focusing on organizational goals and objectives without linking them to overall societal need and aspiration'. The impact of continuing in this narrowly focused manner is bound to deliver many unintended and negative consequences. With reference to the initialisation of, and preparation for, policy–making Fesler (1980:4), realised that 'developments have enhanced the role that administrative agencies play'. He (Fesler, 1980:4) amplifies these developments as the 'increased technicality of subjects with which legislation deals, a phenomenon that is paralleled by a growth in the specialized competence of administrative agency staffs' and concludes that the 'need for expert help has mounted as public–policy problems have become increasingly technical'.

In the new globalised world that confronts all nations, Jun (2000:274) notes that 'many countries strive for the modernization and rationalization of their society and institutions'. Why this should be so has already been discussed. In attempting to modernise public institutions it is obvious that countries, particularly developing countries, want to ensure that any domestic changes are based on available best practice and achieve the desired outcomes. Jun (2000:274) points out that 'many non–Western academics and practitioners look to Western countries as they work to modernize public institutions in their own countries'. Kuye (2006:2) sounds a warning to developing countries about the unbridled import of public administrative practices from elsewhere and notes that 'most developing nations utilize systems which may not really address the needs of local concern'.

Are there major problems in the field of public administration generically or is it just research and understanding in the context of Africa? Not if Marini is to be believed. The science of public administration has, according to Marini (2000:16), 'always been influenced by, and participated in, the intellectual climate and dialogue of its times'. Such ongoing interaction and refinement, according to Marini (2000:16), does not indicate 'crises of identity or future, but rather of vitality and engagement'. Further encouragement for seeking home grown public administration solutions for African and other developing countries is provided by Lanham. Lanham (2006:605) expresses the hope that 'work on Africa or Asia may begin to unravel some of the boundary objects in force today'. Similarly Jackson (2001:25) also asks; 'Where should the boundaries of the state be drawn? [and] How should bureaucracy be shaped?' The same author (Jackson, 2001:25) concludes that '[t]hese are age–old questions but they remain on today's policy agenda'. The need for unique African public administration solutions in the context of the present study is addressed later in the study.

3.2.3 A role for public administration and administrators?

A non–negotiable for public administration suggested by Jabbra and Dwivedi (2004:1106), is to provide 'the framework of rules, institutions and practices, set limits and provide incentives for individuals, organizations and businesses'. Jreisat (2002:6) also argues for a pivotal role for public administration in the restructuring of societies. In the area of trade liberalisation, global agendas and strategies nowadays appear to be largely driven by economics. There is no doubt that economists have played an important role in assisting public administration (Robbins, 1980:51). Their work is evidenced in efforts to quantify and predict external conditions by providing relevant forecasts through to assisting in the appropriate allocation of resources in support of a particular area of activity or policy. The prominent role of economists is also noted by Stiglitz and Charlton (2005:36) who report, in addition, that many have serious reservations regarding the ability of developing country officials in managing complex trade policies.

Economists and economic theory continue to play an important role in such international organisations as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Their work has created a global expectation, according to Nzwei and Kuye (2007:202), regarding core issues identified in 'neo–liberal' policies that each state must aggressively pursue in order to 'remain competitively relevant'. Nzwei and Kuye (2007:202) mention, by way of example, 'reduction of trade barriers, privatisation, and deregulation'. Without a credible counterbalance supported by appropriate underlying public administrative theory, trade liberalisation and related donor activity will continue to rely solely on economic theory. The 'one size fits all' prescriptions of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) evident in Africa, and elsewhere, are an example. Structural Adjustment Programs, driven by economics and economists, were delivered 'as is' in many cases to countries for implementation by local public administrators, guided by foreign advisors.

The resultant outcomes certainly bring new perspectives to the insights offered by White ([1926] 2004:59) over eighty years ago, when he stated 'the role of administration in the modern state is profoundly affected by the general political and cultural environment of the age'.

There has been a copious amount of research, from an economics perspective, regarding the benefits of free trade contemporaneous with global thinking about the need for increased efficiencies in both private and public institutions. Is there room therefore for any input from public administration? If such input is required, is it at the theoretical level or purely to give reactive feedback to economists about the very real problems that continue to surface while implementing their prescriptions, however well intentioned? One can only wonder if Wilson ([1887] 1988:12) envisaged such specific complexities when he stated so long ago that '[s]eeing every day new things which the state ought to do, the next thing is to see clearly how it ought to do them'. As far as developing countries are concerned, a more holistic approach is evidently required to ensure that citizens are given the necessary opportunities to trade beyond their borders. This is especially true if the words of Freysen (1999:29), who maintains that '[s]ervice delivery by the state is not only necessary for the enjoyment of rights – it also secures those rights' are considered.

Is the opportunity to be part of, and gain from, the global economic marketplace only the privilege of those fortunate enough to be citizens of developed nations? If one agrees that such an opportunity should be open to all citizens regardless of the nation state to which they belong, then certain aspects of public service delivery need to be revisited. In order to deliver the required national outcomes, such a review should be based on sound public administration concepts. It is recognised that such insights may or may not be part of the present academic landscape. Welch and Wong (1998:47) encourage such a far–sighted view and point out that 'the global environment provides a natural and useful opportunity for developing a more comprehensive theory of public administration'. Not long after the work by these two authors, a study by Marini (2000:7) reached a similar conclusion and noted that ‘public administration worldwide is in creative tension and undergoing rapid change and attempts at reconceptualization’. That such an understanding arose is probably explained by the work of Jun (2000:276) who found that ‘[w]hen foreign scholars apply Western theories and approaches to their understanding of their own history, culture, politics, and administration, they experience the limits of these theories and approaches’. Goodsell (2006:634) is far more militant in outlook and posits that ‘[i]f the field does not develop its own vision for itself, no one else will’.

That public administration and its role in Africa is in need of major research is obvious given the many failures of previous public interventions in the region in the area of study. It is suggested that not all of the work required needs to be based on new or untried theories but rather an insightful consideration of a ‘[m]ixed bag of theories that need to reflect and effect African development’ as suggested by Nzwei and Kuye (2007:205). Another vital element in the pursuit of long–lasting African solutions is identified by Haruna. Developing a culture of collaboration, according to Haruna (2004:204), would ‘help to bridge the gap between theory and practice and test new possibilities for a better understanding of comparative and international public administration’. Just how such collaboration would work and who would be included in it for the purposes of African trade facilitation is addressed later in the study.

Once an underlying understanding has been obtained, it is necessary to move towards appropriate policy formulation guidelines and, ultimately, sustainable implementation. In order to ensure that the burden for such an intervention does not rest solely with public officials, it is vital that private sector representation and other stakeholders are included as collaborative partners. Haruna (2004:194) calls such an approach ‘development management’, contending that by using such an approach ‘the state, civil society and the private sector can share the burden of development, each carrying what it can legitimately shoulder’. It is also necessary, according to Fuhr (2001:421), that in facilitating and participating in such a process the state should be realistic about, and focus on, what it can and should be doing. Collaborating partners should also be used as a focal point in building appropriate and additional capability. Such an approach would address an important concern raised by Cloete (1994:64), who argues that 'the rights and freedom of the citizens are curtailed whenever a product or service is provided solely by a public institution'. Such a concern leads Cloete (1994:64) to point out that 'a decision on whether or not a public institution should itself be involved in any way cannot be taken lightly'. Freysen (1999:60) would later suggest that such decisions should also initially consider the very 'purpose of the state' which he contends is to 'promote self–development of the individual and hence the community'.

The characteristics of the type of state required to achieve specific goals using collaborative activities is discussed by Nzwei and Kuye (2007:204), who identify the concept of a 'democratic facilitative state'. To qualify for such a title the 'state consciously and strategically shapes, guides and co–ordinates the market but encourages cooperation between government, business and civil society'. In a similar manner, Tawfik (2005:4) addresses the concept of the 'developmental state' which 'conceives its mission as that of ensuring economic development'. Tawfik (2005:3) argues that, in the African context, the state is required to play 'a central leading role'. He (Tawfik, 2005:5) also points out that such a leading role is enthusiastically supported by African scholars, in spite of their concerns regarding the 'predatory, elitist and repressive features' of the African state. Stewart (1999:119) earlier stressed the necessity for a 'strong and pervasive state' to take responsibility for development as part of 'a national endeavour', asserting that in Africa, the assignment of such a key role to the state is an important issue for 'non–industrialised countries (e.g. Tanzania) and semi–industrialised countries (e.g. South Africa)'. Stewart (1999:120) elaborates on exactly the type of role that a 'strong and regulating' state is expected to play. The study by Stewart (1999:120) identifies that such a state 'organises national economic strategy, does long–range planning and investment, and protects strategic industries'. Interestingly, in terms of this current research, the state's role in creating supportive technical infrastructure is not mentioned. Once the necessary collaborative interaction has yielded sufficient and appropriate information, responsibility must be accepted by the state for formulating policy, appropriate supportive legislation together with actionable and appropriately resourced plans. Such a responsibility would, in the public service, then be delegated to the public administrators. Their role is addressed in the next section.

A vital component in the running of any state is the public administrator. A crucial problem in many a developing country, according to Fesler (1980:3), 'is administrative incapacity to get the government's decisions and programs carried out'. With regard to the implementation of public policy, Jreisat (2002:10) later also stresses the key role played by leaders who possess the requisite professional competence. Just exactly what competence is required is still open to question. A related question is raised by Jordan (2006a:572) whose recent research has found that identifying '[j]ust who is a public administrator…is woefully underarticulated in existent literature.' Welch and Wong (1998) and Haruna (2004) agree that given the new context, new skills and knowledge are required in order to be effective. From an African perspective, Haruna (2004:199) goes as far as to suggest that a 'new breed of public administrators is needed'. Managerial skills such as 'flexibility, adaptability, cooperation, and creativity' are specifically identified by Jreisat (2002:9). A more somber note, with Africa in mind, is sounded by Hodgkinson (1978:152) who reminds us that '[a]dministrators will continue to be ordinary and defective men. Yet they will have to deal with power, their basic coinage, and all its corrupting influence'. Rutgers and Schreurs (2000:626) offer one solution to such a concern by suggesting that '[c]ivil servants must be subject to a set of legal conditions, which enable them to effectively execute their functions and competencies, in a proper and lawful manner'.

Role definition together with appropriate accountability and well documented delegations of authority are thus vital components of a suitable and enabling public service environment. Another component is the determination of suitable and specific measurands. The need for instance to measure the efficiency of a public institution is addressed by Cloete (1994). With specific reference to public sector efficiency, Cloete (1994:82) mentions that its measurement is 'often neglected because there is no exact criterion, such as profit in the private sector'. He (Cloete, 1994:82) cautions that '[c]are should also be exercised not to brand a public institution as being inefficient merely because one does not agree with the policy'.

3.2.4 Globalisation, governments and public administration

Government, according to Thoenig (2007:92), 'is in the business of forming its environment, not adapting to it'. Public administration, Thoenig (2007:92) continues, 'is driven by societal visions and political projects'. This view runs counter to that of Welch and Wong (1998:44) who argue that global pressures act directly on public bureaucracies but also indirectly 'through the filters of national political, economic, and social systems'. Fuhr (2001:427) states that public institutions 'appear to be faced with growing pressure in terms of performance and legitimacy, which goes far beyond national boundaries'. Globalisation has created significant external pressure that, according to Farazmand (1999:514), 'has caused major changes in the character of the modern state'. A study by Farazmand identifies five such specific changes. The first change (Farazmand, 1999:515) is the increased importance and rise to prominence of supra–national 'governance organizations'. These organisations make collective decisions and mutually agree on issues such as codes of conduct that then become morally or even legally binding on their nation state membership. Such decisions and associated policies then affect the administrative systems of each of these states which can be either beneficial or problematic. Gladden (1966:19) reminds us that 'in a democracy the general policy of a nation is formulated and moulded by a complexity of agencies, operating through a multitude of channels'. Subjecting nationally crafted policies to wider regional and/or international harmonisation can be expected to be problematic unless the policy ultimately chosen is similar. Caution is required. Trade negotiators tasked to seek appropriate accommodation, as is often the case in reaching consensus within supra–national organizations, need to be well informed. The need for insight into the potential implications and national impacts of the various options proffered during such negotiations is crucial. Unintended consequences that arise post agreement are an ever present possibility in such scenarios.

A hint of the complexities that now face developing countries in the global trading environment, managed under the auspices of the WTO, is provided by Goonatilake and Kaeser. They (Goonatilake & Kaeser, 2006:2) point out that 'developing countries have to compete in a highly demanding rules–driven trading system'. They continue by amplifying some of the issues facing manufacturers from developing countries as they attempt to access more sophisticated markets. After the basic product specifications have been successfully met, developing country exporters then face 'increasingly stringent requirements applied to goods in terms of quality, safety, health and the environment' (Goonatilake & Kaeser, 2006:2). Such requirements are often agreed at meetings of supra national organisations, which often lack a developing country voice. Findings from Chen, et al. (2006:16) indicate that developing countries continually express concerns that 'both voluntary and regulatory testing and certification programs may not be taking local market conditions and capacities into account'. This is perceived by such countries 'as a barrier to export to developed country markets' (Chen, et al., 2006:16). Such a barrier may be the result of either commission or omission on the part of those participants who assisted in devising such programmes but neither possibility gives comfort when confronted with such barriers.

The second change (Farazmand, 1999:515) identified is the increasing trend of 'interdependence among modern states to handle territorial and supraterritorial issues'. Such changes prompt Farazmand (1999:518) to posit that 'public administration has just entered a new stage of human civilization, with a future that is both brightened and darkened by globalization'. This view is endorsed by Jreisat (2002:9) who states that 'public administration finds itself operating within a different global context that is still evolving but that is simultaneously causing novel and hard challenges'. These insights are important from an African perspective if findings from Haruna are also considered. Haruna (2004:194) notes that in the case of post independence African States, the expanded role of the public service both affects and is in turn 'affected by existing practices and understanding of public administration'. Such an outcome is not altogether unexpected if research by Welch and Wong is to be believed. These authors (Welch & Wong, 1998:43) declare that a 'vast body of American public administration literature considers the environment of organizations to be a primary contributor to administrative and policy outcome'.

The need to strategise and then proactively manage state interaction between the domestic and international environment is considered by Kotze and Steyn. According to them (Kotze & Steyn, 2003:91), successful state development under the prevailing circumstances requires 'a strategy of managed openness, which involves seeking to influence the sequencing, speed and scope of the engagement of their economies with globalization'. A similar issue but from a slightly different perspective is raised by Lanham (2006:605) who asserts that Public Administration needs 'to interpret borders and boundaries in new ways—a topic that is dramatically under worked'. It is suggested therefore that, at the present time, African Public Administration has a window of opportunity to determine how it could better serve both inter and intra regional interests. As Jreisat (2002:9) reports 'globalization introduces new opportunities as well as new tensions and disruptions for public administration to deal with'.

The third change mentioned by Farazmand (1999:515) is that all states have gained 'information–age advantages to process information for almost all functions of governance and administration'. From a developing country, and specifically an African perspective, perhaps the words 'the opportunity to access' should be inserted after 'gained' in order to give a more accurate reflection of the existent state of affairs. Whether such development has translated into tangible performance improvements, for those administrations that are in the fortunate position to acquire and implement such technology, is however still questioned by Jreisat (2002:9).

The fourth change (Farazmand, 1999:515) 'is the growing role of governments as partners with and promoters of the private sectors, often at the expense of public goods and services'. The reason for such a development can be explained in part by the research of Welch and Wong (1998:45) who refer to the existence of 'a worldwide pressure on public bureaucracies to cut waste and increase output'. Haruna (2004:203) is not convinced that such a tendency is to be welcomed and argues that 'privatization is both weakening the role of public administration and diverting such a role in favor of market forces and private interests'. Farazmand (1999:517) also expresses concerns that 'the 'public sphere' and the space for citizen involvement have been shrinking as a result of globalization and government restructuring'. A possible solution is offered by Farazmand (1999:517) who encourages public administrators to play 'a proactive role in managing societal resources away from the dominant control of globalizing corporate elites'. These and other issues associated with moving public functions to the private sector are more fully addressed later in the study.

