

LIMITATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS TO POLICY FORMULATION, CO-ORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

The relationship between the political economy of the post-colonial state as outlined above on the one hand, and the capacity for policy initiative, co-ordination and collaboration on the other, becomes quite obvious. To begin with, there is the problem of the limited parameters of policy initiative that is inherent in the nature of a dependent state which has its reference the promptings and pervasive influence of metropolitan powers and the various international financial institutions, particularly in this era of intensified globalisation. This is quite apart from the problem of insufficient knowledge and skills for the policy formulation exercise. But even where such skills have been known to be in abundance, as is the case in a number of the older public services in Africa, these historical and political limitations continue to play havoc with the policy world of the average post-colonial state.

Therefore, it does appear imperative that public service training in Africa takes into account the need to expose the policy-maker to the world of political economy through which to develop a capacity to both understand and confront the social reality in which the policy-maker and functionality is operating. In the meantime, both the nature of the post-colonial state itself and the current effects of globalisation will continue to impact negatively on the possibilities of overcoming the related problems of policy co-ordination and collaboration. Needless to add, the best level of co-ordination and collaboration within any government is always based on a *national consensus* about both the causes of the problems to be addressed and, therefore, the means towards their resolution. That this is lacking in most post-colonial states is hardly surprising in the context of what has already been stated before. This is often compounded by the tension between those political considerations that are considered imperative for the survival of the state on the one hand, and the issues of functionality and effective government on the other. For example, the size of government about which conventional wisdom emphasises "downsizing" in the interests of both economy and efficiency. In the African context, however, the number of ministries is often dictated by such political considerations as are related to the need to build the broadest *national coalition* as part of *nation-building* and promoting *national unity*. But this in turn renders difficult – and sometimes impossible – the need to "downsize" or "right-size" the public service. Yet *size* is an important factor in co-ordination and collaboration: the larger the government, the more difficult to co-ordinate; and the more serious the problem of collaboration in a situation within which factionalism becomes the order of the day and decreasing financial resources make it increasingly difficult to effect functional consensus among the key factors in the government.

In turn, the impact of the structural adjustment programmes and accompanying public service reform measures have so far helped more to exarcebate these problems

than ameliorate them. This is particularly so with respect to the need for retrenchment and the inevitable loss of some of the most able civil servants, the declining attraction of public service salaries and conditions of service, and the erosion of public confidence in the public service in particular and government in general. Therefore, not only are public services confronted with the problem of declining capacity and legitimacy; even governments are now threatened at their very core.

However, there is also tension between two major categories of public policy, reflecting also the traditional dichotomy that has developed over the years with respect to the state's ability to perform quite badly in one while doing better in the other. This is the tension between the *macro-economic* policy framework in which, as stated earlier, the post-colonial state lacks the wherewithal to conduct an autonomous strategy that would break the historical and economic constraints already established during the colonial (and neo-colonial) era. On the other, there is the *social* policy area which is so close, central and visible to the majority of the people and therefore one in which any government worth its salt has to be seen to deliver the "fruits of independence", in the form of education, health delivery, housing, labour and gender matters, justice administration, local government issues, etc.

All these constitute not only the cutting edge in politics but also become the most vulnerable as the economic crisis deepens. On the one hand, *social policy* represents the means whereby the state hopes to address the *social deficit* caused by colonialism and under-development. On the other hand, it is what causes the *budget deficit* and thereby exposes the inherent vulnerability of the economy as the country is forced to borrow from international financial institutions, enters into structural adjustments programmes and is caught in the debt trap. As always, there is the accompanying requirement for reducing the budget deficit, mostly on the basis of reduction in expenditure in the *social development sphere*. In turn, this undermines earlier successes in this field and enhances the crisis in education, health and social services delivery in general. The social crisis that ensues expresses itself in the form of the decline of the human resources development programme, and the erosion of human and technical capacity to save the society from the developing economic and political crisis.

These are the roots of the *African crisis* as we know it today: an historical legacy that is inherently self-inhibiting for the post-colonial state; a colonial-type economy based essentially on the export of raw materials and the import of finished products, with the consequent of such economic activities as industrialisation that would increase job opportunities and wealth, while also contributing to the scientific and technological development of the society; the problem of continuity of the economic, political and social structures as opposed to a growing capacity for effective transition through *transformation*; and therefore, a post-colonial state which increasingly finds itself unable to attend to the economic and social demands of the society.

This is the society in which the state becomes increasingly alienated from civil society, is incapable of good governance and is threatened with the loss of legitimacy.

Even *public policy* becomes hollow in terms of both its ideological and functional import. So even previously live and central issues as those pertaining to macro-economic and social policy areas become as marginal to the people as those in the category of defence, security and foreign affairs.

The post-colonial state has clearly certain political, economic and social limitation in developing its own policies which are not entirely influenced by the external forces. However, despite these limitations, the post-colonial state must still deal with issues of power relations, resolutions of conflict, formulate policies and manage programmes and above all deal with the development of its own human resources. The state, in its own way, must resolve problems of social inequalities in society.

Despite the socio-economic and political limitations imposed by the imperatives of the political economy framework, the post-colonial state must be responsible for identifying areas needing state intervention, for example in the collection of revenue, regulating local market forces and take decisions in the process of governing the country. The social policies, for example, health, education, housing, social security etc are decided by the state through its own system and organisational structures.

The post-colonial state, therefore, has the responsibility and decision-making powers in the allocation, distribution and consumption of resources in accordance with its own criteria and principles. Further, it has the capacity and power to adjust its policies to suit the needs of the society. It is, therefore, in this context that policy analysis, development and policy management that the responsibilities of the post-colonial state that the rethinking and restructuring have to take place in order to suit the profound changes taking place in society. The demands for changes, whether from external or internal forces, must be addressed by the state in an organised fashion following certain agreed principles and guidelines.