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**The African Peer Review Mechanism as an Agent of Change: Towards
Advancing Democratic Governance in Africa**

By

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Declaration

I, Tshifhiwa Netshituni, declare that this mini-dissertation for the Degree of Master of Arts (Diplomatic Studies) at the University of Pretoria hereby submitted by me, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university.

Tshifhiwa Netshituni

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Abstract

The APRM was established in 2003 by the African Union in the framework of the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The objectives of the APRM are primarily to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration through experience sharing and reinforcement of successful and best practices, including identifying deficiencies and assessment of requirements for capacity building.

The APRM is used by member countries to self-monitor all aspects of their governance and socio-economic development. The exercise is not limited to the Executive. It includes the Legislative and Judicial Branches of Government as well as an assessment of the Private Sector, Civil Society and the Media in the areas of governance and socio-economic development. The APRM has been in existence for 14 years, and much of existing literature covers its inception, and its importance in addressing democratic governance challenges in Africa. There is little coverage on the performance and progress of the APRM to this date.

This study analyses the achievements and challenges of the APRM as a mechanism to promote democratic governance in Africa. In doing so, a documentary study research is applied through document analysis, a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic (Bowen, 2009). The assessment of the APRM's achievements and challenges, finds that there is significant strides in institutionalizing the APRM as democratic governance tool in Africa. The study also establishes that the APRM faces fundamental challenges that are political in nature and poses a threat to the existence and survival of the APRM. It is for this reason that the study identifies several recommendations to enhance the APRM's effectiveness.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AISA	Africa Institute of South Africa
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
EISA	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGC	National Governing Council
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SADB	Southern Africa Democracy Barometer

Chapter one

1. Introduction and orientation to the study

1.1. Introduction

This study analyses the progress of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as a mechanism for assessing and potentially improving governance in African states. The study focuses on achievements and challenges experienced by the APRM in implementation of its mandate and objectives over the years. The twenty-first century saw the emergence of a new calibre of African leadership, committed to addressing Africa's socio-economic development challenges. Leadership with a vision for Africa armed with innovative ideas, hungry to produce African owned solutions to the African problems. These leaders demonstrated their commitment to change in the African continent by transforming the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU) and established the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which gave birth to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

The African Peer Review Mechanism was established in 2003 by the African Union as an initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Matlosa, 2008:17). The objectives of the APRM are primarily to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration. This is done through experience sharing and reinforcement of successful and best practices, including identifying deficiencies and assessment of requirements for capacity building (APRM Base Document, 2003:1).

The APRM also aim to bring about democracy and good governance that will enable the achievement of a sustainable socio-economic development in Africa, through best economic, corporate and socio-economic values and practices (Kebonang and Fombad, 2006:39). Membership is open to all AU members on a voluntary basis (APRM Base Document, 2003:1).

1.2. Background to the study

When African leaders established the Organisation of the African Unity in 1963, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the organisation's mandate was that of protecting Africa's independence, protecting the sovereignty of nation states, assisting those countries struggling for liberation, striving towards African unity, achieving solidarity among its members and reversing the continent's economic underdevelopment (Matlosa, 2008:14). Less attention, if not none was given to democracy and good governance and as such Africa experienced the worst forms of governance, among them, dictatorship, authoritarian and autocratic governments (Fombad, 2006:9). This resulted in the OAU's failure to salvage Africa from its socio-economic doldrums and failing to become a catalyst for good governance (Akokpari, 2003:4).

Collectively, African leaders decided at an Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of African Heads of State and Government in the Libyan city of Sirte on September 9, 1999 to transform the Organisation of African Unity into the African Union (Schoeman, 2006:251). This was after African leaders were convinced that the OAU can no longer address the challenges of the twenty first century facing the African continent, among them socio-economic development, and democratic and political governance challenges (Fombad, 2006:9). The formal inauguration of the AU was held in Durban, South Africa in 2002. Some of the key objectives of the AU are: to achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and the people of Africa; to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its member states; to accelerate the political and integration of the continent; to promote peace, security and stability on the continent; to promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance; and to promote and protect human and people's rights (African Union, 2000)

To achieve its objectives the AU endorsed the New Partnership for Africa's Development which was adopted by the OAU in Lusaka, Zambia in 2001 (Southall, 2006:220). NEPAD is Africa's developmental programme which acknowledges that development is impossible in the absence of true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance (Grudz, 2009:5). Some of NEPAD's priorities are: peace

and security; economic and corporate governance; human resource development; environment; and democracy and good governance (Matlosa, 2008:16).

NEPAD is based on a number of key principles, namely: good governance as a basic requirement for peace, security and sustainable political and socio-economic development; African ownership and leadership, as well as broad and deep participation by all sectors of society; anchoring the development of Africa on its resources and resourcefulness of its people (NEPAD, 2003:6). Furthermore NEPAD encourages partnership between and amongst African peoples; and acceleration of regional and continental integration; building the competitiveness of African countries and the continent; forging a new international partnership that changes the unequal relationship between Africa and the developed world (NEPAD:2003:6).

The NEPAD Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance, led to the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), as a NEPAD's initiative to address governance challenges in Africa (Melber, 2006:6). The APRM is an instrument voluntarily accessed by member states of the African Union as a self-monitoring mechanism for African states aimed at institutionalizing and consolidating democratic governance (Matlosa, 2008: 17).

The APRM is Africa's most innovative and ambitious initiative on governance with emphasis on self- and peer-assessment of governance policies and practices on the continent. It is centred on peer review, described as the systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a state by other states, with the ultimate goal of helping the reviewed state improve its policy making, adopt best practices, and comply with established standards and principles (APRM, 2016:7).

Its primary purpose is to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to human security and political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development, and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration in Africa. (APRM: 2009: 33).

To achieve this objective the APRM measures a country's performance in four substantive thematic areas, namely: democracy and political governance; economic

governance and management; corporate governance; and socio-economic development (Suleman, et al, 2008:36). Since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on the APRM in 2003 36 African countries have acceded to the APRM. The APRM will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

1.3. Identification of the Research Theme

The African Peer Review Mechanism was initiated in 2002 and institutionalised in 2003 by the African Union as an initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Matlosa, 2008:17). The APRM aims to bring about democracy and good governance that will enable the achievement of sustainable socio-economic development in Africa, through best economic, corporate and socio- economic values and practices. Membership is open to all AU members on a voluntary basis (APRM Base Document, 2003). Currently the APRM enjoys a membership of 36 African states, of which 17 have undergone country reviews between 2003 and 2017.

The APRM is one of the most innovative African initiatives, created to use peer pressure and demonstration effects to assess progress and performance among participating countries towards achieving agreed goals in areas such as democracy and political governance (Ranker, et al, 2007:9). The continent is characterised by leadership that disregards constitutions and manipulates elections to remain in power, leaving Africa with fragile and weak democratic governance.

In respect of the above, the study aims to investigate the progress of the APRM in advancing democratic governance in Africa, with the focus on institutional challenges that have impeded the APRM in achieving its mandate and objectives. The study is important as it provides prospects for the APRM, identifies institutional weakness and provides possible recommendations to assist the consolidation and institutionalisation on the APRM in the continent.

1.4. Formulation and Demarcation of the Problem Statement

The twenty first century experienced a shift in African political development, characterized by the emergence of a new calibre of African leadership, conscious of

the importance and the need for socio- economic and political development in Africa. These leaders understood that to achieve socio-economic and political development the continent would have to advance democratic governance, as they acknowledged that development is impossible in the absence of true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance.

Democratisation has been and remains a challenge in the African continent. This created a collective desire to initiate African owned solutions to the African socio-economic and political development, and led to the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism as architecture for democratic governance in Africa.

Given the democratic challenges in Africa, the APRM should be institutionally strong to withstand challenges that have impeded it in its advancement of democratic governance in Africa. The APRM has been in existence for about 14 years now. Yet there are concerns about whether the APRM is capable of achieving its mandate and objectives, aimed advancing democratic governance in the continent. In recent years, the APRM has lost momentum.

