Claude Ake On Depsychologising Socio-Economic Problems of Africa And Its Public Services

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Abstract

 Modern public services in Africa were the creation of European colonialism. They were established at first to assist in the exploitation of the continent's resources. From this small beginning they later expanded to cover many services catering for the lives of African colonial people. When African nationalists took over governance and the public services, they decided to use them to engineer great political, economic, and social development. At first, the public services recorded some amazing successes, but as a result of many factors, not least poor leadership Africa's public services since the 1960s have been bedeviled by many problems, including inability to lift many Africans from abject poverty. These problems have led some scholars, commentators and outsiders to hastily conclude that these are indeed congenital and inherent failures of Africans. This is "psychologising" the problems of Africa in its people.

Relying on Claude Ake's theoretical formulation on the state in Africa, this essay debunks this redundant thinking of uninformed analysts by locating the real socio-economic problems of Africa and its public services in the inherited colonial state, which lacks autonomy and is thus the booty of dominant political faction in power at a given time. The resultant battle by other factions with the dominant class in what is truly an intra class conflict leads to over-politicization of the public services. This latter process according to Ake is indeed the de-psychologising of Africa's problem. Ake does not provide any direct and specific solution to the problems identified; one of the key omissions made by Ake, especially with regards to Africa's public bureaucracies. As a solution to the conundrum, the state in Africa and its public services have found themselves the essay concludes that the mixed economy system as in the Scandinavian countries should serve as a model for Africa. This will help to reduce if not eradicate poverty and assist in the rebuild of Africa's public services.

Key words: Ake, state, psychologising, depsychologising, public service.

1. Introduction

The public services in Africa as we know them in the twenty-first century are the creation of colonialism, which dominated the continent from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. The main purpose of establishing them was to help in governing the people and in exploiting the resources of the continent. Although they started on a small scale, they soon expanded and took control of many services being provided to the people. Then in the 1950s and 1960s, the colonial governments decided to commercialise some parts of the services. The commercial-oriented institutions subsequently established were called "public statutory corporations." Some of the services the corporations were established to manage included railways, ports, extraction and exportation of mineral resources, aspects of agriculture, electricity, air travel, and waterways. Thus at independence, African nations had three aspects to their public services: the civil service, public service, and public statutory corporations. In the colonial and early postcolonial periods, efforts were made to use public service institutions as tools of governments: to speed up political, economic, social, technological, and industrial development. Furthermore, they were to be used to eradicate underdevelopment, poverty, inequality, and oppression. In truth, the public services to an extent rose up to the occasion by recording some successes and great improvements in such areas as education, health, agriculture, roads, railways, ports, waterways, aviation, telecommunications, industry, culture, military, defence, sports, and active engagement in foreign relations and politics.

Notwithstanding these modest achievements, since the 1960s, as the population of Africa greatly increases, so has society become more complex and with many more challenges. The needs of the people have increased and

yet as a result of a combination of many factors, not least mismanagement of resources, Africa's governments and public services have not played their own part well. For instance, they have not been able to draw majority of the people away from abject poverty and underdevelopment. The blame for this dire situation has been placed in the court of the public services. Many observers have argued about its inefficiency, ineffectiveness, corruption, over-politicisation, primordial (ethnic and religious) bearing, lack of resources and equipment, lack of requisite staff, overstaffing, alien to the people, and overdependence on the Western capitalist countries.

But rather than locating these problems within the history and political economy of colonialism, post-colonialism, neo-liberalism, and underdevelopment, many outsiders, commentators, and scholars blame these problems and challenges on character flaws and congenital problems of Africans. These negative views of Africa and Africans have not gone down well with many progressive scholars, who have risen up in arms against such negative views and their purveyors. One of the eminent members of this latter group is late Professor Claude Eleme Ake, a radical political economist and political scientist (See Ayoola, 2022: 62-83).

