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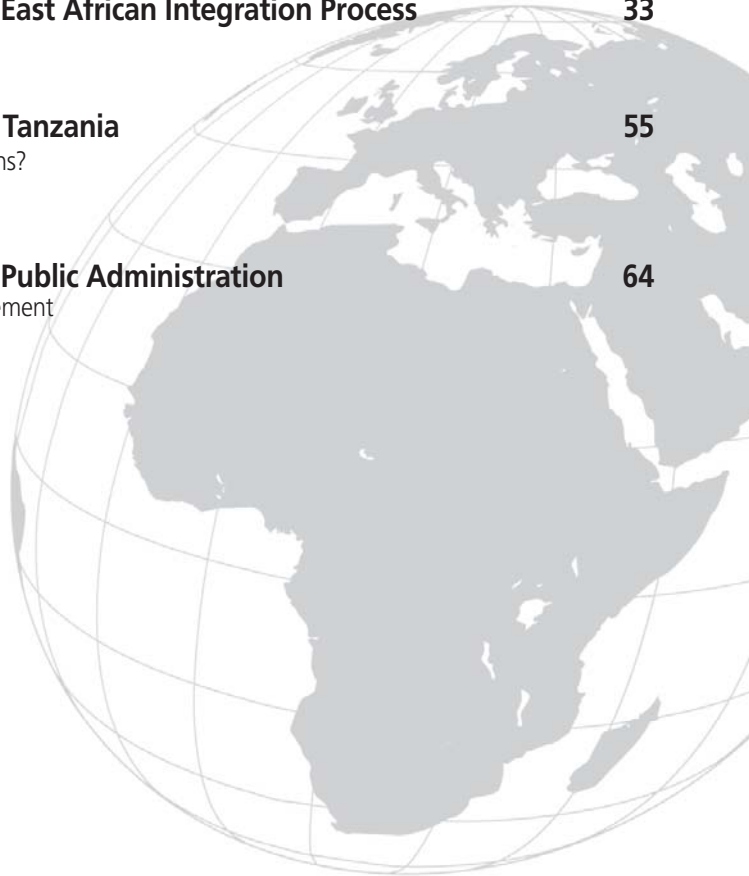


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Editorial

In this special issue, the esteemed reader is presented with five articles discussing various aspects of institution building and development in Africa. The articles tackle this theme from a variety of perspectives, drawing on experiences from Africa at continental, regional, national and local levels. The theoretical frameworks informing the discussion in the articles are drawn from several social science fields including public administration, political science, sociology, and economics.

Most countries in Africa gained their independence in the 1960s. The publication of this special issue this year, focusing on institution building and development, coincides with the celebration, next year, of fifty years of Africa's independence. As Africa celebrates there are, nevertheless, concerns that it has not done as well as it could have done in the socio-economic and political spheres. While there is considerable debate regarding the reasons for the poor performance, most analysts suggest that a major factor for the unsatisfactory results is that it has not given adequate attention to building institutional capacity and capability.

The literature has yet to settle on a standard definition of the term *institution* with some authors focusing on formal structures, rules and procedures, while others emphasize the informal constraints that limit the attainment of what is formally presented. In spite of the fact that agreement on definitional issues has yet to be reached, there is growing consensus regarding the existence of a relationship between the pace of a country's social economic development and the soundness (capacity and capability) of its institutions.

The centrality of institutions to Africa's development reform agenda cannot be underestimated. The institutions have in different ways shaped and affected a number of economic and political processes including those related to elections, political socialisation, policy making, decentralisation, market liberalisation, and conflict management and resolution. The institutions have also supported the formulation, execution and monitoring of various development policies, strategies and programmes including those related to poverty reduction, democratic consolidation, regional integration, economic empowerment, investment promotion, rural development, HIV/AIDS prevention and control, gender mainstreaming, population planning and control, gender mainstreaming environment.

In this special issue, therefore, authors were invited to submit articles which focused on the roles of institutions in propelling Africa's development reform agenda. The special issue includes articles from authors whose works and interests relate to the dimensions and dynamics of institutions and their effects on Africa's development initiatives.

The first article by G. Mutahaba and B. Ally, titled **Building a Developmental Public Service in Africa: An Assessment of Five Decades of Effort**, provides an overview of the underlying causes behind Africa's current condition of public services. The article contends that Africa's unsatisfactory performance in socio-economic development can be defined as not investing effectively in institutional development in the public sector. To move forward, Africa must invest more in building the capacity of state institutions.

This issue of capacity building is addressed in the second article by S.M. Rugumamu on **Parliamentary Networking as an Instrument of Capacity Building: Evidence from**

East Africa. The article argues that parliamentary networks in East Africa may serve as an important tool for building institutional capacity of African parliaments given the fact that, currently, there are no dedicated formal colleges to train parliamentarians and parliamentary staff for their multiple functions. The article demonstrates how networking with sister institutions does serve as one critical mechanism for exchanging and sharing information, knowledge and internationally-acknowledged best practices in order to enhance institutional and individual capacities

On another note, the third article by M. Baregu and B. Ally on **Political Parties in the East African Integration Process** examines four models on the role of political parties, as key institutions in the management of public affairs within the framework of economic and political integration arrangements that have emerged historically. The authors examine the role played by political parties under different models of regional integration/federation. Illustrating their arguments with examples drawn from Europe, the USA, Russian Federation, the United Republic of Tanzania, they contend that the role played by the political parties is determined to a great extent by the historical and socio-economic conditions of the respective countries.

S. Maghimbi in the fourth article on **Rural Development in Tanzania: What Exists Behind Institutions?** advances the argument that market-supporting and other institutions of public administration are weak in rural Tanzania. As a result they may not be in a position to assist the country in transforming its rural communities. Jean-Philippe Platteau's idea of *Where Real Societies Exist* is used to show how, what takes place at what the article calls, *behind institutions* has led to poor performance of the rural sector.

The fifth and last article by A. Mkenda on **Economic Theory and Public Administration: The Case of Fishery Management** offers some intriguing insights on the public administration institutional aspects of neo-liberalist public regulative mechanisms involving a natural resource whose exploitation is of public interest. The author uses the case of fishery management to illustrate the way the confusion between positive economics (the domain that deals with descriptive and predictive aspects) and normative economics (the domain that deals with prescription aspects) may lead to the promotion of institutional innovations in terms of policies and regulations that are not in the interest of the public.

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