The objectives of the study is to analyse the progress of the Africa Peer Review Mechanism in advancing democratic governance in Africa; and to identify challenges that have impeded the APRM in achieving its mandate and objectives. In order to explore more and widen understanding in this regard, the researcher asks the following exploratory research question:

What are the key challenges impeding the African Peer Review Mechanism's progress in achieving its mandate and objectives aimed at advancing democratic governance in Africa?

1.5. The structure of the dissertation

The mini-dissertation is structured into five chapters, which covers an introductory chapter, comprises of background to the study; purpose of the study, justification of the study, the formulation and demarcation of research statement, and the research problem and research question.

Chapter two provides a literature overview. It discusses contribution of other scholars on the subject of the APRM and democracy in Africa. The chapter provides conceptual framework, and examines concepts that are embedded within the APRM mandate and objectives such as, peer review from a country peer review perspective; governance and good governance, and democracy, which are the APRM's key focus area; and institutions looking at understanding the APRM as a continental political institution.

Chapter three focuses on research methodology. A documentary study research was employed, with the focus on readily available document on the APRM. This study was conducted based on qualitative research approach, as it seeks to develop an understanding of the APRM and the democratic governance phenomenon in Africa. Included in this chapter is data collection technique applied when collecting relevant information used to develop an understanding of the study; and data analysis applied in analysing information gathered.

Chapter four of the study discusses in detail the APRM, its origins, process, mandate, achievement, challenges, and prospects. This chapter also provides a discussion on challenges facing the APRM in achieving its mandate and objectives. These challenges include, lack of technical capacity at the APRM Secretariat and APRM members, resulting in slow momentum in review process, attraction of new members, and quality of finalised country review reports; funding as one of the major challenges facing the APRM, as a result of non-payment of membership fees, and dwindling international support.

The last chapter provides conclusion and recommendations based on the study findings.

Chapter Two

2. Literature overview

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a critical literature review, focused concepts that are central to policy issues and debates related to the APRM. The literature covered included conceptual framework, previous and related research work done by other scholars on the African Peer Review Mechanism from its establishment, and the process of democratization in Africa.

The twenty first century experienced a shift in African political development, a new approach of African leadership, conscious of the importance and the need for socio-economic development. A class of leadership with a collective desire to initiate African owned solutions to the challenges of development. One such initiative is the African Peer Review Mechanism, a voluntary self-assessment mechanism for African states, aimed at institutionalising and consolidating good governance and democracy (Turianskyi, 2009:2).

The APRM has attracted the attention of many scholars, who have produced a plethora of literature on the subject. Some give praise to African leaders, such as Thabo Mbeki for this initiative and view the APRM as an innovation. Others such as Chikwanha (2007) argue that the APRM stands a risk of becoming useless in the long run. This chapter discusses the literature on the APRM, provide a conceptual framework, with focus on concepts such as peer review, good governance, democracy and institutions. The literature covered also includes the democratisation project in Africa, how Africa has fared in adopting democracy since the dawn of independence. Lastly the literature discusses the OAU, AU and NEPAD's efforts in democratising Africa.

2.2. Conceptual framework

In response to popular pressure to live up to the ideals of democratic governance and the promise of economic development that were implicit during the struggle to attain political independence, a peer review mechanism in the African Peer Review Mechanism was established to strengthen issues of governance in order to advance democracy in the continent and to demonstrate commitment to good governance in the international arena (Jahed and Kithatu, 2008:110). Concepts related to the APRM such as peer review, good governance, democracy and institutions are discussed below.

Peer Review

The APRM joins a global experience of country peer review. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is the most notable and experienced in conducting peer review (Jahed and Kithatu, 2008:109). Pagani (2002) describes peer review as the systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a state by other states, with the ultimate goal of helping the reviewed state improve its policy making, adopt best practices and comply with established standards and principles. The African Peer Review Mechanism lends itself well within Pagani's definition of peer review, as it has the primary purpose of fostering the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable and inclusive development, as well as accelerated regional and continental economic integration, through sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practices (APRM, 2016).

Pagani (2002) provides that peer review is used in democratic governance for purposes such as, policy dialogue, wherein countries systematically exchange information, attitude and views on policy decisions and their application. Pagani (2002) further indicate that countries under review present and clarify national rules, practices and procedures in order to be capacitated, as peer review is a mutual learning process in which best practices are exchanged. The APRM process is designed to be open and participatory, and through a participatory process, the APRM engages key stakeholders to facilitate exchange of information and national dialogue on good

governance and socio-economic development programmes, thereby increases transparency of the decision-making processes, and build trust in the pursuit of national development goals (APRM Guidelines, 2003:3).

Sven Grimm, et al, (2009) indicate that peer reviews are mechanisms of mutual assessment of actors considered being equals, interacting at a horizontal level of power. The mutual assessment is on a non-adversarial basis thus aspires to reach an agreed standard and to test the performance of the peer (Grimm, et al, 2009: 22). In order to make the mechanism of peer review possible and effective, reciprocal trust among the peers, shared confidence, and combined engagement are prerequisites, as the success and effectiveness of peer reviews rely on the influence and power of peers exercised during the process of peer review. Such peer pressure, which is important as there are usually neither arrangements of decision-making power nor any possibilities to impose sanctions, usually comes to play after the participating country was reviewed by others and the findings are discussed in the group of peers either behind closed doors or in public (Grimm, et al, 2009: 23).

The OECD indicates that there is no standardised peer review mechanism, all peer reviews share certain structural elements, such as a basis for proceeding; agreed set of principles, standards and criteria against which the country's performance will be reviewed; designated actors to carry out the review; and a set of procedures leading to the final result (OECD, 2011). At the end of it all, the success or effectiveness of peer review depends in large measure on the level of influence or persuasion that other peers may exert on the country being reviewed. This form of influence or persuasion, known otherwise as peer pressure, may be executed through a set of recommendations; informal dialogue; public scrutiny; ranking among countries as to levels of compliance; and through domestic public opinion or pressure (Kebonang and Fombad, 2006:39). This is also central in the APRM's set up, as it is conceived and organised with peer pressure as the main mode of driving change (Petlane, 2011:130).

Good governance

Assessments of governance is a critical issue on the African continent, captured in a vicious circle of bad political and economic performance due to insufficient institutional

setups; the bad performance in return is a constraint to the improvement of institutional capacity, and a sustainable socio-economic development (Grimm, et al, 2009:6). It is for this reason that the APRM is derived from the New Partnership for Africa's Development desire for socio-economic development which can only be maintained provided there is good governance. This section discusses the concept of good governance, but before that, one needs to understand the meaning of governance. The concept of governance presents by itself a definitional challenge, it is broad and subject to varying interpretations and there is not up till now a common definition applied to governance terminology in Africa although there is commonality in the applications of key terms through regional and continental development plans of action, programmes, management systems and mechanisms (Mekolo and Resta, 2005:17).

Francis Fukuyama defines governance as a government's ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services, regardless of whether that government is democratic or not (Fukuyama, 2013:3). Governance in general refers to the exercise of power through public institutions like rules and routines, formal laws, and informal norms (Grimm, et al. 2009:17). Ramakant Rao (2008:1) indicates that governance is the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Tahir Naveed (1998) defines governance as the management of resources, and organization of individuals and groups into formal and informal bodies and institutions and businesses, through social, political, administrative and economic mechanisms. In assessing the above definitions one concludes that the emphasis is more on how political power is exercised to manage a nation's affairs.

As mentioned in the opening paragraph governance remains a serious problem in the African continent. Since independence Africa experienced obstacles and failures in the promotion of good governance and maintenance of democratic principles. This can be attributed to a history of colonialism, armed conflicts, mismanagement, lack of rule of law and corruption (Wani, 2004:5). Because of the state of poor governance, Africa remains underdeveloped and in poverty, hunger, natural disasters, with prevalent endemic diseases. After realizing the failure of Africa's political systems to deliver on their developmental objectives, Western governments, and international financial institutions emphasized the need to establish good governance in Africa, which was

considered a conditionality to benefit loans and other financial advantages from the Bretton Woods institutions (Mangu, 2014:62).

There is no universal definition of good governance, therefore this study will be based on Jeffries (2002)'s definition of the concept of good governance, as a system of administration that is democratic, efficient and development orientated; and that of the UNDP Report (2002) which states that good governance advances human development, and should be characterised by political freedom and participation, and the respect for human rights. It is important to include the UNDP's definition of the concept of good governance, as it brings an understating of how institutions views good governance. The two definitions envisage the overall objectives of the APRM and NEPAD, which are democracy and development.