This article therefore seeks to examine in details the key reasons why Africa public services are in such mess as to attract very negative views from within and without Africa. This done by seeking deep understanding in Claude Ake's radical reflections on the origin, nature, deepening crises of the state and public services on the continent. The public service is the most important component of the state around the world. In addition, this essay will argue that for Africa to achieve all-round development, its public bureaucracy must be alive to its responsibilities and should be able to meet the basic needs of the people. To achieve this, the state, economy and class structure in Africa would have to be radically transformed.

This paper is divided into seven sections. Following the introduction above, in section two, attempt is made to clarify key concepts of public service or public administration, and the state. The third section explores key elements of Ake's thesis on the problems of African public services. His critical evaluation of the public bureaucracy in Africa in general is the thrust of the fourth section. The fifth section examines Ake's solutions to the problems identified. Section six is devoted to the present author's criticisms of key aspects of Ake's present work and its relevance in effecting great reforms in the public services. Finally, the last section summarises the main points of the essay and concludes.

2.   Public Bureaucracy or Public Administration, and the State: Conceptual Considerations

Public Service or Public Administration or Public Bureaucracy are terms which mean almost the same thing and are often used interchangeably to describe the collection of governmental activities carried out by certain officials on behalf of the state. Public Service, a crucial arm of the state, can also be described as governmental administration, or better still the management of public agencies charged with the responsibility of carrying out public policies - efficiently and effectively. Onuoha (1999: 279) says it is the mechanics and structures through which government policies are implemented, and the purpose of all this is to achieve the desires of the state and safeguards public interest (Naidu, 1996: 4). To Pfiffner and Presthus (1960:43), Public Administration "…consists of getting the work of government done by coordinating the efforts of people so that they can work together to accomplish their set task."

For Adebayo (1981), Omotayo et al. (1987), and Maduabum (2008), Public Administration is administration that is practised in the public sector of a social formation. Therefore, it is those arrangements, actions, and processes by which the purposes, goals, programmes, and policies of government are achieved. In the considered opinion of Woodrow Wilson (1887:197), public administration is the most visible side of government. According to Ezeani (2006:3), public administration is simply the management of government activities. They are those activities bureaucrats are engaged with in the management of government organisations. Furthermore, Public Administration is the tool for carrying out government policies to ensure stability and continuity in power. Adebayo (1992:4) submits that Public Administration is an organisation that operates in the particular circumstance of government and it is the machinery for executing governmental policies and programmes. Basu (2003: 3) posits that Public Administration is the management of governmental affairs at the various level of government: local, regional, provincial, state, and federal. Herbert Simon (1997) argues that public administration is "…the activities of the executive branches of the national, state, and local governments." Luther Gulick (1937) defines Public Administration as "…that part of the science of administration which has to do with government, and thus concerns itself primarily with the executive branch, where the work of government is done, though there are obviously administrative problems also in connection with the legislative and judicial branches."

Whereas Akpan (1982) concludes that it is the crucial organ that executes the policies, programmes, ideas, and manifestoes of politicians in power. It is the servant of politics and covers every area and activity connected to policy and includes the formal processes and operations through which the legislature uses its legislative power. Balogun (1987:11) argues that Public Administration is the joining together of human and material resources so as to achieve the objectives of a given public policy.

From the above definitions and explications, Public Bureaucracy indeed covers all aspects of human endeavours under the purview of government. No doubt, these activities and more are challenging and it is the responsibility of members of the political class to ensure their attainment. However, professional politicians lack the wherewithal with which to execute the various ideas, policies, and programmes they must have developed. There was therefore the need to call on the expertise and capabilities of professional administrators or bureaucrats. It is this needs that has given rise to the establishment of public administration or service.