The fifth, and according to Farazmand (1999:515) 'the most important change for public administrators, is the shift of the administrative state from a welfare state to a corporate state'. Although true of some developed countries in the north, there are other examples, such as countries in Scandinavia where perhaps this shift is not as evident. That some good for developing countries can still be derived is argued by Haruna (2004:202) who believes that 'professional competency and economic efficiency, two of the key values associated with administrative globalization are worth saving'.

3.3 THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN REGULATION AND MARKET LIBERALISATION

3.3.1 Trade facilitation: The role of the state and its institutions

In order to better understand what role the state and its institutions can play in trade facilitation, it is important to agree on exactly what is meant by the term. According to Maur (2008:8), the activity called trade facilitation is the collective interventions by both the public and private sector that 'help goods cross borders'. The objective of trade facilitation, according to Staples (2002:140), is 'to reduce the cost of doing business for all parties by eliminating unnecessary administrative burdens associated with bringing goods and services across borders'. In a similar vein, Khumalo (2005:139) opines that 'the main aim of trade facilitation measures is to reduce the complexity and cost of transactions'. The difficulties created, in turn, by such activities give rise, according to Agatiello (2007:64), to 'new, unforeseen challenges – economic, political and administrative'. As if to further emphasise that this is not a trivial exercise, both Staples (2002:148) and Agatiello (2007:70) note that for many countries, the broad achievement of trade facilitation objectives is going to be a long term process. The need for a sustained and collaborative effort by all interested parties is also stressed by both authors.

Moving to the issue of businesses trying to export from developing countries, some interesting facts begin to emerge. Najam and Robins (2001:50) address the issue of trade barriers between developing countries and the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). OECD membership is exclusively focused on developing countries. These authors (Najam & Robins, 2001:50) point out that 'over $700 billion worth of trade barriers still confront exports' and lament that 'neither North nor South has managed to design a positive strategy for making international commerce an engine…for sustainable trade'. Unfortunately there is much evidence (Pangestu, 2002:154; Legrain, 2003:327; Meredith, 2005:684; Stiglitz & Charlton, 2005:47; Goldin & Reinert, 2006:64) that the area of developed country subsidies, particularly in agriculture, is a major obstacle in the way of developing countries accessing developed country markets. Cosbey (2004) alerts us to three sets of obstacles that will need to be addressed if any progress is to be made. The first difficulty concerns the issue of 'differing standards in different markets' (Cosbey, 2004:26). The second relates both to technical problems arising from conformity assessment and the related costs (Cosbey, 2004:26). The last issue highlighted concerns foreign government support that may be available to foreign based competitors to assist them in gaining export market share in their own or foreign countries (Cosbey, 2004:26). Redclift (2005) is more controversial. He (Redclift, 2005:221) asserts that developing countries begin with a huge disadvantage due to 'highly unequal capital and information systems, to which groups of people, and governments [such as the members of the OECD], have highly unequal access'. Rotherham (2003) provides further valuable insights into a difficult and relatively new area of trade facilitation activity. The study by Rotherham (2003:2) has found that 'a relatively complex institutional structure has developed at the national, regional and international levels' based on three separate responsibilities 'rule making (standardization and regulation); conformity assessment; and accreditation'.

The need for a clearly defined goal for any public service delivery activity is emphasised by Fox and Maas (1997:3), who point out that 'the delivery of public goods and services, notwithstanding their efficient and responsive delivery, is of no value if it does not benefit the individual, the community and society at large'. While the need for the state to address trade facilitation issues has become non–negotiable, the role that public organisations should initially and continually perform, versus that of the private sector, is one of the issues at hand. The delineation of possible tasks between the two sectors is further complicated by the lack of a clear definition of what exactly constitutes a public organisation or what it should do. Public administrators have not assisted in solving such problems, according to Moe (2004). Moe (2004:469) laments the lack of development by public administrators of 'sophisticated or comprehensive criteria to assist lawmakers in deciding where best to assign a public function'. A 'public organization', according to Bozeman and Bretschneider (1994:199), could either be 'an organization charged with operating in the public interest, or one with goods and services having public goods characteristics'. The need for appropriate and periodic review is highlighted by Antonsen and Jorgensen (1997:338) who report that 'some organizations lose their reasons for being public and remain so simply by tradition'. The role of some of the publicly funded conformity assessment activities in Africa is particularly relevant.

Perceptions of inefficiency and red tape in the public service delivery remain. In his seminal work, White ([1926] 2004:61) contends that 'international competition in trade and industry continues to sharpen the demand for efficiency in government'. From a different angle, Jackson (2001:25) asks: 'Can bureaucracy deliver value for money?' The role of the public and private sector is therefore discussed later in the study. Agatiello (2007:69) does not share such concerns and argues that '[a]dopting a public goods approach for advancing trade facilitation may be one of the most effective ways to enhance competitiveness in the developing world'. The same view is echoed by Hausmann, Rodrik and Sable (2008:4) whose research on reconfiguration of industrial policy with application to South Africa notes that the private sector needs government to provide 'public inputs to meet the obligations of framework regulation', which, in turn, leads to the topic of market failure, covered in the next section.

3.3.2 Market failure

States are not the only role players in the newly globalised environment. Business has continued to expand globally. They demand that governments stick to what they do best and leave business and the global market place to establish appropriate norms for trade related activities. Such a view is noted by Lall (2004). According to Lall (2004:189), such advocates argue that 'neo–liberal policies' accompanied by the 'withdrawal of the state from all economic activity apart from the fundamental provision of…basic public goods' is the optimal solution. Earlier work by Dell (1989:102) identified similar and growing sentiments that 'it is the market that knows best, not the Governments, and that the best thing Governments can do is to allow themselves to be guided by the market'. Lall (2004:189) also refers to the existence of a 'more moderate version' of such philosophy which apparently 'admits a larger role for the government, but a "market–friendly" one'. As Lall (2004:189) explains, the philosophical foundation for all of these approaches is based on the underlying assumptions that 'markets are efficient and governments inefficient and that technology flows across countries most rapidly and effectively via free market channels'. According to the same author (Lall, 2004:189), 'neither assumption is justified'. In the context of developing countries, Hausmann, et al. (2008:2) argue that 'market failures are not a rarity but a rampant feature of the landscape'. Such a radical view is supported by Jackson (2001:7) who points out that 'the information required to run markets efficiently is much greater than was originally thought'. According to Pesch (2005:69), some public organisations were established to 'act in line with the public interest and to repair market failures'. Jackson (2001:6) however points out that government working alone cannot 'solve the co–ordination problem nor can they successfully mimic the incentives established in markets'. More important from an African perspective, Jackson (2001:14) points out that a reliance on markets alone is not the solution as 'they are not designed to bring about desirable distributions [of income] unaided'. Pesch (2005:81) also contends that the 'market system may lead to an optimal situation of general wealth, but one may doubt the fairness of the distribution of this wealth'. Pesch (2005:82) argues therefore that the state 'is legitimised to act' in circumstances where 'the market brings forth undesired consequences or fails to produce desired products or goods'.

The creation of a public good creates two distinct market failures. According to Maur (2008:15), one failure is caused by 'non excludability: providers of the good cannot prevent others from free riding by consuming it at no cost'. The second market failure (Maur, 2008:15) is caused by 'non rivalry: once a public good is provided, all can enjoy it at no or very low cost'. These aspects obviously need to be considered by governments in the process of what activity they would want to take responsibility for and what to leave to the market place. Such a decision would also need periodic review given the fluidities of both the national and international environment. Attention is now given to the related issue of market failure and the private sector. Findings from Knott and Hammond (2007:100) indicate that '[s]everal different aspects of production and exchange can lead to inefficient outcomes'. According to Knott and Hammond (2007:100), inefficient outcomes can be produced as a result of (1) increased transaction costs, (2) intended or unintended external effects imposed on third parties, (3) the underprovision of appropriate and supportive public goods, (4) monopolisation of an industry by a single firm, and (5) information asymmetries in transactions. Amplifying the last point, Knott and Hammond (2007:100) note that 'consumers often have limited information when making a purchase; consumers will not know whether the price charge for a product reflects the product's true value to them'. The last point has special relevance to consumers in developed countries. As these consumers increasingly demand higher technical specifications regarding products and produce, one wonders whether they are really aware of the real impact on the welfare of developing countries.

Some measure of government intervention in the economy is vital in order to prevent market failure. The modern state has, through the use of public expenditure, according to Farazmand (1999:513), 'played a pivotal role in the accelerated development of both capitalism and globalization'. What about Africa where a fully functioning private sector on the same scale as the developed countries is still very far from being realised? Haruna (2004:194) notes that 'without well developed private and nonprofit sectors', Ghana opted for 'large–scale state intervention'. It is hard to fault such a strategy given the circumstances. Such intervention should be selective and appropriate. Jackson (2001:7) cautions for instance that '[b]ecause of the extensive scope of market failures the government could potentially intervene in almost every sphere of life'.

The need for governments to take a proactive 'stewardship and regulatory' role in the market place is emphasised by Bayliss and Hall (2002:4), who note that with such interventions 'there is a risk that informal private markets may provide low–quality services'. Bayliss and Hall (2002:4) conclude that by implication 'private sector options should not be pursued where government stewardship is not able to enforce quality levels'. There is therefore a supervisory role for government as part of a delegation of responsibilities in identified technical support areas. With reference to the provision of specialised technical support services in developing countries, Goonatilake and Kaeser (2006:5) argue that these are often 'considered as public goods as they don't exist sufficiently in many developing countries'. However, they (Goonatilake & Kaeser, 2006:5) acknowledge that, in an ideal situation, the private sector could take responsibility for such service provision as product testing, inspection and enterprise systems certification and even 'consumer protection'. Such consumer protection testing and inspection, even in developed countries, is normally undertaken by the public sector owing to the legal consequences of a non–conforming product. Lack of compliance to national regulations can lead into sanctions, ranging from product withdrawal to prosecution, fines and possible jail sentences. The reluctance under such circumstances to utilise data generated by the private sector can be understood. Another issue concerns the lack of domestic capacity in developing countries to provide such sophisticated services from either the public or local private sector. Without suitable local measurement and/or testing capability, how can the integrity of the data that is provided with a product or produce that is presented for import be trusted? Goonatilake and Kaeser (2006:7) raise the significant question of how one determines 'the impact or the cost and benefits of local, internationally recognized compliance infrastructure and services compared to the outsourcing of such services to foreign providers'.

In Africa, the issue of local provision of SQAM supportive technical infrastructure is increasingly important in order to support exports. South Africa is fortunate enough to possess an appropriate technical support infrastructure that is already well advanced, even compared to some developed countries. Outside South Africa, present day African activity in the area of conformity assessment largely relies on strengthening the under–developed infrastructure of the various publicly funded, national Bureaus of Standards. The assessment of their respective country's needs is largely left to the staff of such entities normally based on reaction to a particular export crisis. 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 sustainable private sector capacity. Such a situation normally leads to the creation of specialised public capacity that impedes future creation of similar capacity in the private sector. Although the scenario is ostensibly driven by perceived market failure, the solutions are not sustainable in the longer term owing to limited public funds and marketability of the requisite technical expertise.

3.3.3 Legislative policy

A suitable policy normally precedes the commencement of any public sector activity. Cloete (1994:60) is even more emphatic, arguing that 'nothing can be done' in the public sector 'before a policy on it has been accepted by the legislature or other competent institution'. In fact, according to Cloete (1994:60), only after such a policy 'has been provided and objectives declared' can the 'other generic administrative processes' commence. Simon, et al. (1950:10) declare that '[a]ctivities of a government agency are usually authorized by a statute'. The same view is shared by Pfiffner and Presthus (1967:6) who add that such is usually the case 'in theory at least'. The same authors (Pfiffner & Presthus, 1967:6) note that the 'passion for accountability gives public administration much of its distinctive character'. A potential problem as far as 'important and complex policy fields' where 'there is little or no accumulated experience to build on' is identified by Fesler (1980:4). Some discretion is required, according to Fesler (1980:5), in such circumstances in order to minimise the need for 'frequent returns to the legislature for enactment of new language'. Cloete (1994:65) also supports such a flexible approach and points out that 'the administrative executive institutions have to apply laws and they are in the best position to observe whether the laws have shortcomings'. Such a legislated flexibility for public institutions needs to be carefully managed. Rainey, Backoff and Levine (1976:239) remind us that 'public organizations are perceived as being owned by the state and citizens'. Such a perception, they (Rainey, et al., 1976:239) continue, creates peculiar expectations amongst the citizenry who have 'rights and expectations they do not have in relation to private organizations'.

The often conflicting relationship between policies created in one part of the world compared to those in another is also an issue. An example is the sophisticated environmental legislation and policies that are increasingly evident in Europe and the Americas. The majority of countries in Africa have inherited the public administration systems created for them by former colonialists. These systems were not designed or implemented with industrial growth for the benefit of Africa in mind. The focus was rather what could usefully be provided by the colony for the benefit of the 'mother country'. Deeper understanding of some of the unintended consequences that previously unfettered industrialisation has produced is a relatively recent phenomenon. One of the many complications in the drafting and implementing of such environmental legislation, together with the related topic of concluding associated international agreements, is highlighted by Lothe (2001). Lothe (2001:198) points out that 'environmental legislation influences the competitiveness of industries' and that 'lenient environmental policies could therefore be interpreted as "hidden" or "implicit" subsidies to producers, making a country's industry more competitive because the producers are able to sell their products at the world markets at prices that may not reflect the true costs of production'. There is a compelling logic to the argument but it produces even more questions, such as: Who determines such true costs and on what basis? How would the errant producers or legislators be identified and then brought to account? If this activity is to be part of bi– or multinational trade agreements there are already some more fundamental problems.

The creation of public policy that appropriately considers both national and global perspectives is an important first step. It is also vital that this is backed by detailed implementation plans, including the role of the private sector with the provision of appropriate initial public funding if required. The same sentiments are evident in a speech by the Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry for South Africa, (Davies, 2006a:1) who stated '[a]mong the themes, which we will be emphasising in our new approach to industrial policy, will be the need for government to facilitate and encourage all stakeholders to engage in a process of self discovery. Self discovery needs to…lead to the identification of key action plans needed to take our sectors from where they are to where we need them to be'. Such action plans will obviously need to consider the area of TBT that confront the various targeted industrial sectors together with Sanitary and Phyto–Sanitary (SPS) issues related to agricultural produce. Once these issues have been clearly identified, a detailed plan can be formulated to address them. This would include the use of existing technical support capacity, the strengthening of such, where appropriate, as well as the creation of new capability where required.

The need for African countries to reassess Industrial and Environmental strategies and associated legislative policies is highlighted by Peet (2006). According to the same study (Peet, 2006:32), the journey towards sustainable development will entail several key interventions. Three key interventions are highlighted. The first is a suitably integrated industrial development and environmental policy. Such a policy should be based on a thorough and integrated evaluation of the industrial sectors potential to make a positive contribution to socio–economic growth. The evaluation should also ensure that potential positive benefits are suitably weighed against negative environmental impacts, and be based on a deep understanding of what is actually and realistically possible given the means that are available. The second key intervention is the need for partnership and ownership in the formulation and implementation of both the integrated policy and associated strategy. Successful interventions would require that all relevant stakeholders have a voice and shared ownership in the vision, strategy and implementation. Civil society should be assisted to actively participate in trade policy issues. The private sector must be actively encouraged to assist in shaping the emerging rules of the market, both domestic and foreign. They have an important role in moderating the content of international standards as coordinated by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and private sector standards activity where possible. The last key element is the need for strong implementation capability and capacity. A major enabler is the creation of a strong and cohesive enabling environment for domestic Regulatory, Standards, Metrology and Accreditation institutions that includes appropriate direction, capacity building and feedback/evaluation mechanisms. A leading role needs to be identified for these selected domestic trade facilitating institutions in setting an appropriate stage for industry with the selective use of incentives and consequences to guide the desired behaviour. The outputs from these technical support institutions should not only positively contribute to improving the domestic situation but also assist government as it engages in international negotiations in related areas. The remaining element, namely capability and capacity to administer policy, will now be specifically addressed.