According to Muhammad Ali (2014) good governance should include principles such as, democratization and civil society; because democracy is an essential prerequisite of good governance, and that though democratic government may also face crisis of governability. However, a democratic system is essential because that alone can promote the ethics of economic and political freedom and development for individuals and increase mass participation, which are features of good governance (Ali 2014).

Ali (2014) also identify accountability to the constituency, as another principle and one of the cornerstones of good governance, which denotes responsibility of the government towards governing and also the mechanism through which people can exercise their influence over the- government (Ali, 2014:71). Accountability goes hand in hand with transparency, which makes it possible for the people to know about the' decision making process of the government, and it is also one of the significant elements of the good governance (Graham, et al, 2003:3).

Another principle is the rule of Law. Graham et al, (2003:3) argue that legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights. The judicial system is crucial in establishing a just society in which people from all walks of life, from different faiths can live in peace and harmony with no discrimination (Ali, 2014:71). Equally important, good governance requires fair legal structure that must

be applied objectively in order to give full protection to the human rights of the people, most especially those minorities (Ali, 2014:71).

The last principles are effectiveness and efficiency. Good governance means that processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal (Graham, et al, 2003:3). Decision makers should have a broad and long term vision on how to better the process of governance to ensure continued economic and social development (Ali, 2014:73).

Democracy

Democracy is one of the most discussed and contested concept of political science. It is still highly contested in analytical and ideological discourse (Wiseman 1996). There is a widespread agreement that democracy is a good political system based on common values shared by peoples throughout the world irrespective of cultural, political, social and economic differences. It is thus a basic right of citizenship to be exercised under conditions of freedom, equality, transparency and responsibility, with due respect for the plurality of views, and in the interest of the polity (Bassiouni, et al, 1998: IV)

Like most political terms, democracy lacks a universal definition. Generally democracy is conceived as involving the guarantee of social justice, government accountability, human freedoms and rule by the people (Klein, 2011:2). In broad terms, therefore, democracy refers to a system of governance in which the rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives (Dahl, 1971).

Kabelo Matlosa (2005) defines democracy as a political system that allows citizens to freely choose their government over time through fair elections, a system that accords them adequate participation in national affairs, and a system in which national affairs are run in a transparent and accountable manner and above all, a system in which there is fair distribution of national wealth. Matlosa's definition of democracy finds resonance with Nongoza-Ntalaja and Lee (1998) who articulate the meaning of democracy as a system in which power should be from the people who elect

representatives to form the government, with emphasis on the rule of law, power should not be arbitrary and that its exercise must be circumscribed by a set of rules with respect to its limits and the mode of operation. They argue that there is need for accountability to the people; that people must be able to monitor government and its conduct, in order to have openness and citizen participation, and in addition government should be set up in a way that people are able to change leaders who are no longer serving the interest of the society (Nongoza-Ntalaja and Lee, 2008). The UNDP Human Development Report (2002) identifies human rights, public opinion, the rule of law, gender and political competition as the constituent elements of democratic governance. For the purpose of this study, democracy is defined as a political system in which power rests in the people, where fundamental rights of individuals, the rule of law, accountability and constitution are upheld, as encompassed in the UNECA African Governance Report II (2009).

The above definitions of democracy place the advancement of human development as a critical component of democracy, and there are about three reasons for this. Ibrahim and Cheri (2013:61) argue that first, enjoying political freedom and participating in the decisions that shape peoples' lives represent fundamental human rights which are essential aspects of human development; secondly, democracy id well institutionalised helps to protect people from economic and political catastrophes such as famines and descents into chaos, through its capacity to mobilize people and resources for the common good and by facilitating dialogue, debate, and consultations. Democracies also contribute to political stability, providing open space for political opposition to express views on national issues; and thirdly, democratic governance can trigger a virtuous cycle of development because political freedom empowers people to press for policies that expand social and economic opportunities (Ibrahim and Cheri, 2013:61).

Robert Dahl (1971), provides the main features of democracy which include; contestation for political office and policy choices; popular participation in election and other elements of political decision making; the accountability of elected officials under the rule of law; guarantee of human rights and political freedoms. Other features include, military accountability to civilian authority; presence of civil society; an independent judiciary; and openness of society; a democratic culture and democratic

spirit; constitutional limitation of political power through the separation of powers, checks and balances (Dahl, 1971).

Democracy is more than just a set of specific government institutions; it rests upon a well understood group of values, attitudes, and practices, all of which may take different forms and expressions among different cultures and societies around the world (Klein, 2001:3). Some of the core democratic characteristics include, democracy being a government in which power and civic responsibility are exercised by all adult citizens directly or indirectly through their freely elected representatives; democracy rests upon the principle of majority rule, which means that decisions are made by majority and have to be accepted by all, but minority viewpoints are respected and protected (Klein, 2011:3).

In a democracy one of their prime responsibility is to protect basic human rights, freedom of speech and religion, the right to equal protection under the law, and the opportunity to organise and participate fully in the political, economic, and cultural life of society (Klein, 2001:3). Democracies conduct regular free and fair elections open to all citizens of voting age, citizens in a democracy have not only rights, but also the responsibility to participate in political systems that, in turn, protect their rights and freedoms; and that democratic societies are committed to the values of tolerance, cooperation, and compromise (Klein, 2011:3).

Institutions

Douglas North (1991) indicates that institutions are both informal (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct), and formal (constitutions, laws, property rights). This classification of institution is also supported by Leftwich (2006:1), who also indicates that institutions can be formal or informal; formal institutions are normally established and constituted by binding laws, regulations and legal orders which prescribe what may or may not be done. Informal institutions, on the other hand, are constituted by conventions, norms, values and accepted ways of doing things, whether economic, political or social; these are embedded in traditional social practices and culture which can be equally binding (Leftwich, 2006:10). So, for example, laws which grant, recognise and protect individual land ownership establish

formal institutions governing property rights in land, whereas communal systems of land tenure may be thought of as informal, embodying rules which have been established by custom and convention and do not permit private ownership, purchase or sale (Leftwich, 2006:10).

Institutions are the kinds of structures that matter most in the social realm, they make up the substance of social life (Hodgson, 2006:2). There is an increase in the acknowledgement of the role of institutions, and that social life involves the recognition that much of human interaction and activity is structured in terms of overt or implicit rules, and it is from this understanding that Hodgson (2006:2), defines institutions as systems of established and prevalent social rules that structure social interactions.

Helmke and Levitsky (2004:727) define institutions as rules and procedures that structure social interaction by shaping and constraining actors' behaviour. Their definition is supported by North (1990:3) who defines institutions as the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction. Institutions structure behaviour and promote social order and trust, which in turn facilitate co-operation for social and economic progress (Nganje, 2015:4).

The African Peer Review Mechanism finds resonance with the discourse around the contribution of political and democratic institutions to developmental governance. North argues that the importance of governance concerning development relies on the formation of institutional structures (North 1993). The basic assumption is that if these structures are designed for providing accountability, transparency and responsiveness, the potential for economic and social development will be enhanced (Grimm, et al, 2009: 11).

Rod Alence (2004) establishes a strong link between the quality of Africa's political institutions and the poor state of governance and socio-economic development on the continent. Nganje (2015:5), blames the poor state of governance on the advent of colonialism and the birth of the post- colonial state whose conduct resulted in a weak and dysfunctional institutions in Africa, a predicament that is also reflected in the slow progress towards regional integration and continental unity on the continent. He further argues that prior to European colonisation, political and social life in Africa was

underpinned by a diversity of institutional systems that reflected the different circumstances and political philosophies of the continent's many socio-cultural groups (Nganje, 2015:5). Despite certain imperfections, political institutions in traditional African societies were functional and resilient enough to engender peace, social cohesion and economic development, and this was mainly because they were rooted in the indigenous values and social conditions of the respective polities, but also because they embodied a shared political philosophy that placed checks and balances on the exercise of political authority (Nganje, 2015:5).