The State also has many definitions; and there are different perspectives to it. According to Fadakinte (2013), it is the hegemonic group of people who use authority and power, through the use of government and its agencies. Indeed, it is the tool used by the dominant classes in all class based societies to control and manage subordinate classes and to safeguard their interests. For Ake (1985), the state is a grouping of interactions and relationship among social classes and groups organised and upheld by political power. It is actually the core tool of political power in a class society. Even though there are other types of state dominations apart from capitalist state domination, for Ake, the state is basically a capitalist manifestation and the capitalist system is the real mode of production capable of sprouting forth an elaborate state mechanism of domination. Finally, the generalisation of commodity production and exchange relations, the core of capitalist production, is made possible by the *autonomisation* of class domination. The latter in turn creates market forces in a social formation or country. It is autonomisation that makes it possible for the state to operate as an "independent force" which dominates and subordinates all classes in a class society. This schema, however, when applied to Africa presents a complicated picture.

The capitalist mode of production-induced modern state was first created in Europe. Later when the Western capitalist and imperialist powers took over Africa, they imposed this form of state apparatus on it. During the nationalists' agitation for political independence, their struggles was rather unfortunately only aimed at driving the white colonial officials away; and not tampering with much of the inherited colonial state structure which was neither autonomous of the dominant class that took over the reins of power; nor was it as developed as its counterpart in Europe and North Africa (Arowosegbe, 2019, 155-162). Also, unlike in the capitalist world, the generalisation of commodity production and the unleashing of wide spread market forces are yet to be realised. Thus, with the state in Africa not above the classes in society, it then became the booty of the dominant class. Set against this backdrop, the state in Africa became the prisoner of all the classes in society. Hence the various conflicts on the continent. It is within this context that Ake seeks to examine the reality of public services in Africa. In the next section we shall examine Ake's de-psychologisation of the problems of Africa and its public services.

3. Claude Ake's Thinking on Africa's Public Bureaucracy

Claude Eleme Ake, who died in 1996, was one of Africa's brilliant scholars and theorists. His academic works covered may areas, including political development, political economy, political theory, development and democracy in Africa, elections, ethnicity, nature and character of state in Africa, and its relationship with society. Ake did not write directly on the constituents of state such as the public services. Nevertheless, his specific writing on the latter, which first appeared in *Ethics and Accountability in African Public Services* edited by Sadiq Rasheed and Dele Olowu (1993), is original, in-depth, imaginative, and germane to discourse on and understanding of the deepening crises of Africa's public services.

In considering the problems facing public services in Africa and offering solutions to them, Ake began his analysis by first looking at how outsiders have been viewing the problems confronting Africa, particularly, its public services. First, media in Europe and North America see the continent as a very dark place, "…the ultimate victim of the original sin, a sad forsaken place where nothing good or noble ever happens, its people forever victims of their warped character (Ake, 1993:13)." To further complicate the negative imageries Westerners have of Africa, some Africans would appear to have accepted and internalised such representation and acting on them. This fatalism is traced back to the colonial period, when anything from the West triumphed over everything from Africa. Ake argued that Africa and Africans were and are still being viewed in this negative way because of some key foreign concepts such as the state, civil society, bureaucracy, organisation, market, interest aggregation, interest articulation, representation and democracy, separation of powers, political competition,

political culture, and so on being used to assess Africa (Ake, 1993: 11).

These concepts are represented to non-westerners as abstract global phenomena that can easily be domesticated and applied anywhere in the world. But in reality, these concepts are simply "…descriptive terms abstracted from Western experience (Ake, 1993, 11)." These concepts are later transplanted to other foreign soils, including Africa, through imperialism and colonialism and with dire consequences. The negative effects of such unnatural grafting in Africa have portrayed the continent in a bad light. The attendant negative perception of Africa has resulted in a situation in which " the African specificity is always [a] deviation" and the continent "[b]eing the other side of an ideal existence [Western Europe and North America], its imperfection and corruption, our [Africa's] institutions lose integrity and entitlements to civilized courtesies." This being the case for Africa, "…what accommodation can one seek with what is patently 'bad' and how can one respect its integrity (Ake, 1993, 12)?" Ake believed that all the scathing criticisms of Africa and its people rest on two interrelated, if irrelevant assumptions. First, those concepts like bureaucracy, which have their origins in the Western world and its culture, can be applied without problems to public services in Africa. The second assumption is that bureaucratic organisation, particularly as conceptualised and articulated by Max Weber, is a universal concept and not "a specific cultural construction" of the West. These bureaucratic organisational structures and processes are thus presented to the rest of mankind as the archetypical or ideal type to be imitated.