3.3.4 Administration of policy

Once national policies and plans have been established, the next and perhaps the most important aspect identified previously is who should be responsible for implementation. Mukamunana and Kuye (2005:595) point out that ‘implementation is a complex political process that involves a number of variables that have to be controlled' in order to be successful. Pillay (2005:1) argues that '[i]f you have rules and no one follows them, it doesn't matter how rigorous a process you have on paper'. Given the African context of the research, Mlambo's (2005:572) specific focus for regulatory intervention is perhaps understandable when he states that 'countries will need to implement regulatory reforms that are more clearly focused to promote competition, which is important for attracting foreign investment'. Such specificity is challenged by Prizzia (2001:461) who insists that '[o]ne size will not usually fit all and it requires careful consideration, the impact of social as well as economic factors on the affected community to achieve the right balance'.

Public institutions, according to Altenburg and von Drachenfels (2006:408), 'should define targets and ensure independent monitoring and evaluation of performance, but leave service delivery to private providers or business associations, whenever possible'. They (Altenburg & von Drachenfels, 2006:408) do however concede that 'it is important to stimulate competition among providers, encourage market–based solutions and enhance the accountability of public service providers'. With reference to the study of public policy implementation, Pressman and Wildavsky (2004:342) note that owing to inherent complexities the 'separation of policy design from implementation is fatal'. The same issue is raised by Friedman (2004). Research by Friedman (2004:43) found implementation was being 'obstructed by [the] policy makers' failure to calculate the political consequences of particular policy options and the likely impact of these on people'.

In the search for greater efficiencies in delivering public goods, many have looked to the private sector for possible sources of inspiration and best practice. Rounthwaite and Shell (1995:55) have found that 'deliverers of services traditionally provided within the public sector are increasingly being exhorted to adopt business practices'. Davis (2006:170) also avers that 'there has to be a new model to direct public business that incorporates the principles that drive private sector success while recognizing the distinct nature of public enterprise'. From a local perspective, Mubangizi (2005:642) insists that 'there needs to be a fundamental change in how public service delivery has traditionally been done by the state', and suggests that parties 'other than the state has to do it'. A complication has been identified by authors such as Fox and Maas (1997:3) and Allison (2004:410). They stress the difference in approach between the private sector, which addresses the needs of a self–selected group of specific customers, and the public sector, which must look after the various needs of a group of citizens. Adopting a 'business' approach to the provision of specialised technical support functions could easily create a scenario where only those services that would realise a profit in the short term would be serviced by the private sector. Technical infrastructure requirements identified as part of national strategic imperatives, but not profitable, could be placed in jeopardy unless public funded organisations and appropriate ongoing funding, were made available to cater for them.

Problems that exist in balancing the need to provide better public services against the need for appropriate accountability are discussed by Diale (2005). Diale (2005:55) joins Moe (2004:473) in expressing concerns about the weakening of political accountability when public functions are contracted to a private entity. Research by Moe (2004:475) has identified that in two centuries of American administrative history the majority of corruption cases 'involved contracts with private providers to perform a public service'. Bloomfield (2006) offers, perhaps, some insight into why this might be so. Bloomfield (2006:406) declares that companies 'do not survive by focusing on the public interest'. He (Bloomfield, 2006:406) contends that private companies are almost obliged to ensure that the government takes as much of the 'contract risk as possible'.

Given the many complications that have already been identified, it is no wonder that Haruna (2004:204) asserts that the 'question of the appropriate role of the public sector and therefore of public administration is a contentious one'. While recognising that '[s]tates have a major role to play in promoting economic growth and development', Ojienda (2005:9) also notes that 'many governments lack the capacity to fulfil this role'. The same author (Ojienda, 2005:9) reports that 'many countries lack the necessary policy and regulatory frameworks for private sector led growth'. Haruna (2004:203) cautions against the 'indiscriminate dismantling of the state' because of the real possibility of 'dire consequences for the public good'. Jackson (2001:9) counters such an argument by asserting that '[w]hatever tasks are assigned to the public sector they must be conducted efficiently and effectively'. Marais (1991:223) offers some historical perspective to Jackson's argument based on the work of Max Weber, regarding bureaucracy in the German civil service of the 1880s. Noting that the civil service increased in size and 'had to be staffed by persons who were not suitable for such work', Weber found that these staff members would 'fall back on application of fixed rules rather than innovation and originality (Marais, 1991:233).

Common developing country administrative patterns identified by Heady (Jreisat, 2002:131) begin with conscious efforts to imitate modern Western bureaucracy rather than developing a more indigenous public administration knowledge base. Problems with implementing ideas that are foreign to local culture are further exacerbated by a shortage of trained managers with technical and managerial capabilities. Such a shortage is normal despite high levels of unemployment. The lack of a production–orientation with much activity directed toward the realisation of goals other than programme objectives adds to the difficulty. Undue formalism in such structures often results in widespread discrepancies between form and practice. Lastly, Heady points to 'unreasonably generous amounts of operational autonomy' due to 'lack of transparency and poor institutional control' (Jreisat, 2002:131).

With regard to the issue of reforming the civil service, Caulfield (2006:21) notes that a common theme in state capacity building has been the creation of 'a more flexible, performance–oriented civil service'. Such efforts have resulted in the establishment of 'task–specific agencies' that are separate from government departments. According to Caulfield (2006:21), 'these agencies are output focused, have certain managerial autonomies, are in principle self financing, and engage in "performance contracting" with their parent ministries'. The same author (Caulfield, 2006:21) notes that the 'countries adopting this model of reform are concentrated in South and East Africa but also include Ghana'.

3.3.5 Technical regulations

Responsible governments want to seize the benefits of globalisation for their nationals, that is, larger markets and greater income for local industry and lower prices for domestic consumers. The challenge is to achieve such objectives whilst limiting the unintended consequences of such action, such as higher safety risks, due to inferior quality imported goods, for the local consumer. One way to do this is to create and enforce suitable regulations including technical regulations. So how might Government discharge its responsibility as far as accountability for ensuring that an enabling domestic environment is created and maintained to facilitate export led growth? Pongsiri (2002:490) claims that 'regulation is a key element to maintain competitive market discipline on public service provisions in developing countries'. Henderson and McGloin (2004:392) emphasise the need 'for the establishment of a legal framework involving a complex mixture of regulatory activity' and continue 'these legal frameworks function to reduce opportunistic tendencies'. Jackson (2001:8) argues that government has a distinct role in 'establishing and maintaining the institutional infrastructure which defines the rules of the game for a civil society'. Thoenig (2007:92) expands on the need for government to 'generate and implement prescriptions' as part of the definition of the rules of the game. The same author (Thoenig, 2007:92) argues that government should also 'define how the game has to be played: who is legitimate to participate [and] what are the acceptable agendas'.

Another vital role for governments is to ensure that appropriate national remedies exist when established rules are ignored. According to Thoenig (2007:92), governments need to determine 'which sanctions to apply in case of deviations'. All of these activities need careful consideration of both the intended outcome and the possible consequences. The need for prudent circumspection was identified by Woodrow Wilson ([1887] 1988:12) who cautioned that '[w]hatever hold of authority state or federal governments are to take upon corporations, there must follow cares and responsibilities that will require not a little wisdom, knowledge, and experience'. Wilson ([1887]

1988:12) also argued that '[s]uch things must be studied in order to be well done'.

The most liberal advocates of free market economies agree, according to research by Kotler and Armstrong (1993: 78), that '[w]ell–conceived regulation can encourage competition and ensure fair markets for goods and services'. The problems with the 'unfettered involvement of private enterprise' in establishing transparent norms for the global market place are also highlighted by Gray (2002). Gray (2002:7) points out that 'the free market that developed in Britain in the mid–nineteenth century did not occur in fact by chance. It was an artefact of power and statecraft. In Japan, Russia, Germany, and the United States throughout decades of American protectionism, state intervention has been a key factor in economic development'. If the present day global environment has been so carefully crafted over such a long time period to serve the purposes of a few developed countries, the remedies for re dress by developing countries cannot be expected to be either simple or short term.

On the need for, and purpose of, competition, Jackson (2001:13) argues that it 'protects against monopoly. But how effective is this protection in practice? Not very – that is why it is necessary to have regulatory regimes.' Given that government regulation in some form is required in each state, what should African governments be learning in this regard? According to the OECD, there is much still to do. Extensive research by the OECD (2005:15) amongst its exclusively developed country membership has identified six principles of efficient regulation which 'respect the diversity of national preferences and regulatory objectives while fostering market openness'. These are (1) transparency of regulations coupled with openness of regulatory decision–making, (2) non–discrimination, (3) avoidance of unnecessary trade restrictiveness, (4) use of internationally harmonised measures or standards, (5) streamlined conformity assessment procedures, and (6) vigorous application of competition principles (OECD, 2005:15). Good regulatory practice can contribute to the effective implementation of the TBT Agreement; the WTO committee on TBT (WTO TBT, 2003a:2) have noted, 'in the avoidance of unnecessary obstacles to trade in the preparation, adoption and application of technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures'.

Several years of experience in Europe has prompted the European Union to prescribe rules for the creation of product legislation as part of improving their internal market. A recent decision of the European Parliament (European Union, 2008c:83) requires that such legislation should 'limit itself to the expression of essential requirements'. The same decision (European Union, 2008c:83) further states that such requirements 'should be worded precisely enough to create legally binding obligations'. Further amplification to drafters of legislation is given in that such requirements 'should be formulated so as to make it possible to assess conformity with them' (European Union, 2008c:83). The last requirement is very important. Transparent requirements for conformity against regulations obviously assist those who would wish to access the European market from other parts of the World. In Europe for instance (European Union, 2008c:84), the responsibility for proving conformity of a product to the requisite legislation is 'the obligation of the manufacturer alone'. A similar methodology is also evident in the United States.

At bodies such as the WTO, the United States continually emphasise their preference for Suppliers Declaration of Conformity (SDoC), which is one method of proving conformity. The third triennial review of the TBT agreement (WTO TBT, 2003a) by the committee on TBT, summarised these preconditions. In order to be effective, the committee (WTO TBT, 2003a:7) noted, SDoC needs to be supported by 'effective product liability laws, well developed market surveillance systems with appropriate resources and enforcement powers, penalties for false/misleading declarations, appropriate incentives to encourage producers/suppliers' compliance and consumer redress'. These important and sophisticated pre–conditions for SDoC effectively preclude its use by all African states, including the most developed such as Nigeria and South Africa. An example of the successful and judicious use of regulation in support of trade liberalisation is given in the case of the South African motor industry. The OECD report previously referred to (2005:16) notes that government driven reform resulted in specialisation in the domestic industry which resulted in the local production of 'auto components and vehicles that were internationally competitive by facilitating the incorporation of key auto components that could not be efficiently produced domestically'.

Safety and other specified characteristics of goods and commodities supplied to the general market are important factors. Can such an important activity be left to the discretion of suppliers alone? De Bruijn and Dicke (2006:719) assert that the 'state is responsible, either directly or indirectly, for safeguarding substantive public values such as universal services, continuity, quality of service, affordability, user and consumer protection'. This has important consequences considering the role of conformity assessment service provision. Many of the aspects identified by De Bruijn and Dicke are normally codified in either standards or national technical regulations. Satisfactory and appropriate proof is therefore required of proven conformance to such requirements. Peet and Koch (2005:8) point out that '[t]echnical regulations serve little purpose if the conformity assessment system is weak or non–existent'. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO, 1992:16) asserts that governments should insist on appropriate evidence of compliance 'irrespective of the mechanism used to make that determination'. ISO (1992:16) argues that government should never 'automatically presume compliance' against their technical regulations for they have an inherent 'responsibility to secure compliance'. The same source (ISO, 1992:16) notes that such rigour is especially important 'in the areas of health, safety and environment'.

Two important issues from the perspective of private companies are raised by Chen, Otsuki and Wilson (2006). The first (Chen, et al., 2006:4) is that the 'difference in regulations across markets can severely limit a firm's scale production capacity and affect a firm's decision in the number of export markets'. Rotherham (2007:179) and Sanetra and Marbán (2007:49) report that the difference between a technical regulation and standard is that compliance is mandatory in the former case and voluntary in the latter.

Rotherham (2007:179) also points out that '[s]tandards and technical regulations are collectively referred to as non–tariff barriers to trade'.

The second point that Chen et al. (2006:4) raise is that '[b]esides complying with standards and technical regulations, firms often experience time delays in procedures such as the inspection process and difficulty in accessing standard–related information'. According to these authors (Chen, et al., 2006:4) such 'inefficiencies may constitute significant implicit barriers to exporting firms'. During the third triennial review of the TBT agreement, the committee on TBT (WTO TBT, 2003a:2) recognised that in order to comply with the agreement, it may be necessary at the domestic level 'to establish administrative mechanisms to ensure that all relevant bodies are aware of and understand their obligations'.

The European Union (European Union, 2008a:24) considers the issue of accessibility of national technical rules concerning goods, as a key issue regarding the proper functioning of the internal European market. The problem has been addressed in Europe (European Union, 2008a:24) by requiring each member state to establish 'a system of contact points'. The system (European Union, 2008a:24) has been created in order that all enterprises can freely access information on the various national rules regarding products within Europe. The stated aim of such a system (European Union, 2008a:24) is to prevent the 'delays, costs and dissuasive effects which result from national technical rules'. The multiplicity of demands and remedies involved in addressing appropriate market liberalisation in Africa, including conformity assessment requirements, obviously requires careful thought, intelligent policy creation and coordination, appropriate governance together with focused, properly coordinated implementation activities. That it is a public responsibility is highlighted by Mills (2000:219), who states that 'in the future, globalisation will require careful consideration of the costs and benefits of bilateral and multilateral ties and the resultant allocation of resources'. What about those countries, such as in Africa, which are individually unable to exercise this responsibility but are subject to its far reaching consequences?

One such consequence is that African exporters frequently face difficulties in gaining access to foreign markets owing to requirements to have products tested and assessed in the importing country to ensure that they meet local regulatory requirements. A further complication is that under WTO rules, quotas and subsidies are not now generally allowed. Governments using quotas and subsidies, including Europe and the United States, have undertaken to phase these out according to an agreed timetable. The WTO encourages members to use tariffs (fees paid at the border) to manage market access rather than non–tariff measures. Tariffs are transparent and can be lowered as the market opens. Lower tariffs are exposing other access restrictions to developed country markets, created supposedly to protect consumers, such as increasingly sophisticated technical regulatory requirements.

An apparent and ongoing escalation in technical requirements is supported by research by Wilson & Otsuki (2004:2), which has found that 'standards and technical regulations are principally used to mitigate food, animal and plant safety risks, and to provide common norms for product characteristics. These technical requirements however can also constitute barriers to trade by imposing unnecessary costly and time consuming tests or by laying out various requirements in different markets'. With reference to the European market alone, Hoffman and Elago (2007:16) note that SPS legislation is not only 'complex and commodity based (more than 760 pages of text)' but that 'each Member State is entitled to have its own SPS requirements'. All of which leads the authors (Hoffman and Elago, 2007:16) to assert that '[t]here is a room for using SPS measures as Non–Tariff Barriers (NTB) that can prevent access into the EU market despite there being no tariffs imposed on the goods'. These requirements, that are already problematic for many countries to comply to are, according to Knott and Hammond (2007:101), difficult to meet, in addition to 'certification and other kinds of mandatory product quality standards' that may be either public or private sector driven.