OECD (2014) indicate that effective institutions enable people to work together effectively and peacefully, and that fair institutions ensure that all people have equal rights and a chance to improve their lives, and access to justice when they are wronged. Effective institutions can take many forms: robust legal frameworks and representative parliaments with strong capacity for oversight; adept civil services and the timely and quality delivery of public services; efficient judiciaries that uphold the rule of law; vibrant and actively engaged civil societies; and free and independent media (OECD, 2014).

2.3. Democratic governance in Africa

The dawn of democracy in Africa in the 1990s attracted scholars in the field of history and political science who provided a wide coverage of this development in their writings. Authors like Ottaway M (1997) in *Democracy in Africa: The Hard Road Ahead*, argues that democratisation in Africa faced many obstacles as supportive social and economic conditions were largely absent. The obstacles included leaders who resisted the redistribution of authority that accompanies democratisation; political developments concerned primarily with power struggles rather than construction of formal political and democratic institutions; and the difficulty of legitimating democratic regimes under conditions of persistent economic crisis (Ottaway, 1997).

Ibrahim and Cheri (2013), indicate that during the onset of multi-party democracy in the so called third wave of democratization, most regimes in Africa did not embrace the changes that accompanied the transition. For instance, most nations accepted multi-party democracy out of Western pressure and agitation for change, and as a

result, the constitutional framework and state institutions have been tempered with in order to create a non-level playing ground for the opposition (Ibrahim and Cheri, 2013). This resulted in poor democratic governance, violation of the constitutions, manipulation of elections, corruption, and undermining democracy and good governance by reducing accountability and distorting representation in policy making, and compromising the rule of law (Ibrahim and Cheri, 2013).

The new calibre of African leadership, comprised of leaders such as Thabo Mbeki, of South Africa; Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria; and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, took the challenge of democratisation in Africa very seriously (Southall, 2006:222). Persuaded by the need for change and the demand for democracy from civil society and the international system, these leaders placed high priority on democratic development in the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

The OAU focused mainly in its mandate that of protecting Africa's independence, the sovereignty of nation states, liberation struggle, African unity, solidarity among its members and reversing the continent's economic underdevelopment (Matlosa, 2008). Less attention was given to democracy and good governance and as such Africa experienced the worst forms of governance, among them, dictatorship, authoritarian and autocratic governments (Shalk, 2005:503).

Collectively, African leaders decided at an Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of African Heads of State and Government in the Libyan city of Sirte on September 9, 1999 to transform the OAU into the African Union (Schoeman, 2006:251). This was after African leaders were convinced that the OAU can no longer address the challenges of the twenty first century, among them socio-economic development, and democratic and political governance challenges (Schoeman, 2006:251). The formal inauguration of the AU was held in Durban, South Africa in 2002, wherein the AU endorsed the New Partnership for Africa's Development, adopted by the OAU in Lusaka, Zambia in 2001, as Africa's development programme (Southall, 2006:232).

Akokpari J (2003) indicates that there are ample grounds for both optimism and pessimism about the capacity of the AU and NEPAD to promote good governance. Unlike the OAU, the AU and NEPAD take democracy and good governance very

serious that they are entrenched in their objectives and principles. The AU's Constitutive Act key objectives include the promotion of democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance (The Constitutive Act of the African Union, 2000). NEPAD's six priority initiatives include democracy and political governance initiatives (Matlosa, 2008). AU cemented its commitment to democracy through the signing of the NEPAD Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance in 2002. The AU also signed the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Good Governance in 2007, aimed at promoting the adherence to the universal values and principles of democracy (AU, 2007).

2.4. The African Peer Review Mechanism

Suleman, et al, (2008) view the APRM as a self-monitoring process focused on good governance to which countries commit themselves in order to foster the kind of practice that would lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and regional integration. Kebonang and Fombad (2006) indicate that the APRM is a voluntary process that seeks to promote good governance.

This is supported by Article 6 (2) of the Statute of the African Peer Review Mechanism which states that membership of the APRM shall comprise and be limited to AU Member States that have voluntarily acceded to it (Statute of the African Peer Review Mechanism, 2016). Kabelo Matlosa (2008) indicates that a country that accedes to the APRM commits itself to be reviewed in terms of its practice around four clusters of governance, namely, democracy and good governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance, and socio-economic development.

Annie Barbara Chikwanha (2007) contributes to the subject by raising several arguments regarding the challenges of the APRM, that so long as African leaders and government are in the position of gatekeepers in the review exercise, meaningful progress will be difficult to achieve. She argues that the APRM is already showing symptoms of becoming trapped in the 'bureaucratic tangles and inertia' that have plagued the continent since decolonisation. Furthermore, she raises the issue of implementation capacity. What has been a norm in most of the participating countries is shortage of funds to educate the public on the APRM and to create effective

institution to facilitate the APRM process. Kebonag and Fombard (2006) identify the funding issues as a major challenge, contending that shortage of funds will compromise the APRM. The APR secretariat does not have its own funding, nor has NEPAD/AU provided budget for it. The argument is that without adequate funding, the APRM runs a danger of collapsing. Steve Gruzd (2010) adds to the challenges of the APRM, indicating that the lack of enforcement mechanism of the APRM recommendations, the APRM risks becoming barking dog without teeth.

2.5. Conclusion

The existing literature lack a diverse definition of peer review in relation to country peer reviews. Most scholar support Pangani (2002)'s definition of peer review, which describes peer review as a systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a state by other states. This type of peer review requires openness and transparency to other countries. This might be a challenge in the African context and the APRM in particular, as Article 4 of the African Union Act emphasises the need for non-interference by any member state in the internal affairs of another (Fombad, 2006:20).

The literature is clear on that good governance and democracy has been and remains a serious challenge in the African continent. Equally the existing literature agrees that improving good governance and consolidating democracy may have positive contribution in Africa's aspirations of achieving a sustainable socioeconomic development. The literature further indicate that NEPAD and the APRM exists for this reason, and if well institutionalised Africa will realise good governance and democracy.

Chapter Three

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a broader explanation of the research methodology applied in this study. The chapter discusses documentary research applied in the study. Document rich with information on the African Peer Review Mechanism and democratic governance in Africa are explored to deepen the researcher's understanding of the topic. The researcher used the qualitative research approach, and this chapter will detail how the study on the African Peer Review Mechanism and the advancement of democracy in Africa lends itself to this approach. In assessing the APRM, and advancement of democratic governance in Africa the researcher consulted mainly secondary literature sources. This chapter will also reflect data collection methods; data analysis techniques used in the study; limitations of the study and ethical considerations.

3.2. Documentary research

This is a documentary research study that relied mostly on analysis of documents in their secondary form. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic material (Bowen, 2009:27). Secondary data included in the study comprised of published written documents such as, books, journal articles, speeches, and reports on the African Peer Review Mechanism and democratic governance in Africa. Documentary secondary data was used primarily to provide background literature on the African Peer Review Mechanism, and to identify common concepts to strengthen the conceptual framework of this study.

Study also consulted the official APRM such as, APRM base document, APRM guidelines, APRM strategic plans, Communiqués and Meeting Reports; the CSAR; Progress Reports on Implementation of the NPoA; Memorandum of Understanding

(MoU). Most of these official documents were accessed online, for example, on websites of the APRM continental secretariat, the NEPAD secretariat, various national APRM secretariats, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

Documentary research is applied in this study because, document analysis is an efficient and effective way of gathering data since documents are manageable and practical resources. Documents are commonplace and come in a variety of forms, making documents a very accessible and reliable source of data. Obtaining and analysing documents is often far more cost efficient and time efficient than conducting own research or experiments (Bowen, 2009:31). Also, documents are stable data sources, meaning that they can be read and reviewed multiple times and remain unchanged by the researcher's influence or research process (Bowen, 2009, 31). Document research enabled the researcher access to a plethora of written information on democratic governance in Africa and the African Peer Review Mechanism, proving a wider scope of debates on these issues.

3.3. Research Method

This section discusses the research methods aspects to be employed by the researcher in this study. This include a qualitative research approach, data collection method, and data analysis.

