

The Quest to Develop African States Through Transformative and Just Reforms

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The majority of people in Africa are robbed of the chance to improve their lives and climb out of deprivation (Shaw, Cooper and Antkiewicz, 2007) because they do not have access to resources and services, which are often accessed by a few who are in power. Whether living in poverty or slightly above the poverty line, these African people lack the protection and enforcement of the rights afforded by various legislations that their countries have ratified. In addition, these conditions are also impacted by the African specificities of the colonial and patriarchal legacy in the provision (or non-provision) of public services. It is in such contexts in African states that Okeke, in the essay entitled, 'the purpose of political power: An African dimension contemplation', sets out to analyse the role and purpose of political power within the continent.

Africa as a continent is viewed with wide-ranging glances; some positive but mostly negative (Meyiwa, Nkondo, Chitiga-Mabungu, Sithole & Nyamnjoh, 2014). Essays presented in this issue critique these elements, probing these two sides to which Meyiwa et al., 2014 refers. *The African Journal of Governance and Development* (AJGD) has, since its inception, been a significant platform for documenting and presenting research-based analyses of Africa's issues. AJGD issues have done this in a bid to broadcast case studies that depict a balanced view of the continent's matters as they relate to social justice, material inequality, recognition, as well as an appreciation of her strengths. All previous issues have carried this mandate in line with AJGD's pursuit of a fair and balanced reporting on governance and development. It is to this end, and for the reason of highlighting this fact that this introductory essay is entitled *Quest to Develop African States through Transformative and Just Reforms*.

In this issue, although discussions are mainly country specific, elements to which they refer resonate with what happens in most African states. The essays of the issue reflect on the successes and challenges faced by four member states of the African continent, namely Ethiopia, Morocco, Mozambique and Nigeria. As in the past, this issue provides analyses of the various countries' societal matters, ranging from economic, educational, health and popular political issues. The analyses are based on research evidence. The opening essay of the journal, Okeke's essay, critiques the purpose of political power within the continent and introduces these issues by simultaneously examining the ways in which these facets have broadly affected the citizenry of the African continent. In the same breath as Okeke, co-authors Odigwe and Aibieyi, in the essay that analyses Nigeria's economic development pursuits, raise very cogent questions. The opinion of these authors is that if nothing is done to ensure efficiency and accountability, and if nothing is deliberately embarked upon to protect the sovereignty of the ordinary African citizenry, African democracies face an uncertain future. Over the past four decades, a number of political science



scholars have posed similar questions, for example Weber, 1972; Goldsmith, 1980, and Barry, 1982.

We present the fifth issue of the *African Journal of Governance and Development* in the era that the entire world, through the UN, has been constantly reflecting on the millennium development goals (MDGs). Subsequently, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030 were adopted in September 2015 at UN's general assembly. In this issue, Gebru and Demeke critique the manner in which Ethiopia has incorporated MDG goals into its core strategic policies. A list of Ethiopia's achievements in this regard is tabulated, also listing a suite of progressive legislation that has been ratified since 2000 – the year in which 189 UN member states adopted the Millennium Declaration. Gebru and Demeke's essay, while applauding the country for the listed successes, decries the fact that there has been insufficient capacity to ensure implementation and enforce changes towards gender-sensitive interventions. Arguing that policy approaches favouring the previously disadvantaged is crucial in an effort to promote gender equality, they state that "without incorporating a goal that brings down gender disparity, a country's plans in advancing gender equity would be a futile exercise". Hence, their call for transformative programmes that reflect governmental commitments to economic development and social transformation that is undeniably deliberate in its effort to engage women. Although the focus of their analyses does not have a gender diagnostic outlook, Odigwe and Aibieyi lament the manner in which various Nigerian political administrations have at every opportunity, since the 1930s, manipulated the economy to benefit themselves; they argue that the changes have contributed towards the spate of unemployment and poverty within the country.

Evidently, unemployment and poverty is a theme that resonates throughout all the essays of this issue. The contributors acknowledge that there has been a great deal of effort by various governments and political leadership to eradicate poverty and advance economic growth. However, writing on Mozambique's economic persuasions over the years, as António Francisco and Moisés Siúta posit, the main challenge has been a lack of robust economic growth strategy. While on one end, Francisco and Siúta point out positive elements like the emergence of the private domestic saving, on the other, they express concern that progressive transformation has lacked crucial impact, which has, in turn, lead to desired change and review of economic strategies for growth purposes.

In essence, essays in this issue have, in one way or another, sought to determine how and if the implementation strategies, methods and processes developed by the studied countries have dealt with the improvement of the lives of the citizenry. Providing services to the ordinary African citizenry to improve their lives is crucial – whether in the form of direct services, an enabling and regulatory environment, infrastructure provision, information or through institutions. From the discussion of the essays of this question, it is apparent that previous and current policies have not achieved the required sustained high growth and employment creation. There is thus a call for new or revised policies that are more detailed in order to ensure correct implementation processes, in a bid to avoid reliving yesteryears filled with extreme poverty and inequality. It is equally in this

vein that Jaouad Radouani's essay critiques Morocco's job market policy; posing the question of its relevance and usefulness in the recruitment and employment of higher education graduates within the country's public sector.

The essays of the issue highlight the need for proper and strategic planning by structures given the mandate to do so, i.e. political leadership and governmental organisations. The failure of the African states' economy to achieve high levels of economic growth and reduce unemployment negatively affects the tax base, which impacts on government revenue collection. Also, as noted by Miller (2004) and Naidu (2006), failure to plan strategically exacerbates the desperate situation of the vulnerable, and in turn, widens the gap between those who have and those who do not. As it exerts pressure on government spending, particularly through the social wage, expenditure of African states thus remain above government revenue and results in high levels of debt. This situation ranges from reduced credit rating to increased inflation and interest rates and thus reduced savings and investment, leading to reduced growth and unemployment, perpetuating a vicious cycle.

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