3.4 THE ROLE OF STANDARDS AND CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT

3.4.1 The role and importance of standards

Rapid advances owing to globalisation have effectively made the world a smaller place which allows trading activities between geographic areas that were not previously feasible. The growth in global trade and the need to adhere to a set of uniform / common rules of trade places enormous pressures on governments, especially those of developing countries. As parties to international conventions and treaties, there is a real need for them to participate in the creation and application of international, trade related, regulations and standards intelligently and actively. Two such relevant agreements, as already mentioned, are the TBT and SPS Agreements of the World Trade Organization. During the third triennial review of the TBT agreement, the committee on TBT (WTO TBT, 2003a:6) noted 'the increasing development of international standards for conformity assessment procedures'. A submission by the ISO (WTO TBT, 2003b:1) to a subsequent 'special workshop' on TBT related technical Assistance held by the WTO committee on TBT in 2003, notes that the 'practical implementation of the Agreement by developing countries is faced by a host of problems'. The same ISO report (WTO TBT, 2003b:1) points to problems regarding 'the basic infrastructure of standardization, technical regulation and conformity assessment'. Brunsson and Jacobsson (2000:173) argue that the 'whole subject of standards – their production, distribution, and adoption – is of central importance in society today'.

The global agreement on frameworks that promote the acceptance of the equivalence of measures to prove TBT and SPS conformance was an important first step. Research by UNIDO (2006:7) has found however that despite these agreements 'exporters often face a multiplicity of requirements for different markets'. The same report (UNIDO, 2006:7) notes that 'out of a total of 67 different tests applicable to compliance for different fish and shellfish products', the Federal Drug Administration of the United States, the European Union and Japan 'all require different combinations and total number of tests'. Newfarmer and Nowak (2006:379) refer to the 'increasingly stringent official and private standards in industrialised countries' as a real threat to the efforts of developing countries to export higher value perishable produce in a sustainable way.

In theory, the availability of a voluntary standard or a technical regulation should be a welcome aid that assists producers in first understanding the needs of a certain group of customers or consumers and then supplying conforming product or produce. Rotherham (2003:3) points out that such documented requirements normally contain 'commonly accepted guidelines, rules and criteria that help to determine if a product, process or service is suitable for its intended purpose'. Rotherham (2003:3) also argues that if these requirements 'are clearly defined and easily obtained', then in theory their existence should 'enable companies to communicate quality requirements with their suppliers and customers precisely, consistently and efficiently'. Brunsson (2000:21) asserts that '[s]tandards facilitate contact, cooperation, and trade over large areas and even throughout the world'. In striving to achieve these potential benefits, Rotherham (2003:4) notes the 'growing pressure [from some quarters like multinational corporations] to harmonize the requirements at the international level through the development of international standards'. Based on experiences in Kenya, Nyangito, Olielo and Magwaro (2003:1) point to a more cynical use and assert that in 'practice, however, standards and technical regulations may be strategically used to enhance the competitive position of countries or individual firms'. Standards 'are often regarded as highly legitimate rules', according to Brunsson and Jacobsson (2000:171), who add 'even if they are produced by experts who are somewhat divorced from any democratic procedures'. Furusten (2000:83) agrees and opines that the 'knowledge underlying standards does not necessarily reflect an empirical reality'.

Even within Africa problems exist with cross border trade. A study by Qobo (2005) highlights certain TBT related issues regarding the export of goods from SADC member states to South Africa. Qobo (2005:70) points out that 'South Africa insists on South African Bureau of Standards compliance even though most SADC countries cannot always meet this requirement'. The effect, according to Qobo (2005:70), is that '[w]ittingly or unwittingly, this creates significant barriers to trade'. Findings from Chen, et al. (2006:13) suggest that 'firms that are not impacted by standards are more likely to export to multiple markets than the others'. The same report (Chen, et al., 2006:23) also explains that differing standards between countries are a major impediment for firms trying to access new markets with an existing product. Goonatilake and Kaeser (2006:2) hold that both international standards and the related conformity assessment systems used to prove conformance to such standards 'make an important contribution to the global economy'. They (Goonatilake & Kaeser, 2006:2) contend that these two related mechanisms 'improve the efficiency of production and facilitate the conduct of international trade'. The other side of the same coin is addressed by UNIDO (2006:6) who point out that 'standards and technical regulations drawn up by individual countries to protect health and the environment, as well as to ensure quality and safety, can also act as technical barriers to trade'. International standards can make a vital contribution to the global economy, according to the same UNIDO (2006:6) report, because of improvements in efficiency and the related reduction in costs. As a result of such proven benefits, UNIDO (2006:6) argues that 'compliance with standards has become a requisite for the expansion of inter–regional and international trade'.

Not all share the prevailing view on either the use of internationally harmonised standards or even on how their future use and content could be improved. Some private and public sector actors want to exercise control by creating their own specific standards, in the private sector, or technical regulations, in the public sector. Research into environmental standards by Cosbey (2004:15) has found that standards can be created by governments, private buyers, or non–governmental labelling organisations. Cosbey (2004:15) notes that the standards themselves are usually written either about manufacturing Processes or Production Methods (PPMs) or a combination of the two. Standards can alternatively focus on desirable product characteristics. The Sanitary and Phyto–Sanitary (SPS) committee of the WTO (2007) that is responsible for issues such as food safety has also identified the growing popularity of so–called ‘private standards’, and attributes this to ‘a variety of factors’ WTO (2007:1). The global expansion of food service companies and the relatively recent expansion of large supermarket chains into food retailing both nationally and internationally has encouraged direct contracts between suppliers and retailers. Such direct interaction has accelerated the vertical integration of supply chains. The mitigation of food safety risks coupled with ever increasing legal requirements for companies to adequately demonstrate the application of ‘due diligence’ has led to the codification of specific minimum standards in such buyer/seller relationships and hence the creation of private standards.

Given that there are no signs that globalisation is slowing down and that the global populace has an ever increasing appetite for the material benefits that it delivers, how can such demands be addressed continuously in a way that protects the international consumer? Research by UNIDO (2002:2) found that ‘the worldwide stock of standards and technical regulations is well above 100,000 and…growing rapidly’. The same report (UNIDO, 2002:2) states that ‘in many cases’ such standards and technical regulations ‘have become a real hurdle to increasing developing country exports’. Owing to the vast improvements in transport and communication, African fresh produce producers now have the ability to sell their produce directly into large supermarkets in Europe. European consumers of fresh fruit and vegetables are simultaneously being encouraged to make purchasing decisions based on health and sustainability criteria, the quality of which is confirmed by sophisticated, and expensive, certification schemes. The importance of suppliers addressing the requirements of private standards is highlighted by Brown and Sander (2007). Inclusion in such a potentially lucrative supply chain is dependent, according to Brown and Sander (2007:iii), on continual compliance to the ‘stringent private standards’ imposed by such supermarkets. Najam and Robins (2001:58) note that while developing country participation at institutions such as ISO can be addressed as part of capacity building projects, private standards are ‘often confidential documents that suppliers have little chance of influencing’. Where private standards become the industry norm, the WTO (2007:3) report that ‘the choice of whether or not to comply with a voluntary standard becomes a choice between compliance or exit from the market'. Some of the concerns highlighted by the WTO with regard to both the 'content of' and 'compliance with' private standards are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Examples of concerns related to private standards (WTO, 2007:4)

Concerns with the content of private standards	Concerns related to compliance with private standards
Multiplication of private standard schemes both within and between markets	Cost of third party certification, particularly for small and medium sized enterprises and farmers in developing countries
'Blurring' of official SPS measures with private standards	Requirements of some private schemes to use only specified certification bodies
Relationship of private standards with the international standard setting bodies referenced under the SPS Agreement	Lack of equivalence between schemes leading to repetition of certification audits
Scientific justification for certain Process and Production Method (PPM) requirements	Lack of recognition of certificates issued and/or lack of recognized certification bodies in developing countries

Dealing directly with producers, based on successful certification, supermarkets are now cutting out large sectors of the supply chain. The African producer is however still left with the largest risk until the produce is sold. The benefits of such rationalisation are obviously not being distributed in an equitable way. This is problematic as governments have little input into such private contractual arrangements. A possible solution would be for the creation of trans border trading rules and associated regulations to protect both the developed country consumer and the developing country provider.

Although this suggestion is a clear interference in the principles of the free market, some intervention is required or the present day inequalities will only be aggravated. The issues concerning compliance or, to use the more correct terminology, conformity to standards and technical regulations are the subject of the next section.

3.4.2 The need to prove conformity to standards

The sustainable provision of private and public funded conformity assessment and the associated enabling technical infrastructure are an important component in creating holistic solutions for addressing TBT and SPS issues. Such issues are already problematic for the agricultural and fledgling industrial output of developing countries. There are important consequences regarding both the domestic provision and non provision of conformity assessment services in the developing countries of Africa. These questions logically lead to the issue of what is driving the need for proving conformity to standards.

In order to better understand the complexities of proving conformance to a standard, a fundamental need is to establish whether one is confronted with state mandated protection of health and safety that is normally addressed by mandatory compliance with technical regulations. Rotherham (2003:4) argues that, in many cases, developed country standards and technical regulations address issues concerning 'environmental protection or safeguarding human health and safety'. The non compliance by an importer to such requirements could lead not only to financial loss but may also result in prosecution. There could also be a need to address the quality compliance or environmental concerns and/or trade related issues that are usually contained in voluntary standards. Proven non compliance in such a case could result either in substantial financial loss or reputational risk or both. A practical example of the risks borne by developing country producers exporting fresh produce to developed country markets is given by Sawhney (2005). Sawhney (2005:329) notes a 'marked shift in trade towards fresh food' by developing countries owing to increased demand from developed countries. The increased demand has also created an accompanying need for customers in developed countries to be assured of the safety and quality of the produce originating in developing countries. Sawhney (2005:329) points out that 'food safety and quality aspects in trade became important since fresh food is more prone to certain microbiological contamination'. He (Sawhney, 2005:329) reports that concerns about food such as abnormal pesticide and drug residues and genetically modified content increased the need for competent and sophisticated testing procedures and capacity. There is no sign that this trend is slowing down; in fact the opposite is true. Given the nature of the test item, local capacity and capability in the developing country of origin are crucial. If the producer has to export to the developed country before testing is undertaken, a negative result would not only condemn the whole consignment but, owing to the costs involved in reshipping back to the country of origin, a substantial financial loss is borne by the exporter.

Domestic testing capability allows local producers an option to divert a non conforming product into the local market where some of the initial investment may be recovered. There is also another reason for wanting to ensure that non conforming produce is not shipped to the developed country markets. A direct result of such heightened awareness is mentioned by Vermeulen and Ras (2006) in a South African context. These authors (Vermeulen & Ras, 2006:252) cautions that 'a poor or unsafe product, if tracked back to a local grower, not only tarnishes the reputation and reduces the prospects of future marketing for that grower as an individual producer'. One need look no further than the total ban in Europe of British beef for evidence that the market does not always discriminate against the individual supplier but sometimes against an entire country. There are many such cases in Africa that should convince one that this is a shared national and regional responsibility.

A study by Abbot, et al. (1999:7) identifies a definite 'growth in the volume and range of internationally traded goods affected by environmental criteria'. Research by Cole, Rayner and Bates (1998) gives significant insights into why this is so. Their study (Cole, et al., 1998:346) concentrates on the emission of four specific air pollutants together with the specific industries likely to benefit, and therefore grow, in developing countries based on trade agreements reached at the World Trade Organization during the 'Uruguay Round'. Cole, et al. (1998:346) found significant 'increases in emissions of [the specified]…pollutants' due to the high pollution intensities associated with the output from the specified sectors. Such research outcomes are not unique in reaching such conclusions. Bhalla (2002:43) notes that '[g]lobalization affects the environment in several ways'. Another side effect is identified by Chen, et al. (2006:3) who contend that the 'rising challenge in meeting complex technical regulations by exporters has also led to a rise in trade disputes centering on these issues'. The reason why such technical criteria should lead to trade disputes is provided in a study by Thoburn (2000). The need to comply with international environmental standards, according to Thoburn (2000:13), 'affects the competitive climate because compliance costs are imposed on enterprises, and regulatory costs on governments'. The major problem identified by Thoburn (2000:13) is that '[t]hese costs could result in the loss of share in overseas markets'. The same investigation (Thoburn, 2000:13) concludes that '[c]ompliance costs are likely to be greater in the short run since they involve immediate investment expenditure, and are greater for some industries than others'. One might ask if this is purely a private sector issue. If the public sector has a role, then what might that be for a specific government(s) and its associated public infrastructure?

An increase in customer support for 'environmentally–friendly' products and practices in some countries is identified by Harris (2007). Harris (2007:59) argues that such an increase is linked to concern 'regarding the implications of global warming and the currently unsustainable level of exploitation of…finite resources'. A special report by *The Economist* (2006:71) points out that 'environmental concerns, rather than health benefits, are now cited by British consumers as their main justification for buying organic food'. Interestingly, the same report (*The Economist*, 2006:71) notes that 'there is no clear evidence that conventional food is harmful or that organic food is nutritionally superior'. That such concern might be concentrated within a certain segment of the global population is noted by Laird (2001:471) who reports that 'the quality of environment is appreciated more by the wealthier'. Melser and Robertson (2005:51) identify another but related issue, namely health and safety labelling. Commenting on the effectiveness of health labels, they (Melser & Robertson, 2005:51) argue that success 'depends on a consumer's willingness to pay a premium to protect their own well–being'. Moving to the environment, the same authors (Melser & Robertson, 2005:51) note that success depends on the 'consumers' willingness to protect the environment [which] depends implicitly on consumers' desires to contribute to the wellbeing of others as the environment is a shared resource'. Such an unselfish purchasing decision would suggest a better informed section of the global population with sufficient income to be able to afford the luxury of this type of discretionary purchasing. Unfortunately there was no further information available to allow more accurate segmentation of the composition of such a group of consumers.

Increased demand for quality products in general, as well as specialised "offerings" such as health and environmental labelling, has also raised the need to demonstrate that the quality system and/or label can be trusted. A whole system of specialised certification programs has appeared to verify such claims. Because of the costs involved in utilising such processes one wonders if there are perhaps other compelling reasons driving the need for independent certification. Two will be highlighted. The first, identified by Luken (2006:58), is that 'only with the threat of or actual enforcement of environmental standards were industrialized countries able to motivate [sic] industrial facilities to take the necessary steps to comply with environmental standards'. An independent and credible certification can greatly assist companies to prove compliance to others, be they customers or regulatory authorities. A second reason is provided by Botonaki, Polymeros, Tsakiridou, and Mattas (2006:78) who maintain that companies use such certification processes 'as a tool that protects them in an environment of distrust and as a promotion strategy that will add value to their products and justify higher prices for them'. From a South African point of view and with reference to the local wine industry, Vermeulen and Ras (2006:252) declare that 'the global wine industry has recently begun to investigate voluntary environmental initiatives'. This will put immense pressure on local producers to follow suit if they want to protect their hard won overseas market share.

Proving conformity with both the mandatory and voluntary standards of developed countries is not a trivial task. A recent decision by the European Union (European Union, 2008c:83) argues the necessity for a 'choice of clear, transparent and coherent conformity assessment procedures, restricting the possible variants'. The same decision (European Union, 2008c:83) then provides a menu for future use of European legislators of product legislation that they should employ based on 'the level of risk involved and the level of safety required'. Research by UNIDO (2006:7) refers to the need for 'establishing efficient testing, certification and accreditation mechanisms that conform to the requirements of the SPS and TBT Agreements and enjoy international recognition'. In a submission to the WTO, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO, 2003:2) points out that 'valid testing, metrology and certification services are prerequisites for the proper application of standards and technical regulations'. The same submission (ISO, 2003:2) emphasises the need for 'accreditation of certification bodies and testing and calibration laboratories to ensure that the resulting certificates are accepted in global markets'. Goonatilake and Kaeser (2006:3) emphasise the need for domestic conformity assessment capacity to 'achieve compliance at the level of exporting enterprises and/or products' and to 'prove such compliance with international market requirements in an internationally recognized manner'. Although a daunting task, the financial benefit of making such an investment in technical infrastructure is pointed out by UNIDO (2006). The UNIDO research (2006:7) indicates that 'local metrological and testing capabilities, provided they are internationally recognized, reduce the costs associated with testing products (and thus the cost of exports)'. Many developing countries are becoming increasingly aware of the trade facilitation benefits of concluding international mutual recognition arrangements especially with respect to the harmonisation of standards and mutual recognition of the competence of testing, inspection and certification activity. This recognition of domestic competence can have a very positive impact on the ability of domestic firms to conduct international trade. Part of the strategy to realise closer economic integration within Africa should therefore concentrate on the creation of an appropriate and supportive technical infrastructure.