3.3.1. Qualitative Research approach

This study is conducted based on a qualitative research approach, described by Nieuwenhuis (2007:50), as "research that attempts to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon with the intention of developing an understanding of what is being observed or studied". This is applicable as the study seeks to develop an understanding of the African Peer Review Mechanism and the democratic governance phenomenon in Africa. It is important to develop this understand, because the democratic governance process in Africa has faced many challenges and remains weak and barely institutionalised, and the African Peer Review Mechanism becomes the most significant tool in addressing African democratic governance challenges in

the twenty first century. Studying the case of the African Peer Review Mechanism, through exploratory case study will assist in understanding the progress and capabilities of the African Peer Review Mechanism in advancing democratic governance and reversing the plight of social, economic and political underdevelopment in Africa.

The qualitative research approach is also applicable in social science research based on empirical questions that are exploratory and historical in nature. It is important to have a historical overview of the roles of African institutions in democratisation of the continent. For instances, the Organisation of the African Unity established in 1963, focused more on decolonisation and less attention was given to democracy and good governance, leading to undemocratic political governance across the continent. The transformation of the OAU to the African Union in 2002 gave birth to the New Partnership for Africa's Development, Africa's developmental programme which acknowledged that development is impossible in the absence of true democracy and good governance (Matlosa, 2008:16). NEPAD led to the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism aimed at advancing democratic governance in Africa.

3.3.2. Data collection method

This study used documentary analysis as data collection method. This method relates to the analysis of relevant documents, including written material that contains information relevant to the APRM. This method was applied to Chapters One, Two, Three and Four. Using documents as data collection technique the focus is more on that may shed light on the phenomenon that is being investigated. Written data may include published and unpublished documents, reports, memorandums, and articles, or any document that is connected to the investigation (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:82). Information collected focused on democratisation in Africa and the African Peer Review Mechanism with the view to gain better insight into the progress of APRM in advancing democratic governance in Africa.

It is advised that in selecting documents to be included in the study, the researcher must verify the kind of documents, if its primary or secondary; date of publication in order to determine if the phenomenon has changed in recent years; the purpose of the

document, and the context in which it was produced; and the relationship between the arguments put forward and the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:82).

The study relied mainly on secondary sources when collecting data. To acquire this data the researcher embarked on a literature search, which involves reviewing all readily available materials such as books, published articles and reports from the university of Pretoria library and research institutions which have produced a plethora of literature on the African Peer Review Mechanism and democratic governance in Africa such as the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), the Southern Africa Democracy Barometer (SADB), the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), and the Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA). Primary sources include the African Union resolutions, base documents, and speeches by African leaders on the African Peer Review Mechanism and democratic governance in Africa, sourced from the government's publications, and internet websites of the AU and the APRM.

Relevant themes explored in the documents includes the APRM mandate, objectives and principles; its focus on democracy and good political governance, institutional setups, progress, challenges and prospects. Documents retrieved from websites were saved on diskettes for safe keeping, and for later use when printed and read to understand the phenomenon of the APRM and democracy in Africa.

3.3.3. Data analysis

The data collection was through document analysis as mentioned above. Subsequent to the collection of data on the APRM and democracy in Africa, the researcher analysed it using data analysis tools discussed below in order to explore if it responds to the major question of the study. Terreblanche and Durrhei (1999:154) assert that data analysis includes striking a balance between theory and practice, critical reading through the data collected, examining and breaking down the data and packaging it in a manner that will help facilitate interpretation and elaboration. Baker (1988:243) adds that the task of analysis is to bring order out of the chaos of the notes prepared, pick out central themes of the study and carry them to the writing of the final work.

The study applied qualitative content analysis, which involves the systematic analysis of social artefacts to provide an in-depth understanding of text and their specific contexts (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014:191). The researcher interpreted the narratives in content of documents with the goal of providing a thick description of democratisation in Africa and the African Peer Review Mechanism. This approach was relevant for this study as Nieuwenhuis J (2007:101) indicates that, this approach is most effective when looking for narratives in texts such as journals, books, and written documents.

The researcher also applied the historical research data analysis which is focused on the analysis of and description of events that occurred in the past in order to gain understanding of the current events. The researcher analysed the historical background of democratisation in Africa, the involvement of the OAU, and the AU, in the advancement of democratic governance in Africa, and the African Peer Review Mechanism's establishment and existence. Strydom and Bezuidenhout (2014:192) indicate that historic research involves analysis of decision made in the past, as well as the consequences that these actions had, help to show the past and the future; and it also assist in making decision based on the outcome of historic situation. Decision made at the AU, that of establishing and setting up the APRM becomes critical in understanding the historical background of the APRM, the role of those decision in the progress the APRM had made to date, including challenges that may have arisen as a results of such decisions.

As pointed out above, the data for this research will be collected by employing a qualitative research approach which enabled literature review based on studying relevant APRM documentations such as resolutions, books and journals. The advantage of this data analysis is that the documents used already exist and cannot be tempered with or altered.

3.4. Limitation

The study did not include field observation which is one of the research methods used in the collection of data in qualitative approach and case study design. Bailey (1982: 247) asserts that 'the observational method is the primary technique for collecting data

on verbal behaviour. Although observation most commonly involves sight or visual data collection, it could also include data collection via the other senses, such as hearing, touch or smell'. In respect to the APRM participation in conferences and information session would have further nourished the study.

The researcher did not conduct interviews, which is a qualitative data collection method because they are time consuming and the research have limited time, and also can be expensive if one want to cover a large sample, and printing costs. Fortunately those who would have been respondents have contributed massively in the literature of the African Peer Review Mechanism and democratic governance in Africa, and their views will be sourced from published books, journals and articles.

3.5. Ethical procedures

The researcher followed ethical principles of research such as professionalism as provided for within the university's guidelines, with the view of maintaining the researcher's reputation and that of the university. In this regard, plagiarism was avoided at all cost; all ideas borrowed from other scholars were cited. The researcher avoided the use of false reports. Deception was avoided as only true and accurate information covers the study. Unpublished information was not cited as published and vice versa.

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter discussed documentary research in qualitative research approach, and reflected on documents analysis as a data collection techniques, approaches to analysis of data in accordance with the research questions posed. An attempt was also made to explain the defining reasons for selecting the research methodology and design, data collection methods and techniques and the analysis of the data collected. The Chapter also covered limitation to the study, which included not conducting interviews due to time constrains; and covered also ethical procedures, assuring to abide by university guidelines and maintaining academic professionalism expected from a researcher in an academic environment.

Chapter Four

4. The APRM's progress and challenges in advancing democratic governance in Africa

4.1. Introduction

The African Peer Review Mechanism has been in existence for 14 years. This chapter discusses the APRM's progress, challenges and prospects in advancing democratic governance in Africa. The discussion includes the focus on the APRM objectives and processes, the APRM focus areas, and its achievements. The chapter also provides a thorough discussion focusing on institutional challenges facing the African Peer Review Mechanism, thereby answering the question: What are the key institutional factors impeding the African Peer Review Mechanism's progress in achieving its mandate and objectives aimed at advancing democratic governance in Africa?

4.2. The APRM's mandate, objectives and processes

After realizing that good governance is a key paradigm in achieving sustainable socio-economic development, African leaders during the Sixth Summit of the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, held in March 2003 in Abuja, Nigeria, adopted the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the African Peer Review Mechanism. The mechanism, which is turning out to be the most innovative aspect of NEPAD, is essentially a self-monitoring process focused on good governance to which countries commit themselves in order to foster the kind of practices that would lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and regional integration (Suleman, et al, 208:36).

The mandate of APRM is to ensure that the policies and practices of participating states conform to the agreed political, economic, and corporate governance values, codes, and standards (Mangu, 2014:63). The APRM commits leaders of participating countries to promoting these codes and standards in their own countries and regionally.

The Africa Peer Review Mechanism has been created as an initiative to use peer pressure and demonstration effects to assess progress and performance among participating countries towards achieving agreed goals in areas such as democracy and political governance (Rankner, et al, 2007:9). The mechanism is open to all AU members, and accession entails undertaking to submit to periodic peer reviews and to facilitate such reviews (Matlosa, 2008:17). The periodic peer reviews involves a wide range consultations with civil society, which includes the media, academia, trade unions, business and professional bodies (Suleman, et al, 2008:37).

