

# Current State of Public Administration and Management in Africa



---

Victor O Ayeni  
Director

Governance and Management Services  
International, UK



# What's PA?

---

The study and practice of the machinery of the state and delivery of efficient and effective services for the people and society



## .....Motivation

---

'Never trust a man who says the  
hippopotamus is a beautiful animal'  
(South African)

.....We are not going to moan again but,  
let's face it, Africa has a serious issue  
with her PA&M



# Some Facts

---

- The state has worked sometimes; not broken down entirely
- Limited successes; a few show cases
- But concerns about performance and development remains very real
- Agenda of reform paralleling that elsewhere
- Nowhere to hide: faces continuing relentless global influences
- Hopeless continent syndrome



# Three Issues

---

- The unfinished 20<sup>th</sup> Century, while the world speeds on in the 21<sup>st</sup>
- Bringing Study back: the near-crisis in the intellectualism and academic industry
- Factoring in Africa's heterogeneous PA environment: too much over-generalisation in the bid to cut corners



# Unfinished 20<sup>th</sup> Century

---

- PA is about real change in the lives of people: still not the case in large measures
- PA is about strong and effective state institutions: far from so, some barely do
- Reforms everywhere but not much to show for them
- Frustration of failure and continuing threat of abandoning change programmes
- Broadening the reform agenda to include all



# The Challenge

---

- Search for quick-fix
- Missing the focus on fruition: renewing agenda as end
- Losing control of PA change: *too* externally driven; challenge of international transference
- Running too fast for existing capacity to handle



## ...Challenges Cont'd

---

- Globalisation and predicament of fitting-in
- The challenge of heterogeneity: danger of over-generalisation v inadequate national and indigenous intellectual capacity
- Complementarities of study and practice



.....Remember..

---

'Don't only admire another man's wife, feed and dress your own wife' (Gambian Proverb)



# Near-crisis in study

---

- Missing: study in universities is anchor of successful practice and institutions
- Decline of traditional PA-focused universities: traditionally 'concentrated' in few institutions
- Recoil into ivory tower, armchair academics
- The 'donour' factor: drain leading brain; search for quick-fixes; too ready acceptance of ideas cooked elsewhere
- Ageism



## ....Crisis Con'td

---

- Precarious state of 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> generation scholars
- Deterioration of the African university: physical dilapidation; poor conditions; more materialistic scholars; unresponsive curricula; limited political leadership commitment, etc
- Internalising the paradigm shift



# Thoughts on Way Forward

---

- Revisit reform agenda and priorities: no escaping fact that some institutions are foundational
- Taking university-based study seriously
- MDI's and university PA Depts: need for closer collaboration
- Expanded staff development and mentoring for university depts, including closer collaboration within and between African institutions



# Final Thoughts.....

---

You can blame a man for pushing you down, but you have yourself to blame for refusing to get up (The Gambia)