3.4.3 The need to build appropriate capacity

A foundational issue in debates on trade, the environment and sustainable development is noted by Cosbey (2004). Cosbey (2004:7) reports that the concern was raised that 'environmental protection in developed countries would be used as a cloak to disguise protectionism'. Cosbey (2004:7) also notes that it was predicted that as tariff barriers were progressively removed 'new forms of protection might include a number of technical barriers to trade'. Time and subsequent experience has done nothing to allay these concerns. Najam and Robins (2001:51) are convinced that, if anything, it is even more polarised with 'prevailing Southern views of Northern intentions in linking trade and environment are now more aggressive than ever'.

A report by Orriss (2002:7) to a global forum of food safety regulators, held by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), points out that WTO Members 'have agreed to facilitate the provision of technical assistance to other Members'. During the third triennial review of the TBT agreement in 2003, the committee on TBT (WTO TBT, 2003a:8), emphasised 'the importance of effective technical assistance as a means of improving the implementation of the TBT Agreement'. The committee on TBT (WTO TBT, 2003a:8) identified technical assistance as 'an area of priority work'. At the same meeting, the committee noted (WTO TBT, 2003a:9) 'that TBT–related technical assistance needs fall in a wide range of areas due [sic] to the dynamic and sophisticated nature of technical regulations, standards, conformity assessment procedures and transparency procedures'. Special emphasis (WTO TBT, 2003a:10) was placed on the need to carefully select and prepare participants involved in technical assistance activity. Such care (WTO TBT, 2003a:10) was 'critical to ensure proper application and dissemination of the knowledge gained'. The role of institutional strengthening and 'the use of internal measures to complement technical assistance' and the need for monitoring, assessment and follow up of such activity was also highlighted (WTO TBT, 2003a:10). A special workshop on TBT related technical assistance organised later the same year (WTO TBT, 2003c:7) encouraged an exchange of experiences 'to allow Members to learn from the more experienced ones'. In order to ensure sustainability, the same workshop (WTO TBT, 2003c:7) stressed that a recipient government also has a responsibility 'to provide continuity and maintain adequate human resources and effective institutions'. In conclusion, the workshop (WTO TBT, 2003c:8) agreed on the need for improved coordination between donors and recipients, while noting 'the large number of players involved'. The workshop (WTO TBT, 2003c:8) also concurred that sustainability was required both in the various ongoing activities and their results. A need for feedback (WTO TBT, 2003c:8) was also required 'to allow continual improvement and adjustments to meet outstanding needs and priorities'. All of which are commendable but when discussing who might be the coordinator of such activity, the workshop (WTO TBT, 2003c:8) expressed caution about the 'limited resources of the Committee' and agreed that 'a pragmatic approach should be followed'. In spite of such global consensus on the need for continual and appropriate skills transfer, the presence of sophisticated technical requirements contained in both technical regulations and voluntary standards continue to have a major negative effect. The lack of a globally agreed coordination mechanism such as could be provided by an appropriately resourced TBT Committee is not helping.

Once basic product specifications have been met, findings from UNIDO (2006:2) illustrate that 'exporting countries have to meet the increasingly stringent requirements applied to goods in terms of quality, safety, health and the environment'. Meeting such requirements is non–negotiable for developing countries that 'have to compete in a highly demanding, rules–driven trading system' (UNIDO, 2006:2). Goonatilake and Kaeser (2006:3) mention that the sophisticated technical support infrastructure required to prove TBT and SPS compliance is present in most, if not all, developed countries. These markets are normally the destination of choice for the bulk of developing country exports. The developing countries in the main are only now realising the need for such capacity and capability. The lack of scientific and technical expertise, according to Orriss (2002:5), severely limits the ability of a country to 'fully understand or challenge…requirements introduced by other [WTO] Members'. According to Goonatilake and Kaeser (2006:3), such a large 'disparity was acknowledged when the two agreements were drafted, and therefore a special clause has been introduced to suggest that industrialized countries should provide related technical assistance if so requested'. The results of such assistance have so far been decidedly variable providing little by way of best practices for future interventions. Orriss (2002:15), for instance, opines that a 'concentrated effort is required to meet the capacity building and technical assistance needs of developing countries'. Subsequent research by Williams, Staples and Herman (2007:30) again recommends that capacity building is urgently required in developing countries to support trade and export development. They (Williams, et al., 2007:30) argue that this should focus on domestic trade officials and include training on trade regulations, standards and WTO rules. Such training is required 'to ensure that developing countries can adequately and efficiently exploit the opportunities and preferences made available to them' (Williams, et al. 2007:30). Africa has very real and urgent related needs. Nwonwu (2006:16) points out that 'Africa lags behind the rest of the developing world continents in its level of sophistication and infrastructural development'. Given the agricultural nature of a large proportion of present day exports from Africa, concerns must be raised. Chen, et al. (2006:24) declare that '[b]oth testing procedures and lengthy inspection processes constitute a greater concern to agricultural firms'.

Reasons for creating domestic technical support capacity are also provided by Sawhney (2005). With reference to foreign based certification, Sawhney (2005:335) reports that such a process 'often constitutes a significant proportion of the total cost of production' which also effectively excludes smaller firms. Abbot, et al. (1999:26) claim that '[c]ertification systems are often in their infancy and can prove prohibitively expensive if European consultants are required'. Findings by Cosbey (2004:29) support the previous authors and add a further complication, that of 'finding a different foreign certifier to “match” each desired export market – an expensive and complex prospect’. A similar view is supported by Harris (2007:50) who argues that ‘there exists a plethora of environmental certification systems’.

Specific issues that need to be considered in efforts to counter the technical difficulties confronting exporting nations are highlighted by Chen, et al. (2006). The first is initial discussion and negotiation on the type and scope of testing that is really required. Once agreement has been reached on the technical requirements, the next step is to focus on building specific technical capacity to prove compliance to the requirements contained in the standards. Chen, et al. (2006:24) assert that such activity ‘could help firms diversify their export markets and improve the stability of their sales given the uncertainty in international markets’. Rotherham (2003:2) asserts that technical support institutions such as standards bodies, metrology laboratories and accreditation bodies enable ‘producers both to establish what is required of them, and to credibly demonstrate their compliance with a wide variety of quality standards’. The last activity identified by Chen, et al. (2006:24) is the need to ‘facilitate information exchange with importing countries on standards and technical regulations’ in order to ‘stimulate [the] firms’ propensity to export’.

3.5 PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE PROVISION OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES SUCH AS CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT

Public institutions are, according to Cloete (1994:62), ‘usually established to promote the general welfare of society’. Roux (2006:125) argues that the primary purpose of the public sector is ‘to serve the public’. The primary task of public organisations asserts Bryner (2007:189) is on the one hand, ‘to implement the policies enacted by governments’. The purpose of a private business concern, on the other hand ‘is to make a profit’ (Cloete, 1994:62). Public enterprise, McGuire (2002:511) points out ‘satisfies needs’, whereas the role of private enterprise is the satisfaction of demand ‘that is, needs backed by purchasing power’. In the bulk of the literature on public administration, according to research by Pesch (2005:59), ‘the public/private distinction is conceived as a distinction between the public domain of the state and the private domain of the market'. Pesch (2005:83) contends that 'empirical manifestations of public goods and service…differs considerably among national states'. The reason for such a variation according to Pesch (2005:83), is that the 'final decision to make something a public or private good or service is not made by economists but by political decision makers'. Commenting on business and public institutions, Rainey, et al. (1976:239) note a distinguishable difference between 'the nature of goals and performance measures of the two types of organizations'. Rounthwaite and Shell (1995:55) argue that 'it is important to recognize the differences as well as the similarities between the different sectors in culture, mission and purpose'. Davis (2006:166) does not foresee too much of a problem in this regard as 'the end goals of public sector organizations have not changed; their purpose is still primarily to ensure services are provided to the public'.

A trend has been noted regarding public administrations by Prefontaine, Ricard, Sicotte, Turcotte and Dawes (2000:5) that more 'are turning to new means of collaboration for activities that were, until quite recently, their sole domain'. Findings from Marini (2000:5) clearly indicate that the change to 'market like mechanisms for the provision of public goods is increasingly a matter or rhetoric, planning, or action'. Jackson (2001:13) challenges such development and argues that many activities were originally allocated to the public sector owing to market failure. He (Jackson, 2001:13) categorically questions the wisdom of 'taking these services out of the traditional bureaucracy and confronting them with greater amounts of competition and managerial control'. Altenburg and von Drachenfels (2006:405) assert the importance of identifying services 'which can and should be provided on a market basis' versus those 'in which governments should intervene to maximize welfare'. Rasmussen, Malloy and Agarwal (2003:84) note an important difference between governments that 'want cheap and efficient service delivery' versus non–profit organizations 'driven by a strong desire to serve their clients in the best possible manner for each individual client'.

The desired end result for a project, and associated underlying assumptions, should to be clearly understood by all who are involved. Noting the use of terms such as 'public value and value–added services', Davis (2006:166) argues that their deployment in a specific context needs 'to be quantified and internalized'. Rainey, et al. (1976:233) agree that '[p]rescriptions will be no better than our understanding of the phenomena.' The same authors (Rainey, et al., 1976:233) state that proposals arguing for more deregulation would only provide the expected solutions if the 'underlying assumptions about the effects of market competition are accurate'. Smith and Wohlstetter (2006:250) see the perceived or real differences between the public and private sectors as an opportunity for the creating better arrangements. Smith and Wohlstetter (2006:250) maintain that the different perspectives brought to a problem from the two sectors enables a 'search for solutions that go[es] beyond their own limited vision of what is possible'.

The different motivational forces active within the public and private sector are highlighted by Pongsiri (2002) from a slightly different perspective. Pongsiri (2002:492) declares that public agencies 'externalize net social benefits as a result of organizational activities' and private firms 'demand adequate returns on their investments'. The fundamental differences that exist between managing in the private as opposed to the public sector have also been identified by Broadbent and Laughlin (2003:336), who contend that a profit driven, private sector supplier needing to satisfy shareholders, 'may or may not share the same public service values that might be the case if provision was [sic] exclusively made by those in the employment of the public sector'. These opinions would tend to caution against public institutions that are created to provide specialised technical supervision and are also simultaneously involved in delivering similar commercially driven services. Owing to uncertainty about the ongoing supply of public funds, there are unfortunately many such instances in Africa.

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'. An interesting development in the post–independent era of many

African states as Tawfik (2005:3) notes, is that 'state domination over economic planning and development led to a relatively weak and small private sector'. Discussing private sector involvement in restructuring and privatisation schemes in developing countries, Jreisat (2002:118) states they were, in many cases, 'ill prepared' to cope with their expected responsibilities. Research by Tawfik (2005:7) also reveals that development plans for Africa for the last ten to twenty years have concentrated on capacity building for state institutions because of the scepticism 'about the role of private sector'. Such scepticism has meant that 'no action plans were adopted to achieve this aim' (Tawfik, 2005:7). According to Kennedy and Hobohm (1999:1), there are two main drivers behind calls for greater private sector involvement: 'the failure of public sector led economic development and the rise of globalization'. Seemingly by way of explanation, Jreisat (2002:9) points out that 'most administrative systems in developing countries are caught ill prepared for the new responsibilities foisted on them by globalism'.

The wholesale and uninformed replacement of public sector practices with those of the private sector could lead to unintended consequences. Diale (2005:59) cautions that the intended beneficiaries could be left 'at the mercy of the self–interested market forces'. Liou (2001:1010) is less concerned about such an eventuality and points out that 'recent government reforms' have moved away from solely focusing on improving efficiency to a 'new focus on good governance'. All of which points to a careful balancing act by government between opening markets, and all of the issues of TBTs (already covered), providing appropriate publicly funded technical infrastructure and encouraging the private sector to take an active and increasing role, while remaining ultimately accountable to the electorate.

As part of the solution to the lack of public sector capacity and capability, Kennedy and Hobohm (1999:4) emphasise the need for African states to 'develop strong private sector enterprises that can compete effectively in world markets'. Such a task implies strong collaboration between representatives of the public and private sector at both the national and regional level. Given the need for state leadership, Haruna (2004:189) notes 'public problems are too complex and the range of transactions too extensive to warrant handling by one jurisdiction'. Explaining the need for 'multi–tiered efforts', Agatiello (2007:70) stresses that these are essential for states faced simultaneously with '[a]dopting and enforcing global, rules–based trade facilitation commitments, planning for their effective implementation' while also trying to maximize 'their development impact'. Research from Haruna (2004:189) recommends that government 'partner and collaborate rather than control civil society and the private sector'. Another important reason for such collaborative partnerships is provided by Hartzenberg, et al. (2007:3), who argue that 'in the past trade policies were developed solely by the public sector, [but] it was the private sector that actually did the trading'. In the context of Africa, the same authors (Hartzenberg, et al., 2007:3) also highlight some exceptions 'which the governments considered strategic to the country's economy'.

In order to leverage the limited capacity of the state, Fuhr (2001:421) suggests a strong focus 'on fundamental tasks' coupled with 'partnerships with the business community and civil society'. The promotion of a greater role for the private sector in delivery of goods and services on behalf of the public sector has resulted, as Jreisat (2002:9) argues, in 'shifting the responsibility of public administration in the new economy from producing and managing goods and services to facilitating and regulating economic activities'. Moving to the creation and sustainable provision of technical support infrastructure, Goonatilake and Kaeser (2006:5) contend that some of these services 'can clearly be seen as sole public goods'. Their view (Goonatilake & Kaeser, 2006:5) is motivated by the fact that in spite of an identified need, '[s]uch services would not be provided by private entities, as their character makes them unfit for a commercial operation'. By way of example, the same authors (Goonatilake & Kaeser, 2006:5) identify cases of strategic public service provision that 'are indispensable to [exporting] producers [and for local consumer protection issues]'. The thorny issue of provision of some technical support services in developing countries as a public good, when such services are privately provided in developed countries is also addressed. In theory such health and safety related compliance activity could be provided by the private sector. Goonatilake and Kaeser (2006:5) point out that 'the public sector engages in their provision as a response to a market failure, where private supply did not respond to the demand'.

All of the previously identified key characteristics point to the need for strong public leadership and implementation with appropriate governance. Given the stated focus of the private sector, there is no doubt that although this sector might be willing to participate in certain activities and roles, the overall leadership would have to be provided by the public sector. Such leadership begins with a suitable and coordinated public policy (or policies). In order for proper objectives to be set, Boron and Murray (2004:67) point out that private sector management 'has to be guided'. Brown and Sander (2007:12) have firm views on what such policies should address including, of course, the need to 'promote good business practices'. In addressing the adoption of private sector standards by developing countries, Brown and Sander (2007:12) highlight several needs and expectations. These are simplification, flexibility, mutual agreement of realistic time frames, the provision of appropriate technical and financial support, an ongoing review of purchasing practices, harmonisation of the various codes, and finally, an equal partnership between the standard creator and the developing country producers and exporters. The question is: Can such encouragement come from the market alone? Evidence is not very positive, which suggests that some sort of inter governmental agreement is required. Such an agreement would stipulate criteria for the future relationships between developed country buyers and developing country sellers together with an appropriate monitoring strategy.

PART II

3.6 AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES

3.3.3 The legacy of colonialism

Post independence in African countries many believed, according to Nwafor (2003:3), that 'the apparatus of state would be used to…generally improve the quality of life of Africans'. Birkland (2005:49) points out that 'structural and historic factors influence the making of public policy'. Such insight is axiomatic, given the African developmental context of the research. Keller (2007:47) reports that the legislation, policies and public infrastructure created under colonial rule was for specific, self–serving, purposes. Facilitating the export of primary resources for further processing in European factories is given as an example. Commenting on development activities towards the end of some of the colonial powers, Cooper (2003:5) argues that these 'never did provide the basis for a strong national economy'.