The periodic peer review process allows for a broader analyses and assessments of progress and performance among participating countries towards achieving mutually agreed goals in the areas of Democracy and Political Governance, Economic Governance and Management, Corporate Governance and Socio-economic Development (Rankner, et al, 2007:10).

The process also entails identifying best practices, which through sharing experiences will help African countries to learn from each other and develop solutions to common governance and developmental problems, as well as undertaking interventions to build capacity (Rankner, et al, 2007:10). By implication, these practices also provide examples or models of how to attain the agreed governance norms and standards, and furthermore, best practices provide the template for the harmonised or common strategies necessary to meet the APRM's objective of promoting regional and continental integration (Petlane and Gruzd, 2011:8).

There are five stages through which the APRM process evolves. Stage one is the preparatory phase during which the Secretariat prepares a background document about the country, and the country uses the questionnaire to prepare a self-assessment (Suleman, et al, 2008:37). The country establishes a Focal Point and constitutes an independent national governing council (NGC) or a national commission consisting of all the stakeholders, to conduct the self-assessment exercise on the basis of the questionnaire and with the assistance, if necessary, of the Secretariat and relevant partner institutions (Mangu, 2014:64). The process culminate in three outputs, namely, the National Programme of Action (PoA) prepared by the country, the

Background Paper prepared by the APRM Secretariat, and the Issue Paper prepared from the National Programme of Action and the Background Paper (Matlosa, 2008:19).

Stage two is the APR team visit to the participating country to carry out the widest possible range of consultations with the government, officials, political parties, parliamentarians, and representatives of civil society organisations, including the media, academia, trade unions, business, and professional bodies (Mangu, 2014:64). According to the APRM Guidelines document (2003) the main purpose of the visit is to learn about the perspectives of different stakeholders on governance in the country and to clarify issues identified in the Issues Paper that are not taken into account in the preliminary Programme of Action of the country, and to build consensus on how these could be addressed.

Stage three is the drafting of the country review report (CRR) on the basis of the briefing material prepared by the APR Secretariat and the information gathered in stage two (Mangu, 2014:64). Specific focus is given to how the National Programme of Action could be improved, highlighting the best practises and identifying deficiencies and challenges that would call for the deliberate efforts towards capacity-building for the nurturing and consolidation of democratic governance (Matlosa, 2008:21).

In stage four both the country report as well as the PoA are submitted to the APR Secretariat and APR Panel. At this point, the panel takes over the process, reviews the report and makes recommendations for policy reforms (Grimm, et al, 2009:37). The report as well as recommendations are then handed on to the APR Forum, which discusses the report and then communicates actions deemed necessary to the institutions at the national level in the reviewed country (Grimm, et al, 2009:37). If the government is willing to address the identified shortcomings, other participating governments and development partners are required and urged to provide support and assistance in rectifying remaining problems, and if the government is not willing to address challenging issues, peer pressure is meant to be applied (Grimm, et al, 2009:37).

Stage five is the final stage of the APRM. It is the formal and public tabling of the report in key regional and sub-regional structures such as the Pan-African Parliament, the

African Commission, the Peace and Security Council, and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the AU (Mangu, 2014:64). This happens within six months after the report was considered by the APR Forum (Suleman, 2008:38).

4.3. The APRM's focus areas

As indicated earlier, participation in the African Peer Review Mechanism means that a country commits itself to be periodically reviewed in terms of its practice around four clusters of governance, namely, democracy and good political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance, and socioeconomic development (Matlosa, 2008:17-18). The focus on democracy and good political governance is to ensure that the constitutions of participating countries reflect the democratic ethos and provide for accountable governance, and that political representation is promoted, thus providing for all citizens to participate in the political process in a free and fair political environment (NEPAD, 2011). The APRM is of the view that Good economic and corporate governance including transparency in financial management are essential pre-requisites for promoting economic growth and reducing poverty (NEPAD, 2003). It is for this reason that there is a concerted efforts to promote macroeconomic policies that support sustainable development; implement transparent, predictable and credible government economic policies; promote sound public finance management; fight corruption and money laundering; and the accelerate regional integration (APRM, 2016). The APRM also requires an assessment of corporate governance of participating countries with the focus on promoting ethical principles, values and practices that are in line with broader social and economic goals to benefit all citizens. It works to promote a sound framework for good corporate governance (NEPAD, 2011). On Socioeconomic development, the APRM is guided by the understanding that poverty can only be effectively tackled through the promotion of democracy, good governance, peace and security as well as the development of human and physical resources (NEPAD, 2003).

4.4. Governance structures of the APRM

The structures are clearly articulated in the APRM Organisation and Process Guidelines document (NEPAD, 2003b). The Committee of Participating Heads of State

and Government, also known as the APR Heads of State Forum or APR Forum is the highest decision-making authority in the APRM (Herbert and Gruzd, 2008:13). The APR Forum's mandate includes the selection of personalities for and the appointment of the APR Panel; consider, adopt, and take ownership of country review reports submitted by the APR Panel; establish and approve the rules of procedure for the APR Forum and approve those of the APR Panel; communicate the recommendations of the APR Forum to the Head of State or Government of the reviewed country immediately after the review meeting, among others (NEPAD, 2003b).

The Panel of Eminent Persons consists of seven members who are nominated by the member states and are appointed by the APR Forum (Grimm, et al, 2009:27). Guidelines demand that the members must be Africans with high moral stature, that they need to be familiar with the APRM and that they should be strongly committed to the ideals of Pan-Africanism (NEPAD, 2003b). The purpose of the Panel is to protect the process from political interference and ensure its integrity (Herbert and Gruzd, 2008:13). Some of the important mandate of the Panel is to oversee the selection of the APR Teams and appoint them to conduct country reviews; recommend appropriate African institutions or individuals to conduct technical assessments; and submit to the APR Forum all country review reports with recommendations on measures that could be taken to assist the country in the improvement of its governance and socio-economic development performance (NEPAD, 2003b).

The APR Secretariat, headed by Professor Eddy Maloka, provides technical, secretarial, and administrative support to the Panel and the Forum (Jahed and Khithatu, 2008:110). It is based in Midrand, South Africa. The Secretariat is funded by voluntary contributions from countries that have acceded and by a trust fund to which development partners have contributed (Herbert and Gruzd, 2008:114). The Secretariat is responsible for preparing a background research report on governance in each country, this is a paper outlining the main issues that will guide the Country Review Mission; it maintains database and information on the four areas of focus of the APRM and the political and economic developments in all participating countries; proposing performance indicators and tracking the performance of each participating countries; liaises with participating countries and partner institutions to follow progress of technical assessments; plan and organize the Country Review Visits; and

recommend to the APR Panel on the composition of APR Teams and recruit the experts required for research and analysis (NEPAD 2003b).

4.5. Achievements of the APRM

The purpose of the APRM process is to promote standard-setting and best practice, identify areas of under-performance, flag associated risks and signal potential sources of conflict within member countries, all with the aim of establishing better governance (Small, 2015:2). The published APRM country review reports have lived up to this purpose, and have provided a sense of optimism in advancing democratic governance in Africa. These reports have raised awareness of governance issues, energised the continent and taken small but significant steps to remedy big problems (Gruzd, 2010:1). It is in Gruzd's point of view that with committed leadership, greater transparency and better documentation of success stories, the APRM promises to become even more significant in future (Gruzd, 2010:1).

Thus far the APRM has managed to convince 36 African states to voluntarily accede to it, for peer review. These are, Algeria, Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gabon, Mali, Senegal, Mauritius, Egypt, Benin, Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Sudan and Zambia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Djibouti, Mauritania, Togo, Cape Verde, Liberia, Equatorial Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Tunisia, and Chad (<https://au.int/en/organs/aprm>). This indeed is an achievement, having more than half of the AU member states acceding to the APRM required a convincing and effective strategic approach. It is important to also note that of these 36 members, only 17 have undergone country reviews, and it presents a problem for the APRM.

The benefits derived from the APRM cannot be overemphasised. In some countries, such as South Africa, Kenya and Ghana, its findings have highlighted good practices that are worthy of broader dissemination across the continent, drawn attention to impending crises that need immediate preventive action, and analysed virtually all issues of governance that fall somewhere in between (Gruzd, 2010:2). In the unfortunate situation where crises already anticipated by APRM reviews were left unaddressed and eventually materialised, APRM recommendations have provided a

useful framework for immediate resolution and long-term reform. In South Africa one of the key recommendations by the Panel of Eminent Persons, ignored by government, was that it should deal with growing xenophobia, the APRM CRR states that xenophobia against other Africans is on the rise and should be nipped in the bud. South African government did not act or provide the necessary measures, and the country erupted in a wave of xenophobic attacks in May 2008 that left 62 dead and a further 670 injured (Turianskyi, 2010:29).

Gruzd (2010), indicates that the APRM has been able to bring positive impacts on policy formulation of its member states and international recognition. A country such as Ghana has developed a draft land use master plan; established a ministry of chieftaincy and cultural affairs; increased its district assemblies from 138 to 166; passed laws on human trafficking, persons with disabilities, whistleblowers and domestic violence; drafted a national policy on the aged; and established several institutions to counter corruption including tender boards and internal audit agencies. Rwanda was singled out for praise in the World Bank's 2010 Doing Business survey for implementing business reforms and rectifying corporate governance weaknesses revealed by its APRM report (Gruzd, 2010:3).

In Kenya the benefits included the established peace committees; passed laws on political parties, maternity and paternity leave, sexual offences and refugees; developed a master plan on land use; established agencies to combat drugs and tender irregularities and improve ethical conduct; increased immunisation coverage dramatically since 2003; and established a ministry of women and children's affairs. APRM recommendations helped inform its proposed new constitution (Gruzd, 2010:3).

4.6. Challenges facing the African Peer Review Mechanism

Not only has the APRM enjoyed some of the above mentioned achievements, it is also faced with many challenges that are political in nature, mainly because African leaders and governments are in position of gate-keeper in the APRM review exercise (Chikwanha, 2007:1) . A close examination of the state the APRM reveals a number of these challenges that have been encountered over the past years. This include the lack of technical capacity, lack of enforcement mechanisms, funding, lack of

monitoring mechanism, the APRM's dependence on governments being reviewed, and lack of political commitment and will.

4.6.1. Lack of technical capacity at the APRM Secretariat and APRM members

The APR secretariat is supposed to provide the secretarial, technical, coordinating and administrative support services for APRM. It is also required to work with other units of the AU commission or other AU organs. To discharge these functions properly, there must be sufficient staff with the technical and administrative capacity to undertake and manage the analytical work that underpins the peer review process and also conform to the principles of the APRM. The APRM is currently experiencing severe staff shortages, and this has been identified as one of the weaknesses in the APRM strategic plan, 2016-2020, which indicates that limited staff capacity and adverse impact of financial uncertainty to attract and retain high calibre experts is a challenge for the institution (APRM Strategic Plan, 2016:11).

After some few years of its existence the APRM started to experience challenges related to technical capacity at its Secretariat. It has been bedevilled with weak institutional and organizational constraints despite remarkable efforts, such as having APRM operational, in organizing and delivering first-rate APRM Country Review Missions and Reports (Economic Commission for Africa, 2011:19). The technical capacity challenges have resulted in internal management failures, poor coordination among different APRM organs, and worsening the situation was the absence for nearly eight years of a chief executive officer for the Secretariat with full mandate to run the institution, leading to the onset of a sense of loss of direction for some time (APRM Strategic Plan, 2016:17). There are real fears that unless urgent action is taken to address the problem of the APRM Secretariat capacity, the APRM risks losing credibility in the eyes of the participating member States and all stakeholders (Economic Commission for Africa, 2011:19).

At the country level, the pace of completing the review cycle has been very slow in many countries, with major variations across countries. While the process took between 8 and 14 months in pioneer countries such as Kenya, Ghana and South Africa, other countries have been slow in setting up their APRM national structures

and completing their self- assessments. It has taken some countries such as Uganda several years to complete the process, even after receiving the country review mission. There is a need to find ways of shortening the time-frame between receiving the Country Support Mission and completing the entire process (Economic Commission for Africa, 2011: 20).

4.6.2. Funding the APRM

The APRM also faces challenges of funding. The APRM secretariat does not currently have its own funding, nor has NEPAD and AU provide any budget for it. The APRM receives its funding from the assessed contributions of participating member states, with each APRM member country obligated to contribute \$100,000 per annum; additional special contributions are expected from the five originating countries, Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa (Reitmaier, 2014:7). The financial status of the APRM is in poor shape, mainly because of the fact that the majority of members are behind in annual contributions.

The financial challenges are resulting in the APRM secretariat being short-staffed and lacks the technical knowledge necessary to complete the reviews and moreover, the secretariat is generally over-stretched given the tremendous breadth of APRM reviews, which cover democracy, political governance, corporate governance, economic governance, as well as other areas (Elgin-Cossart and Chandran, 2016:19). This will bring doubts on the reviews that emerge, that they may not be of a sufficient technical standard and contain inaccurate or outdated information, which could undermine their credibility as practical resources for policy development.

Lack of funding subjects the APRM to seek funding elsewhere which, could potentially undermine the political ownership and have unintended effects on the peer review's legitimacy. Mangu (2014:17) indicates that for the APRM to remain an African-driven and owned mechanism, African governments should be able to fund the APRM from their own national budgets. Mangu further adds that democracy and good political governance, which are to be promoted by the AU under the APRM, should be primarily home-grown and funded. Africans should understand that they cannot demand

democracy and good political governance, which is in their own interest, and yet rely on others to pay for it (Mangu 2014, 70).

4.6.3. The lack of enforcement mechanism

One of the most unclear aspects of the APRM process concerns the consequences that will follow the refusal or failure, for whatever reasons, by a participating state to take the necessary measures to correct shortcomings exposed by the review process.

It is for this reason that the APRM has been criticised for its lack of enforcement mechanism for implementation of its recommendation to members' states. Steven Gruzd (2010), argues that in the absence of a clear formal punishment for non-compliance, one easily concludes that the APRM stands to become a barking dog without teeth. This position is also supported by Mangu (2014:69) who indicates that in the APRM there are no effective sanctions for lack of democracy and good political governance, and yet, democracy and good political governance cannot prosper without any possibility of sanctions for those leaders who have become famous for the violations of the rule of law and human rights in their countries.

Africa faces huge challenges when it comes to governance; leaders are very reluctant to open up with honesty, to admit as to how bad things are in their countries. They want to appear to have small challenges which are common to every country. If the APRM panel indicates the true reflection of their governance, they resort to denial, or choose not to implement the APRM recommendations in full. The APRM fails to hold these leaders accountable, as it does not have a formal 'hard pressure' to ensure compliance. There is a need for the APRM to improve its ability to hold leaders to account (Gruzd, 2010:2).

4.6.4. Lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanism

Monitoring and evaluation are important management tools to track progress and facilitate decision making, and the greatest beneficiaries of an evaluation can be the community of people with whom the organization is serving. By closely examining

organisational work, the organization can design programs and activities that are effective, efficient, and yield powerful results for the community (World Bank 2007:1)

The World Bank (2007:1) defines monitoring as a continuing function that aims primarily to provide the management and main stakeholders of an ongoing intervention with early indications of progress, or lack thereof, in the achievement of results. An ongoing intervention might be a project, program or other kind of support to an outcome. Monitoring helps organizations track achievements by a regular collection of information to assist timely decision making, ensure accountability, and provide the basis for evaluation and learning

Evaluation on the other hand is define by the World Bank (2007) as the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, program, or policy, and its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision making process of both recipients and donors.

Considering the above, one of the biggest challenge and major weakness of the APRM mechanism is the lack of effective follow-up particularly, the implementation of the National Programs of Action (NPOAs). There are insufficient resources and capacity to monitor the implementation reports of the countries that have already completed the review process at the continental level. Although the continental Secretariat is in the process of designing a systematic continental Monitoring and Evaluation System, the operational challenges involved are likely to stretch the APRM Secretariat's capacity in managing the evaluation process of its member countries. (Economic Commission for Africa, 2011:19).