As already stated, such a self–serving colonial legacy cannot assist African states in the new global paradigm they now face. Even more problematic is that colonisers entrenched different public administration practices based on their own unique history and legal systems. A study in Africa by Caulfield (2006:25) has identified 'patterns of difference' between francophone and anglophone countries in Africa. After researching the impact on the three continents where Europeans settled or colonised, Raadschelders (2000:376) argues that 'Africa is perhaps the one that has suffered the most under the Western legacy'. With specific reference to the African public administration infrastructure, the same author (Raadschelders, 2000:376) points out that these were 'European in character and reflected a level of political development not yet reached in Africa', adding that 'Africanization was limited to replacing white colonial public servants with indigenous people'.

While European powers may have in theory handed over political control of their African colonies, Keller (2007:47) notes that they were however careful to maintain 'economic interests and influence'. In such an environment it is not difficult to understand why African rulers, according to Cooper (2003:5), 'realized early on that their own interests' were easier to align with strategies akin to those had been utilised by the former colonialists. In a similar vein, Nabudere (2002:3) also criticises African leaders who 'advance their own interests', using exactly the same methods as 'those who dominate their countries'. Cooper (2003:5) notes that such strategies created a series of 'gatekeeper states' in Africa. The main source of revenue for such states 'was duties on goods that entered and left [their] ports'. To guard such sources of revenues, Cooper (2003:5) points out that 'rules and licenses that defined who could engage in internal and external commerce' were then created and enforced. Commenting on previous unsuccessful development strategies in Africa, Tawfik (2005:1) asserts that they were 'the bi–product'. Tawfik (2005:1) also argues that such strategies need to be contextualised within 'a certain historical moment with its social, economic and political conditions as well as the dominant or leading development thought of that moment'. Such background appears to have been largely and perhaps intentionally ignored in the global clamour to harmonise rules for lowering of tariffs and opening markets. There is little wonder therefore that developing countries in Africa no longer trust the strategy promulgated by others to open their markets and let free market principles teach them how to compete globally.

African states have adjusted to life after colonial dependence with some difficulty. Using policies of creating large state owned enterprises and substituting imports with local production, as Kotze and Steyn (2003:73) point out, 'African governments allocated a strong and increasingly interventionist role for the state in industrialisation'. Research by Raadschelders (2000:377) concentrating on the first three decades after colonisers left African countries has identified three interesting characteristics. The study notes (Raadschelders, 2000:377) an 'unusually large reliance on state driven mechanisms to facilitate both economic and social development'. There is also a tendency to maintain the inherited colonial administrative structures that support 'strong centralized government' (Raadschelders, 2000:377). The existence of 'a highly politicized' and 'unrepresentative bureaucracy' in most post colonial African states is also highlighted by Raadschelders (2000:377).

Initially, African efforts to break free from the constraints imposed by their inherited public structures were largely unsuccessful. Kuye (2006:6) notes that attempts to cope with the ongoing global development of capitalist strategies led to 'uneven development in African countries'. Given their different colonial backgrounds and lack of regional coordination any other outcome was highly unlikely. According to Cooper (2003:6), the economic status of Africa today is not the result of an 'abrupt proclamation of independence' by the various states 'but from a long, convoluted, and still ongoing process'. Kotze and Steyn (2003:74) are more critical of domestic actors, arguing that Africa's problems are not due to any victimisation caused by policies associated with globalisation but 'that Africa's myriad of social, economic and political problems can be explained through a history of poor political management'.

With reference to the management of African development over the last forty years, Herbert (2004:2) contends that it was both chaotic and piecemeal. According to Herbert (2004:2), '[m]istakes have been repeated and learned lessons forgotten'. Noting that the 'citizens of today cannot be held responsible for the actions, the choices, and the values of their parents and grandparents', Raadschelders, et al. (2000:777) actively encourage today's decision makers to 'use historical knowledge to explain why they want to break away from the past'. There is ample material to assist in such a retrospective but necessary exercise if Africa is to make any progress. Such a task is not going to be easy given the rapidly changing nature of the global environment. Nzwei and Kuye (2007:202) refer to the 'come in or stay out neo–liberal trends' associated with globalisation. Such trends they (Nzwei & Kuye, 2007:202) assert have resulted in a dramatic restructuring of the global environment in which developing states are forced to operate, and that such developments are 'difficult for many African countries to ignore'. In many cases African states have been forced not only to actively reconsider their global participation but have also been given specific, normally donor or capital driven, remedies. Such remedies normally include prescriptions for the reduction of the role of the state, dismantling certain parts of the public infrastructure and promoting a larger role for the private sector using more open markets. The generic name for such interventions is structural adjustment programmes. These are dealt with in the next section.

3.3.3 Structural adjustment program[me]s (SAPs)

Structural Adjustment Program[me]s (SAPs) are, according to Haruna (2004:187), based philosophically on two foundations, neo–liberalism and managerialism. Neo–liberalism is defined by Haruna (2004:187) as the 'faith in the viability of the market'. Managerialism, according to Haruna (2004:187), is defined as the 'belief in one best way'. Haruna (2004:187) claimed that the architects of such interventions believe that it is necessary for African economies to remove 'unnecessary state intervention, and bureaucratic controls' in order for any progress to be made. Haruna (2004:187) also asserts that such a philosophical approach is grounded 'in Western belief in money, science, and instrumental rationality for improving the human condition'. Obviously one can expect problems if the strategy on which an intervention is based does not reflect the belief system or understanding of those tasked with its implementation.

Not only did SAPs not achieve the desired benefit of sustainable economic growth in Africa, but as Tawfik (2005:2) maintains, these programmes also unintentionally undermined the role of the state which 'rendered the weak states in Africa weaker'. Findings from research in Ghana prompts Haruna (2004:195) to conclude that 'reducing the size of the public sector…paralyzed the state'. The same author (Haruna, 2004:195) questions the wisdom behind such a strategy and points out that 'Asian countries grew with large, not small public sectors'. According to Mkadawire and Soludo and also Onimode (quoted by Tawfik, 2005:2) the African SAPs 'did not take into consideration that the institutions needed to perform the adjustment tasks are either weak or totally absent'.

Over forty–five years ago, Langrod (1961:89) commented sagely that ‘problems faced by most European countries today are not the same as the problems of young and underdeveloped countries’. Such wisdom has certainly stood the test of time. In the African context, South Africa, in line with many African developing countries, has targeted certain interventions as part of a broad strategy to foster economic growth and reduce unemployment. Nzwei and Kuye (2007:202) point out that although some of these policies ‘are prescribed by neo–liberalism’, they have not prevented an active state involvement in the local economy. Is this perhaps indicative of the fact that complex problems need innovative thinking based on deep local insights?

Another facet of the complexity facing those tasked with implementation of public sector reform efforts in Africa is highlighted by Raadschelders, (2000:378) who contends that although the public service in Sub Saharan States appear superficially to have been ‘Africanized or indigenized’, the underlying values systems have not changed. Raadschelders’s (2000:378) concern is that, fundamentally, the organisational values in many cases still more closely resemble those that pervade the ‘reform objectives of multi and bilateral donors’. The probable cause for such a situation is also addressed in the same research. Olowu and Adamolekun (in Raadschelders, 2000:377) note that ‘in the absence of proven local initiatives’ the wholesale transfer of foreign management practices ‘has been seen as the only viable option’. How such local initiatives might be self created, proven and funded in a sustainable way from the embryonic stage to appropriate maturation does not appear to have been addressed as part of any previous SAP initiative. Donor funded projects are normally written in accordance with strict and measurable objectives that need to be achieved within very tight time constraints. The limited time available for implementation is also not eased by the bureaucratic formalities required to ensure that the promised funding is released initially and then as a project unfolds. Such a scenario does not easily lend itself to self learning by the local participants.

3.6.3 Current issues

If African goods are to be exported in any significant way beyond the region, as has already been stated, developed nations expect proven compliance of imported agricultural products and manufactured goods, against increasingly sophisticated technical requirements, before allowing access to their markets. This expectation by developed nations that are members of the WTO is supported by an undertaking, in theory at least, to provide appropriate assistance. The members of the WTO have, according to Smaller (2006:3), 'increasingly accepted the need for trade–related technical assistance to help developing countries with the implementation of WTO commitments'. Unfortunately this acceptance has not led to any dramatic improvements on the ground. The same author (Smaller, 2006:3) notes that experience to date has shown that 'the various initiatives have had limited success and insufficient funds'. Unfortunately in the meanwhile, Nwonwu (2006:17) points out that the global trading system grows ever more sophisticated both in reach and technical depth.

The present reality is contextualised by Nwonwu (2006:17) whose findings indicate that 'Africa is still grappling with the basics of developing physical infrastructure'. Although 'Africa's interconnections are old', research by Cooper (2003:105) reports that the African share of global trade 'fell from over three percent in the 1950 to less than two percent in the 1990s'. Such a drop is even more problematic given the huge increases in global trade in the intervening forty years, as illustrated by the 2007 regional economic outlook of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for Sub Saharan Africa (IMF, 2007:49).

The reasons for such a poor performance are obviously varied and multiple. Keller (2007:48) reports that most African states have committed to embrace the process of globalisation in order to turn its outputs to their advantage. Given the evidence, there is obviously still much work to be done in this regard. Two key issues for Africa, namely poor economic policies and the need to improve political governance, are mentioned by Kotze and Steyn (2003:73). Mukamunana and Kuye (2005:600) are more direct noting that political governance, or rather the lack of it, is directly linked to 'Africa's development tragedy'. Can the blame be fairly apportioned solely to African leadership or lack thereof? Not according to Kotze and Steyn (2003:73) who also point out that African states are operating in 'an unfair international system'. The dominance of global capitalism in many and varied forms and the need for an intelligent response is also reported by Stewart (1999:103) who concludes that it will be around 'at least several generations to come'.

Given the complex task ahead and the inevitable constraints that African states will face leads Kuye (2006:11) to contend that one of the 'critical pre–requisite[s] for transitioning from survival to development' will be the 'efficient use of resources'. On the same topic, Keller (2007:49) highlights the need for a much wiser approach to resource utilisation in order 'to advance…developmental objectives'. Directive and wise leadership coupled with broad consultation and a heightened sense of urgency are also important prerequisites. One problem is where does one focus scarce resources and effort to gain maximum short term benefits that could also simultaneously assist in achieving longer term strategic objectives. According to research by Goonatilake and Kaeser (2006:1), noting that we now live in 'a world driven by innovation and technical change', they posit that success will depend on four interlinking project components. These are 'competitiveness development, the supply of public goods, incentive systems and development of institutional support capacities' (Goonatilake & Kaeser, 2006:1). Mukamunana and Kuye (2005:600) argue that in order to be successful, all such future projects in Africa will also require a serious look at and 'faster roll–out of good governance'. A large amount of trade revolves around specific goods and services. It is therefore appropriate that the areas where Africa is strong and can compete internationally are identified. A logical supportive step is to also investigate the type of work still required to move such activity towards global competitiveness.

Initial comparative advantage for African countries as a group according to Thoburn (2000:3) 'lies in agro–related industries'. Some of the difficulties in this area will now be addressed. Large European supermarkets operating in cut throat competition in their domestic market, Europe, are the cause of the same multinationals exploiting African developing country farmers. Many of the existent one sided business arrangements are unsustainable if looked at holistically and also from an environmental perspective. What is ironic is that a very different pro–environment message is used to gain market share amongst sophisticated purchasers of such produce. There is no evidence that these supermarkets intend to alter their strategy, indeed why should they with such huge mark ups and the developing country producer carrying the bulk of the risk?

Another important aspect in unlocking Africa's potential for agricultural and other exports is sustainability. Bhalla (2002:46) notes that 'certain patterns of growth and technological progress deplete natural resources more rapidly than others', which points, initially, to a considerable amount of highly specialised groundwork by experts either directly employed by the public sector or the use of private sector experts that are contracted and managed by public sector managers. Given the many other and more immediate concerns that usually confront African governments it is not surprising that the management of development in a sustainable manner is not always seen as a major priority in many African states. Part of the answer of why this might be so is provided by Caulfield (2006:16) who points to larger problems noting that 'public sector reform outcomes are severely constrained' owing in large part to 'weak state capacity'. Another important factor that needs to be considered is the 'African history of autonomous bodies' (Caulfield, 2006:16). Learning from recent African development history is also strongly recommended by Cooper (2003). Findings from Cooper (2003:99) remind one that industrialisation has been touted by 'economists and political leaders' already 'in the 1950s and 1960s' as 'the cure' for many of the fundamental problems that still exist. As Cooper (2003:99) reiterates: 'It didn't work out so simply.'

The trade and development report for 2006 published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2006:ix) notes that 'external influences over national policy targets have become stronger and the trade–offs between internal and external objectives have intensified'. At issue is that the global trading environment has already been largely created and many of the ground rules are already agreed. Many argue that some restructuring is now required in order to promote economic growth for all, rather than for some, at the expense of others. This view is shared by the former South African President (Thabo Mbeki) who, according to Mills (2000:303), believes that 'what South Africa is able to achieve' is very dependent on 'the manner in which South Africa and the international community alike can reform the global landscape'. Mbeki's view is supported by Gibson (1997:239) who states that although 'there will be very tough economic competition…if we are going to mutually prosper, we are going to have to co–operate to create a global economy that works'. To which one might add, for the benefit of all, not some.

There is an urgent need to determine whether there is a more cost effective way to use public infrastructure to support African exporters. Ngema (2005:11) argues that 'lack of capacity not only has local or national consequences, it has regional, continental and global consequences as well'. A major difficulty, according to Ngema (2005:11), is that it is just 'not possible to withdraw from such processes until we have built the capacity for effective engagement'. Experience has already shown that technical infrastructure capacity building and strengthening projects are by no means short term in nature. They require large amounts of ongoing capital, operational expenditure and skilled public and private implementation capacity.

According to Batley (2004:53), '[p]ublic service reform is generally complicated by the fact that public service officials are both the agents and the objects of change'. Such reform projects in developing countries are, according to Batley (2004:53), 'further complicated by an additional set of external actors in the shape of international financial institutions and donors'. All of which suggests the need to create suitable mechanisms to guide the implementation of public policy so that it addresses real domestic and regional needs. Such guidance should also ideally assist in limiting the impact of non value adding or even potentially corruptive influences. With specific reference to the public institutions tasked with delivering conformity assessment related support, it is interesting to note that the majority of the relevant institutions in South Africa now have an independent Board of Directors. In terms of good corporate governance, each of these Boards has a delegated responsibility to direct activities for the ultimate benefit and sustainability of both the specific entity and, hopefully, for the country as a whole. These two ideals are not always mutually supportive. What would assist in reducing suboptimisation and other unintended consequences would be the creation of an overarching strategy to counter the 'silo' effect that is unfortunately still prevalent in many instances. The recent publication of a South African industrial policy is one such instrument that would allow a much wider perspective than was possible until recently in South Africa. Unfortunately, there are still problems in the rest of the region in this regard. The existence of some commonly agreed regional direction would also satisfy the concerns of Jreisat (2004:1004) who argues that '[g]ood performance is inescapably related to satisfaction of criteria'. Earlier research by Jreisat (2002:113) into problems facing developing countries has identified some important generic pointers. Jreisat (2002:113) points out that sustainable national development is premised on empirical understanding of local political, administrative, and economic realities. Public decisions must be made as transparent as possible together with continuous affirmation of the accountability of public officials and institutions. Such transparency would assist the collective and well orchestrated efforts that are required of both private and public institutions in implementation. The need to employ appropriate and relevant technologies in creative ways aimed at the improvement of productivity is also required. Finally, Jreisat (2002:113) points out that 'appropriate and ongoing application of proven scientific and technological methods is both unavoidable and should be encouraged in order to achieve growth and increase production'.