4.6.5. The APRM's process dependence on governments under review

One of the major shortcomings of the APRM lies in the fact that it is government or state centred and driven from its inception to its conclusion. This approach lead to a situation in which African leaders and governments are in the position of gate-keeper

in the review exercise, hence meaningful progress will be difficult to achieve within a reasonable and workable time period, and the likely undesirable result is that the APRM, though designed to be a continuous activity, risks becoming moribund in the long run (Chikwanha, 2007:2).

Mangu (2014:69) indicates that cabinets of member's states have stranglehold on the APRM processes, controlling the APRM from the first to the final stage. With such dominance on the self-assessment process, cabinets are tempted to manipulate the work and to undermine the independence of the members of the APR teams to ensure that their views are endorsed by the APRM Secretariat and APR teams in their final reports (Mangu, 2014:69). This will put in question the credibility of the country review reports outcomes, and the entire review process.

The APRM states that the in-country costs of the APRM processes for member states must be borne by the country itself (APRM Guidelines, 2003:10). This strengthens the dominance of governments under review to dictate how their resources should be prioritised and what outcome should the country review report presents, in many cases a report favourable to the government. In order to have a credible APRM country review report, the APRM secretariat must mobilise enough resources to independently run the process with minimal government participation.

4.6.6. Lack of political will and commitment to the APRM

After the founders of NEPAD and the APRM, such as former Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Olusegun Obasanjo left the political stage the APRM started to experience a waning political support. At the continental level the APRM Heads of States Forum lost steam, with reduced commitment and waning of the initial enthusiasm and dynamism that characterized their work. In the case of the Forum, the peer review at this level has not been "vigorous," partly because "the considered documents [for review, e.g. the Country Review Reports, including the NPoA, and the periodic, half-yearly and annual reports, from already peer-reviewed Member States] had not been fully read by the Heads of State." (Economic Commission for Africa, 2010:19).

The success of the APRM is mainly dependent on the political will and commitment of African Heads of State and Government, as decisions to sign the APRM MOU, subject the state to peer review, establish a Focal Point, constitute NGC, sign an MOU with the APR Team for technical assessment and the country review visit, prepare and implement a POA, and to regularly and timely report to the APR Panel and Forum are made by the government under the leadership of the Head of State and Government of the concerned AU member state (Mangu, 2014:68).

At the national level of its member states, the APRM's biggest challenge became the political will to carry through all the precepts and principles contained in the MOU which countries have voluntarily committed to undertake. In theory, the APRM represents a valuable opportunity for civil society to get critical issues onto the national agenda and to engage the State in policy issues affecting the citizens' interest. In practice, however, the level and extent of participation greatly varies across countries depending on the government's political will to truly and meaningfully engage all stakeholders in the review process. (Economic Commission for Africa, 2010:19).

4.7. Conclusion

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was launched with so much fanfare and hope by continental leaders such as South Africa's Thabo Mbeki and Nigeria's Olusegun Obasanjo. As a self-monitoring mechanism acceded voluntarily and established with the aim of fostering the adoption of policies, standards and practices that engender and promote good governance, political stability, economic growth, sustainable development, the APRM enjoyed some success in the few year of its establishment.

The success was short lived as the APRM has not witnessed yet the accession of all members of the African Union, and only 17 of the 36 APRM members have completed their first review. The fact that a number of AU member states have not adhered to the APRM, that they have not signed and ratified some key standards and codes or have failed to comply with the NEPAD objectives several years after they acceded to the APRM suggests that that a strong political will or commitment to democracy is still lacking.

Essentially, without adequate funding, the APRM runs the danger of being unable to sustain its own operations. If this challenge is not addressed, Africa runs the risk of opening the door to over-reliance on donor funding. This would defeat the notion of African solutions to African problems, if Africa is unable to fund its own initiatives. Africa needs to jealously guard the APRM and ensure that it maintains its character as an African initiative.

Chapter Five

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study analysed the achievements and challenges of the African Peer Review Mechanism in advancing the democratic governance in Africa. From this analyses the study conclude that, the APRM has made significant contribution in the continent's democratisation process, in terms of promoting democratic values and opening up political space for citizens' participation in policy debates and increased advocacy for good governance. Notwithstanding some of these contribution, the APRM faces challenges that are mainly political. The first chapter of the study provided the background on the establishment of the APRM, and the involvement of the AU and NEPAD as the precursor institutions to the APRM.

The consulted literature provided a conceptual framework to broaden understating of the APRM. Key concepts covered included peer review, which still lacks a diverse definition towards country peer review. The definition of peer review by Pagani (2002) enjoys citation by many scholars as it speaks to the examination and assessment of a state by other states. From this understanding the APRM has to engage African leaders in assuring them that a country peer review does not imply the abdication of sovereignty of the country under review. The study find that good governance and democracy are still a challenge in Africa, thereby emphasising the need to institutionalise the APRM as a political and democratic institution central to Africa's developmental governance.

The study discussed African Peer Review Mechanism in detail, examining its mandate and purpose, its governance structures and the process of peer review. From studying the implementation of the APRM since 2003, a number of achievements are picked up. Generally the APRM have been able to identify deficiencies in governance of member states. The study also finds that the APRM is faced with a number of challenges that have manifest over the years, but are generally political in nature. The challenges include the lack of technical capacity, which have slowed down the number of countries reviews, and accession of new member states. The non-payment of

annual contributions by members hampers the APRM from effectively and timeously carrying out its mandate. Other challenges identified in the study include the lack of political support and commitment to the mechanism. The departure of the founding leaders of the APRM from the continental political scenes have created a vacuum and weakened the APRM. On the other hand leaders are reluctant to accede to the APRM, because of the fear of opening up their political administration to the public, continent and the world.

Recommendations

The study identified several recommendations to enhance the APRM's effectiveness in advancing democratic governance in Africa.

The lack of technical capacity at the APRM Secretariat and APRM member, resulted in the APRM process experiencing a stagnation in the membership of the Mechanism and in the number of countries that are engaged in the review process beyond accession (Chikwanha, 2007:3). To address this challenge the APRM should build and improve management systems with modern infrastructure and best human resources composed of best African academics and researchers in the field of democracy and good governance. There is a need reorganize the APRM Secretariat by developing an organisational structure that will allow the Secretariat to effectively provide the technical, coordinating and support services for the APRM.

Funding of the APRM remains a critical challenge. The APRM has experienced challenges in financing reviews of member states and staffing at its Secretariat (Kebonang and Fombad, 2006:49). If the APRM is going to achieve its aspiration of becoming fully reliant on African funding, this study recommends that all countries that are in arrears need to clear their debts within a reasonable period; the amount of annual contributions needs to be increased by at least 50% per member state; the AU should make budgetary provision for the APRM; and the APRM secretariat must develop a detailed financial management and resource mobilization strategy that will attract external funders.

Given the importance of monitoring and evaluation, the APRM should actualise and strengthen its monitoring and evaluation framework in order to effectively inform the APRM and its stakeholders on a regular basis on progress in implementing the APRM recommendation; allow APRM and its stakeholders to evaluate progress and assess the need to revise outputs, targets and indicators as needed; allow for evidence-based decision making; and to evaluate the efficiency of implementation by linking outcomes, outputs and activities to resources used.

The APRM's overarching objective is to use the assessment findings to assist participating countries in designing and implementing policies and programmes that improve governance. But like most of peer reviews, the APRM is premised on mutual trust, no confrontation, non-coercive persuasion, shared confidence, mutual trust (reciprocity) and confidence in the process of review. Thereby providing no space for an effective enforcement mechanism for the implementation of the APRM recommendations. The study recommends that the APRM should develop an enforcement mechanism, but in the absence of any formal enabling hard pressure mechanism to ensure compliance, the APRM should create innovative means as incentives, for well performing member countries to encourage others and equally strengthen the APRM.

Lack of political will and commitment to the APRM is also a serious challenge, as the system itself requires strong political leadership and commitment, more or equal to the leaders who established the APRM. It therefore critical for the APRM to revive, energize and reinvigorate the APRM profile in an endeavour to restore confidence in the APRM as a credible instrument against crises in Africa in order to attract political buy in. The APRM should also create an awareness to dispel the fear of interference in internal affairs, and provide a clear emphasis that the mechanism affords African states the opportunity to compare policy experiences, exchange ideas on the best practices to adopt in order to improve their governance and achieve development objectives.

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