3.7 CHALLENGES FACING AFRICAN STATES WISHING TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN THE GLOBAL TRADING ENVIRONMENT

3.7.1 International participation

African and other developing countries cannot continue to argue about the fairness of the international trading rules, while simultaneously being further excluded and marginalised owing to their effects. Welch and Wong (1998:46) argue that one such effect will be the reduction in the amount of autonomy 'previously enjoyed by national bureaucracies'. Through 'the interplay of deregulation and technology', Fuhr (2001:425) postulates that 'new options for economic and political participation become available'. Such opportunities should be investigated at both regional and international level with the aim of modifying the present rules in order to gain new advantages. If Africa is absent from such global debate and consensus building, it can only be to the detriment of the region.

There needs therefore to be a coordinated and continuous African presence and voice where possible, in organisations that make such rules such as the WTO and the OECD. This is by no means an easy task. Successful participation in organisations such as the WTO according to research by Mbekeani (2005:40) requires 'a number of key competencies' and 'involves a range of national institutions'. Similar representation at global treaty organisations such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the *Bureau International Poids et Measures* (BIPM), responsible for global scientific metrology, and the International Organization for Legal Metrology (OIML) needs careful consideration. Membership and appropriate representation in the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) are also essential if Africa is serious about actively contributing to the process rather than remaining a victim of the various and often uncoordinated outcomes of such deliberations.

In order to make their presence felt it is vital, according to Kotze and Steyn (2003:113), that African participants adopt 'a more active posture on the principle of equality and mutual benefit'. Kotze and Steyn (2003:113) stress the need to 'utilise the contradictions present among Western countries and take the opportunity to stress their own interests'. Although some African representation is already evident in such international forums, the use of 'consultation, consensus, and collaboration', which Haruna (2004:201) highlights as a unique African trait in the process of 'indigenous decision–making' will require time and effort. With reference to experience in Ghana with 'administrative globalization', Haruna (2004:195) declares that 'public problems are far too complex to be manipulated scientifically to arrive at "right" answers'. Another important issue is reported by Rutgers and Schreurs (2000:621) who argue that '[p]ublic administration is still primarily a national undertaking'. All of which underpins the need initially for coordinating national strategies, policies and implementation with a national view that is used first in regional interactions. The results of such interventions could then be intelligently used further in the various international negotiations that form the prevailing global landscape.

3.7.2 The role of the public sector

Given the problems in many African states with both capacity and funding, greater regional collaboration in the pursuit of common negotiation positions is one way to cost effectively use national expertise to promote a wider regional agenda. Southern exporters and their partners in government are encouraged by Williams, et al. (2007:25) to 'harness new models of collaboration to overcome structural weakness and put in place the requisite political, technical, and financial resources to ease their integration into the global economy'. Such advice is crucial, according to Jreisat (2002:118), if African states are to learn from the 'host of issues stemming from previous market failures' and actively overcome the 'familiar shortcoming and inefficiencies of public–sector economic involvement'. Tawfik, (2005:3) argues for a central role for the African state in the promotion of development. Noting that missing markets are a major problem in many developing countries including Africa, Jackson (2001:7) notes that appropriate 'government intervention can be justified'.

A developmental mandate needs a very different set of skills and broader insights from public officials than previously required. The need to identify requirements for publicly funded technical support as part of negotiating trade agreements is vital. Research for instance by Cosbey (2004:27) has found that 'existing standards – which were in some cases well below world standards – were routinely flouted'. Such behaviour undermines any negotiation especially as long term impacts are probably not immediately realised in the new global environment. The dramatic, negative and largely unintended consequences for domestic industries that are allowed to take such a short–sighted view are also mentioned by Cosbey (2004). Cosbey (2004:27) reports that 'firms lagged far behind foreign standards levels, missing the chance to find synergy between foreign and domestic standards'. Such companies would rapidly go out of business once the government of such a country either decided, or more probably was pressured from outside, to open its domestic markets to foreign competition. With reference to a study in Zimbabwe, Jreisat (2002:11) highlights 'the need for reform prescriptions to achieve synergistic support between international standards and norms and local institutions'. A word of caution by Maur (2008) should be noted in accepting such advice. Weak institutions, according to Maur (2008:34), 'are not well equipped to manage heavy implementation challenges.'

African countries need to make appropriate, substantial and ongoing investment in the public infrastructure, that in most cases already partially exists, to address domestic and foreign quality assurance requirements. Failure to do so would, as Rotherham (2003:24) warns, 'begin to discredit the kinds of policy tools that are increasingly being used to promote sustainable development: eco–labels, certification programs and other market–based tools'. If individual African countries cannot afford to create and maintain appropriate national infrastructure, they need to find creative ways to investigate, fund, maintain and share such scarce technical resources for the benefit of the whole region.

3.7.3 Access to foreign markets

In order to address the many and varied problems that still face African economies it is now generally accepted that they need greater access to international markets. Such access in theory should allow sustainable growth through trade rather than the existing dependence in many cases on aid. Kennedy and Hobohm (1999:4) strongly promote the notion of increased openness of African economies to the international markets. The same authors (Kennedy & Hobohm, 1999:4) note that such a strategy needs to be coupled to the development of strong and sustainable private sector enterprises that could compete effectively in these same world markets. The encouragement of such private sector development is seen as one of the keys to Africa's future. It is also expected that such increased market activity would enable the wider population to enjoy a much fuller share of the myriad benefits of globalisation. As previously stated, developed nations increasingly expect proven compliance of imported agricultural products and manufactured goods, against sophisticated technical requirements, before allowing access to their markets. Such requirements are normally contained within the domestic technical regulations intended to protect the health and safety of their citizens. Due to the inherent difficulties caused by each country defining its own individual regulatory requirements there are increasing moves internationally towards referencing internationally harmonised standards in such national regulations. This in turn has led to a demand for appropriate mechanisms that allow for the independent proof of the competence of conformity assessment bodies and the integrity of the associated national technical support infrastructure.

With specific reference to cross border trade in Africa, Leshaba (2004:4) states that already 'there is a high level of unrecorded trade between ordinary citizens of the continent'. According to UNIDO (2006:2), the root of the problem in most African countries is an urgent need to address limited production capacity. In order to be successful, such enhanced capacity must produce a sufficient surplus of exportable goods in order to generate additional income. A prerequisite would be that goods aimed at satisfying these needs would have to be of acceptable quality and continuously meet the standards of the foreign target market.

3.8 DONOR ACTIVITIES WITHIN AFRICA

Findings from Farazmand (1999:514) clearly indicate that the United Nations has been a major factor in globalisation. The same research (Farazmand, 1999:514) refers to key affiliated organisations of the United Nations, namely the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO. Farazmand (1999:514) points out that these UN bodies 'have been powerful instruments' in a US, European and Japanese dominated globalisation strategy. Not surprisingly, these same countries, according to Farazmand (1999:514), are 'the key donors of international aid'. Since the creation of the WTO, Goonatilake and Kaeser (2006:1) report that 'global trade has been facilitated through the completion of a more and more sophisticated set of rules and regulations'. According to the same authors (Goonatilake & Kaeser, 2006:1), a side effect of such ever increasing requirements is the creation of 'important challenges for developing countries for their implementation'.

Haruna (2004:190) notes that 'several interrelated policies and programs derived from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund…limit the intervention of the state in the economy'. An interesting conclusion when one considers the considerable amount of state intervention that still occurs in developed countries. Another problem characterised by aid programmes in Africa is identified by Kuye (2006). Research by Kuye (2006:4) asserts that in many cases 'there is no consideration for country–specific issues' in the quest for a simplistic 'one size fits all' solution. The study by Nzwei and Kuye (2007:202) also notes the need for serious consideration of a country's 'unique social, cultural and historical exigencies' for successful development and economic growth. Mathiasen (2005:667) mentions that 'Western technical assistance practitioners working at the ground level refer to the need to understand and take into account the social and political context of the countries in which they are working'. Such a contextual sensitisation obviously takes time if performed properly, a commodity that is unfortunately not in abundant supply, given the very real and increasing needs facing the region.

Is there some hidden prescribed European model for Africa? Not if research by Caulfield (2006) is believed. Referring to the activities of European donors for public sector reform in Africa, Caulfield (2006:18) reports that even the agenda's between donors from the same part of the world have had different focuses. French aid policy and associated funding has, according to Caulfield (2006:18), strongly encouraged the deregulation of the public sector with a simultaneous movement towards State–Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and public utilities. In contrast, Caulfield (2006:18) points out that reflecting Britain's own preference, 'the United Kingdom's public sector policy for Africa focused most heavily not only on civil service reform…also included the creation of service delivery agencies and performance contracting'.

Article Eleven of the TBT Agreement (WTO, 1994:127) states that with regard to developing country Members, the other 'Members… shall grant them technical assistance on mutually–agreed terms and conditions'. Specific issues are then highlighted. The first is 'the preparation of technical regulations' (WTO, 1994:127). The second is the 'the establishment of bodies for the assessment of conformity with standards adopted within the territory of the requesting Member' (WTO, 1994:128). The last intervention mentioned is 'the establishment of the institutions and legal framework that would enable them to fulfil the obligations of membership or participation in regional or international systems of conformity assessment' (WTO, 1994:128). Ten years after signature of the agreement, Cosbey (2004:41) points out that '[n]o country yet has made such a request', and that such a vacuum leads to 'a number of uncertainties about how the obligations would be fulfilled'. One of the major ones is for instance 'how to interpret the obligation to provide technical assistance on mutually–agreeable terms and conditions' (Cosbey, 2004:41). A possible reason for the reluctance by developing countries to ask for help is provided by Smaller (2006:7) who asserts that 'developed countries consistently use their aid budgets to pressure developing countries to move closer to developed countries' trade negotiating positions'.

The Committee of Trade and Development of the WTO (2002a:16) argue that providers of technical assistance and the beneficiaries need to work closely together to ensure that delivery occurs 'within a coherent policy framework' against a set of trade related priorities. A special workshop on TBT related technical assistance (WTO TBT, 2003c:7) also pointed out that providers of technical assistance 'would be able to respond better if a country had a properly formulated plan with identifiable needs and priorities'. The active and ongoing involvement of 'higher level policy–makers' was identified by the same workshop (WTO TBT, 2003c:7) as an important component in the 'proper formulation of effective technical assistance plans'. A joint WTO and OECD report on Trade Related Technical Assistance (TRTA) (WTO, 2002b:1) points out that greater emphasis needs to be placed on promoting 'greater participation in the multilateral trading system and the world economy'. The same report (WTO, 2002b:1) asserted that, at that time, trade related aid fell under three different groupings. The first area (WTO, 2002b:1) focused on trade policy and regulations in order to assist countries to 'reform and prepare for closer integration in the multilateral trading system'. The second group (WTO, 2002b:1), trade development, focused on developing an appropriate business climate and promoting the benefits of trade to different business sectors. The last grouping (WTO, 2002b:1), 'infrastructure', addressed the creation of the 'physical infrastructure required to move goods and export successfully'.

Research by UNIDO (2002:4) claims that '[i]nsufficient attention is paid to the technical infrastructure and capacities required'. Jreisat (2002:106) contends that as part of the 'universal quest for a transformation to modernity' the creation and strengthening of institutional capacity 'has always been a centerpiece of the prescriptive models'. Research by Keller (2007:48) identifies the prioritisation by western donors of the three areas of 'good governance, free–market capitalism and democratization'. The same author (Keller, 2007:48) points out that 'aid became linked to demonstrated progress in these three areas'. Findings from Nzwei and Kuye (2007:197) identify 'two sets of ideas on development', one focusing on issues such as 'reduction of poverty and improved standard of living' (Nzwei and Kuye, 2007:197), the other on 'a process of transformation towards a capitalist economy and the development of the drivers of production' (Nzwei and Kuye, 2007:197). What is remarkable, according to Jreisat (2002:108), is that no matter what the scenario of development, 'citizens were not an important factor in the choices made for them'. On a more sinister note, Farazmand (1999:516) maintains and African experience supports the fact that '[m]ost foreign aid and international loans are returned to donor countries'.

Given such background, the logical place therefore to begin to seek redress for African countries is in the various and ongoing negotiations of the WTO. Vermeulen and Ras (2006:246) concur that 'creating fairer trading relationships is one of the important issues on the global agenda for multi-lateral agreements between nations'. Laird (2001:471) acknowledges that there is still a lot of work needed. Laird (2001:471) also suggests an urgent need to review the efficacy of the accepted rules 'to ensure that such measures are being used for legitimate objectives and not merely for protectionist purposes'. Such a view is supported by a study by Najam and Robins (2001:65) that identifies the critical need to build 'indigenous negotiating and institutional capacity within trade institutions…in developing countries'. The same authors (Najam & Robins, 2001:65) also note that such capacity should be created 'not simply to understand what is happening in international policy, but to influence it'. Such a proactive stance will not be easy for African states and their public administrators to action. Mbekeani (2005:41) points out that 'considerable capacity is needed for effective participation in the design of rules and institutional mechanisms that shape the global economy'.

The role of both private and public funded conformity assessment activity and supporting technical infrastructure is an important component in creating holistic solutions for addressing African TBT issues. There are often initially obscure consequences regarding provision and non provision of such services and infrastructure as Africa tries to better integrate into the wider, and brutally competitive, global economy. Tangible benefits of the donor supported work that has already been done remains variable according to many authors (Vil–Nkomo, 1999:85; Jun, 2000:27; Raadschelders, 2000:378; Batley, 2004:417; Haruna, 2004:190; McWilliams, 2007:18). Batley (2004) offers at least one reason why this will continue to be the case. Given in Mozambique during 2003 that donor support accounted for more than half of total public expenditure, Batley (2004:417) notes that 'it is almost impossible for donors to impose conditions without creating macro–economic instability and putting the government budget into disarray'. Cooper (2003:105) and Efretuei (2005:198) mention that cutting aid to some sub Saharan countries would force them to 'close down overnight' with the resultant creation of 'chaos and political instability'. With such a major imbalance of power and capacity between such governments and donors, Batley (2004:416) insists that 'donors really can let go the reins and allow government to assume control'. Assuming control presupposes the ability to change conditions to achieve some intended outcome. The achievement of major improvements in trade related benefits by African governments is highly unlikely in the short term. The present international trade environment almost forces certain self–defeating choices on African states by design. More donor funding into such a situation is unlikely to produce the dramatic positive changes required in Africa. The expanding role of countries such as China in Africa is however a reason why such a plea should be seriously considered by the western developed country donors. China has no interest in either African democratisation or human rights, according to Keller (2007:51). Keller (2007:51) contends that China is focused rather on 'gaining access to the continent's markets and minerals, including petroleum'. Such a reality might provide even more impetus for the radical changes in the approach, at both the global level as well as by some foreign donor agencies, long sought by African and other developing country states.

3.9 SUB–REGIONAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION IN AFRICA

3.9.1 Problems with closer regional cooperation in Africa

The benefits flowing from closer regional cooperation for the vast majority of African states is no longer in question. That there are problems in getting common agreement on the need for continental development is highlighted by Kuye (2006:16), who notes 'that several African states have in one form or the other forgotten the implications of collaboration'. According to Gottschalk and Schmidt (2004:138), previous attempts over the last forty years to address institutional frameworks for African integration 'were chronically under resourced and politically marginalized'. The same authors (Gottschalk & Schmidt, 2004:157) caution against too much optimism 'about the common political will since there are vast differences and often even distrust between the governments'. It is evident that little has changed fundamentally to allow Africa to make the necessary progress. Yet Ngoatje (2006:62) is far more positive and points to historical and other factors 'that have created strong bonds of solidarity and unity among the peoples of the continent'. Globalisation, Fuhr (2001:437) maintains, 'often acts like a magnifying glass' which, automatically creates discussion and simultaneously highlights the need for appropriate responses including institutional arrangements. Keller (2007) is clear on where African priorities should lie. The overriding priority for African countries, according to Keller (2007:51), 'is to become effective players in the globalization game'. He (Keller, 2007:51) points out that such an enormous task necessitates the development of 'increasingly effective regional and sub regional political and economic organizations'. Fortunately there are already examples of such organisations that can be used to gain further insights. As Cooper (2004:27) perhaps irreverently points out, 'the European Union is a highly developed system for mutual interference in each other's domestic affairs'. The knowledge gained and benefits flowing from such 'interference' could be utilised for the benefit, rather than the exclusion, of developing African countries. All of which points to the need for research based policies, directed at trade related industrial growth, but not at the expense of the environment. As Schoeman (2004:14) points out, with Africa in mind, 'new innovative policy will be required, focused especially on investment in human capital'.

Closer ties possibly leading to regional integration within Africa are not without problems. Findings from Leshaba (2004:3) on post independent African states have found 'two conflicting predispositions have influenced their efforts at regional cooperation and integration'. The first (Leshaba, 2004:3) is the rigid adherence to previous colonial borders in spite of the inarguable fact that such borders 'militate against economic viability and coherence of the African nation–states thus artificially created'. In total contrast, the second issue, according to Leshaba (2004:3), has been an emphasis on 'the indispensability of economic integration across Africa's sub–regions and the continent as a whole'. One might be tempted to ask whether there is a role at the regional level in respecting the first while trying to assist in making the second a reality. It will certainly need more than a modicum of local ingenuity that has been sadly absent so far. A further complication is mentioned by Keller (2007:46) who asserts that post independence saw the formation of 'African–led regimes that were more or less carbon copies of [those of] their colonizers'. Even with such inherited impediments, Ngoatje (2006:84) asserts that '[i]t is entirely within Africa's own power to agree to the lowering of…barriers, which would contribute significantly to improved economic growth across the continent'.

3.9.2 Need for closer regional integration

Excellent insight is given into the challenges presented by Africa's colonial past by Mathiasen (2005:667) who points out that 'most of the people in the world do not live in societies whose political roots go back to the Middle Ages in Europe'. What is evident is that any change to more indigenous, Afro centric models will need sustained hard work, together with unwavering political commitment. Regional integration, Ngoatje (2006:63) contends is also 'a means towards African unity and the recovery of African dignity and status in global affairs'. Such a higher level perspective is essential, given the enormity of the challenge. Batley (2004:35) avers that it is in the public service in weak African states that 'power, employment and patronage are concentrated'. The foundational role in both the AU and NEPAD of the RECs is also a cause for concern according to Leshaba (2004). Leshaba (2004:8) points out that 'most African countries have multiple memberships to many of the existing RECs'. The unintended side effect of such multiple REC memberships is that a particular state could find 'itself progressing towards economic integration at different paces in different communities'. Another negative factor is noted by Cooper (2003:104) who claims that 'African economies are at least as likely to compete as to complement each other's [sic] strengths'. This is worrying if one considers the findings of Williams, et al. (2007:31) who argue that '[c]ountries that focus narrowly on "national goals" or turn inward will fail in the new era'. International cooperation, according to Cooper (2003:104), 'assumes that state leaders are disinterested advocates of African or at least national interests'. The same author (Cooper, 2003:104) states that 'many are anything but'.

A fundamental disagreement between well known economist, and proponent of the global free market, respectively Friedman and Florida is identified in a study by Feiock, Moon and Park (2008). They (Feiock, et al., 2008:24) report that globalisation (according to Friedman) 'has diminished the importance of location as a competitive edge in fostering economic growth'. Florida counters that 'although globalization has exposed many regions to heightened competition…it is full of clusters where location matters'. The same authors (Feiock, et al., 2008:24) argue that this 'disagreement is no mere academic exercise' and that 'it has serious implications for elected officials, public managers, and scholars that craft, implement, and evaluate economic development strategies or theories'. Farazmand (1999:515) found that '[m]any states have surrendered their national policy–making ability to regional or international organizations for collaborating with globalization efforts'. Williams et al. (2007:31) also declare that the 'key to success in a turbulent environment is collaboration across borders, cultures, companies, and disciplines'. Such collaboration should lead to the solution of a problem for many African states, according to both Cooper (2003:103) and Maur (2008:9), of 'increasing the size of markets'. Williams et al. (2007:25) identify one important benefit of regional trade agreements, in that such agreements give regional exporters the opportunity 'to experiment in their own backyard'. Other benefits mentioned by the same authors (Williams et al., 2007:25) are the ability not only to 'network' but also to 'improve on their knowledge and expertise'. All of these potential benefits should surely be welcomed and fully utilised by African states.

Whether positive or negative, Tawfik (2005:11) contends that 'many African countries have some experiences…to share with others'. Findings from Caulfield (2006:16) support the fact that African countries have more in common than immediately obvious and therefore much to share 'largely because of aid dependency and the policy conditionality's of multilateral donors'. Ojienda (2005:22) discusses the need to share information with the aim of 'increased adoption of best practices and standards and also accelerating the integration of the economies of participating countries'. Other benefits of such activity are identified by the same author (Ojienda, 2005:22) as 'higher levels of trust', which could also 'increase opportunities for intra–country trade and investment, physical infrastructure, production systems and structures'. The final benefit (Ojienda, 2005:22) is posited as 'fostering common African positions for negotiating with other regions', which is, as already stated, presently sorely lacking. 'Scarcity of technical skills' is another important reason given by Maur (2008:9) for regional approaches in the specialised technical areas such as the ones under discussion. Maur (2008:9) points out that such shortages can become a serious issue when confronted with 'modern trade facilitation techniques'.

3.10 THE AIMS OF THE NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT (NEPAD)

There has been far too little imagination or drive shown within Africa to date concerning its unique development challenges. Instead, there has been a lot of passive acceptance of foreign advice, usually linked to the availability of external funding. Much of the advice given from outside the region has, according to Herbert (2004:2), dramatically failed to deliver any sustainable benefit. Fuhr (2001:432) contends that 'private sector–driven globalization' provides a new landscape which can assist national governments 'rethink their own policies'. Kwako (1995:35) holds that 'no African State is economically large enough to construct a modern economy alone'. Kotze and Steyn (2003:10) point out that, given the present form of globalisation, Africa must decide either 'to integrate or face the real possibility of being left behind'. They (Kotze & Steyn, 2003:39) note that African Governments have regarded the need for regional economic and political integration within the region as a priority 'for quite some time'. Such a realisation (Kotze & Steyn, 2003:39) has 'resulted in the launch of numerous initiatives aimed towards this end'. The latest such initiative is the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Ojienda (2005:3) credits President Thabo Mbeki with pioneering the 'relatively new idea that using political strategies rather than [an] economic approach would facilitate the recovery of Africa'. Noting that NEPAD 'reflects the Post–Washington consensus model of development', Tawfik (2005:1) argues that the need for state intervention in the development process is no longer an issue. The discussion, according to him (Tawfik, 2005:1), is 'rather, about the ways and mechanisms of such intervention and the relationship between state, private sector and civil society for achieving development'. Such an important realisation should immediately place African Public Administration and public administrators on the alert and encourage them to find a meaningful and pioneering role going forward. Nwonwu (2006:22), noting that the leaders have only provided a blueprint, contends that 'it is the civil society and the people who must respond urgently to the opportunity to participate in the implementation of the NEPAD programs'. Just how they might do that is unfortunately not covered.

As can be expected, NEPAD is not without its critics. Tawfik (2005:12) points out that 'many African analysts' criticise NEPAD for being far too dependent for implementation on foreign capital. 'The very essence and context of NEPAD', according to Efretuei (2005:243), 'has to do with funding the policy goals through a handsome financial support from the industrialised nations'. Two of the underlying problems with such dependence, based on past African experience, are highlighted by Ngoatje (2006) and Kotze and Steyn (2003). Ngoatje (2006:134) expresses concern about African capacity to 'effectively absorb and manage' large inflows of donor funds. Kotze and Steyn (2003:97) are anxious that the self–identified goals of African states could 'differ fundamentally' from those of 'Western donors'. A specific example is reported by Gottschalk and Schmidt (2004:151), who note that the African 'non–adversarial and collegial' approach to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is at odds with the understanding of donor countries that see it 'as an instrument for enforcing good governance'. Such a donor view is also mentioned by Caulfield (2006:18) who points out that French political pressure was used regarding continuing eligibility for aid to persuade 'francophone countries to submit to "good economic governance" as defined by the IMF'. The marginalisation of Africa, according to Nabudere (2002:19), is not because it is being excluded from the global economy but that it is 'the most exploited'. Nabudere (2002:19) argues that greater African political unity should be 'the basis of African development and not financial resources from outside'. Nwonwu (2006:28) also decries the over reliance of foreign partners in the implementation of the NEPAD agenda. He (Nwonwu, 2006:28) exhorts Africans to seize the challenge of development and 'look inward and develop mastery in harnessing the local resources both human and material'. Arnold (2005:970) sums up the problem succinctly: 'If there is to be an African renaissance it will be achieved by the skilful deployment of what Africa itself controls', concluding his history of the last forty years in Africa by stating that 'NEPAD funded by the West is not the answer'. Mukamunana and Kuye (2005:602) contend that it is hypocritical of Africans to expect western donors to continue to provide financial assistance if they themselves 'fail to hold each other accountable and denounce poor governance and leadership'.

Other frequent criticisms of NEPAD (Nabudere, 2002:7; Kotze & Steyn, 2003:54; Gottschalk & Schmidt, 2004:152; Melber, 2004:4; Nwonwu, 2006:22) are perceptions that it is a top down approach, driven by an African elite and that it gives too many concessions to neo–liberal orthodoxy. 'The major accusation unleashed against NEPAD', according to Nwonwu (2006:22), is that 'it is a state–centric initiative whose conceptualization did not involve the people for whom it is designed'. Melber (2004) also expresses doubt about the inclusiveness of NEPAD. NEPAD has, Melber (2004:4) claims, 'utterly failed to gain approval from many stakeholders'. In a similar vein and given that many of the draft plans for NEPAD 'are shielded from public comment until they are final', Herbert (2004:9) ponders how the drafters can realistically have any hope of enlisting 'thoughts of Africa's best experts'. Nwonwu (2006:25) refers perhaps dramatically to an 'impasse between NEPAD operatives and civil society'. Even worse, according to the same author (Nwonwu, 2006:25), NEPAD appears to have forgotten the need for transparency and accountability, which admirable traits, according to Nwonwu (2006:25), have been replaced by 'the obnoxious attitude of exclusivity'. This is not a sensible option given that one of the original aims was of greater partnership. Nwonwu (2006:23) also points out that 'NEPAD operatives continue to blame lack of capacity as the primary predicament and main contributor to their underachievement'. This is dismissed as 'incredulous as it is unfathomable' by Nwonwu (2006:23), who cannot comprehend that Africa 'lacks the quantum of intellectual sufficiency and critical mass of technocrats needed to implement NEPAD programs'. Is it perhaps time for an internal review of the NEPAD operational infrastructure and how it goes about its day to day activities? If so, who would do it, and to whom are they accountable?

Closer to home, and showing signs of regional undercurrents, NEPAD, Melber (2004:7) maintains, is 'considered a lubricant for South African expansion into other parts of the continent'. According to Lesufi (2004:821), 'NEPAD represents a summation of the programmatic orientation of the big South African corporations'. Lesufi (2004:821) points to a drive to penetrate the African continent by South African actors that 'include the who's who of both large private and public corporations'. The South African state, Lesufi (2004:822) argues, 'is not only involved in the facilitation and creation of a conducive environment' for private sector expansion but 'it is itself involved through its own corporations in the accumulation process'. South African involvement is not a problem for Ngcukana (2006:86) who informs us that 'South Africa is the number one investor on the African continent. It even outstrips the United Kingdom and the United States combined'. This supports the view of Leshaba (2004:4) who notes rather that '[t]his is a reflection of the continent's potential to flourish if regional integration is well coordinated'. Noting that current operations 'are largely maintained by funds from donors and the South African government', Mukamunana and Kuye (2005:599) point out that only a small minority of the participating countries have in fact 'paid their financial contributions'. The reasons for the withholding of such contributions obviously create a cause for concern which needs open and honest resolution.

Instead of taking the many criticisms seriously, NEPAD leadership's reaction has to date been less than forthright. Herbert (2004:6) identifies two different strategies. The first (Herbert, 2004:6) 'focused on developing supposedly tangible projects to demonstrate that NEPAD is doing something'. Given the past history of much rhetoric but little action, the need to provide positive evidence that NEPAD is making a difference is understandable. Unfortunately, despite periodic assurances of the imminent release of the detail behind specific programmes, the result has, according to Herbert (2004:1), been that the 'promise has gone unfulfilled for most of the last half–decade'. An even greater problem in this regard is identified by Kuye (2006:9) who argues that any projects should seek to satisfy 'demand driven initiatives'. It is hard to see how this can be fulfilled in such an environment of silence and exclusion. The role of NEPAD more specifically as far as inter and intra African trade facilitation will be further investigated in Chapter Four.

3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Developed nations increasingly expect proven compliance of imported agricultural products and manufactured goods, against sophisticated technical requirements, before allowing access to their markets. These are normally contained in technical regulations intended to protect the health and safety of their citizens. Owing to the inherent difficulties caused by each country defining its own individual regulatory requirements, there is increasing international pressure to reference internationally harmonised standards in domestic regulations. This, in turn, has led to an increased demand for appropriate and transparent mechanisms that allow both for independent proof of the competence of both local conformity assessment bodies and the integrity of the associated national support infrastructure.

The need for insight into the potential impacts of the various options proffered by developed countries during global trade negotiations is another problem. If the prevailing global environment has been so carefully crafted, over such a long time period, to serve the purposes of a few developed countries, the remedies for redress by African countries cannot be expected to be either simple or short term. In many cases, African states have been forced, not only to actively consider their global participation, but also to accept specific, normally donor driven, remedies. All of which underpins the need initially for coordinating national strategies, policies and implementation with a national view that is used first in NEPAD regional interactions. The results of such interventions could then be intelligently used further in the various international negotiations that shape the global landscape today.

Unintended consequences, post agreement, are an ever present possibility in such scenarios. Technical barriers to trade may be the result of either commission or omission on the part of the participants who actively assisted in devising such programmes but neither possibility gives comfort to those who actually face such barriers. Political fragmentation within Africa coupled with the legacies of colonialism serve to exacerbate an already desperate regional situation. It is suggested, therefore, that African Public Administration has a window of opportunity to determine how it could better serve both inter and intra regional interests. The problem of using public administration principles from one part of the world to assist in others has been highlighted. Developing a culture of closer collaboration within Africa could assist in the development of more Afro centric public administration theory and practice. Just how such collaboration would work and who would be included in it for the purposes of African trade facilitation are also important. Once the necessary collaborative interaction has yielded sufficient and appropriate information, responsibility must be accepted for formulating policy, appropriate supportive legislation together with actionable and appropriately resourced plans. Such a responsibility could, in the context of NEPAD, be delegated to public administrators.

States are not the only role players in the new globalised environment. Business has also continued to expand globally while demanding simultaneously that governments stick to what they do best and leave business and the market to establish norms for their activities. Consumers also increasingly demand higher technical specifications regarding products and produce, but are they really aware of the real impact on the welfare of African countries and if not, how can they be informed?

Private sector development of conformity assessment bodies, if considered at all, is largely seen as an unrelated and even unwelcome activity by their public counterparts. Although the role of a vibrant private sector is actively promoted as a key success factor for Africa, there is little existent evidence that anything is actually being done. Effort is certainly not focused on producing a sustainable private sector component. The unintelligent application of a market driven approach to conformity assessment could easily create a scenario where only those services that could realise a profit would be readily serviced by the private sector. Supportive technical infrastructure and state provided conformity assessment services, identified as part of strategic imperatives, such as those required to support NEPAD, but not profitable in the short term, could therefore be placed in jeopardy. This leads to the creation of specialised public capacity in Africa that ultimately impedes the creation of a sustainable private sector in this area while actively discouraging any chance of growth.

The multiplicity of demands and remedies involved in addressing appropriate market liberalisation in Africa, including conformity assessment requirements, obviously requires careful thought, intelligent policy creation and coordination, appropriate governance together with focused, properly coordinated implementation activities. Experience has already shown that technical infrastructure capacity building and strengthening projects are by no means short term in nature. They require large amounts of ongoing capital, operational expenditure and skilled public and private implementation capacity. If individual African countries cannot afford to create and maintain appropriate national infrastructure, they need to find creative ways to investigate, fund, maintain and share such scarce technical resources for the benefit of the whole region.