Applied to Africa, Western-type bureaucracies have created many problems. To Ake, the core problem with African leaders and their officials was and is still that they took Max Weber's ideal organisation model without changing any aspects of it and slammed it on Africa. Hence, "We [Africans] have accepted this on faith, raised no questions of historicity, and applied it to Africa with predictable results" (Ake, 1993, 12). After highlighting key elements and standards of the Weberian ideal bureaucratic model, Ake then sought to critically evaluate public services in contemporary Africa against them and his conclusions are not amusing.

Against these standards [Weber's] the public service in Africa looks very bad. With minor exceptions, public servants are not always objective, administration is often personalized, attitudinal orientations are more often than not diffuse rather than specific, particular rather than universalistic, ascriptive rather than achievement-focused. Rules are not always taken seriously sometimes they are applied ad hoc and, worse yet, discarded altogether according to convenience (Ake, 1993, 13)."

As a result of the foregoing, some opinion moulders insist that all these problems centre on African ethics and morality and collectively constitute a peculiar deviance that actually separates the continent from the *normal*. Simply: "… a special case of moral depravity." But does this represent the actual state of Africa and its public services? For Ake, the answer is no. This is because most outsiders who run commentaries on the continent do not really know what they are talking about. Ake then sought to clarify what was actually going on with Africa's public services. For him, "…our [Africa's public services] problem is not so much a problem of character defect or ethical failure as it is one of misunderstanding arising from *decontextualizing* and *dehistorizing* social phenomenon (Ake, 1993, 13)." Furthermore, commentators "are making judgements based on false analogies and false comparisons on the separation of meaning from social context, behaviour from cultural milieu, and action from social structures (Ake, 1993, 13)." Additionally, the commentators' arguments are based on wrong assumption "…that the western European state and its correlates, market society and bureaucratic organization exist in Africa or ought to exist." These judgements, however, are not grounded in Africa's realities (Ake, 1993, 13). What then is the reality in Africa?

The state, which is the fulcrum upon which a country's political and bureaucratic structures rest in Africa, is a very complicated phenomenon. The creation and maintenance of the state under colonialism "was not so much a state in the western sense as an apparatus of violent oppression" (Ake, 1993, 13)." The reason for this was to subjugate Africans, exploit their resources, and suppress their resistance to foreign occupation. Set against this background, the colonial state therefore needed enormous arbitrary power to do so. The colonial state while it lasted was in a permanent state of war against the people. The reason for the establishment and operation of the colonial state were completely different from the social, economic and political thought of indigenous peoples and societies in Africa. Thus, the colonial state was not only disconnected from the experience of the people; it was actually a collective threat to their lives. In reaction, Africans worked fiercely against it; and as a result of its wanton arbitrariness, it became mired in controversies and never-ending contradictions. For instance, rather than uniting those territories it was superintending over, it embarked on an agenda of divide and rule of the people (Ake, 1993, 13).

With the attainment of political independence in Africa – starting from the 1950s onwards - rather than

transforming the inherited colonial state in Africa, the nationalist leaders, who assumed the reins of power from the departing European officials, decided to retain it with little or no changes (Ake, 1993, 14). The implication of this poor judgement was the alienation of African leaders from their own people. Thus, as a result of the inability of these leaders to solve socio-economic and political problems confronting their own people, the latter began to resist and disobey their rulers; for their betrayal of trust and treachery. As it was in the colonial era, the new rulers resorted to the use of force to suppress the people. This in turn translated to grave repercussions for Africa (Ake, 1993, 14). But how? The wide chasm between the state and society gave rise to what Ake characterised as "informal polities," which now stand parallel to and are in fierce conflict with the inherited colonial state (Ake, 1993, 14). The consequence of the preceding outcome is the over-politicisation of local communities, primary loyalties, ethnic groups, and nationalities. Indeed, the whole purpose of politicisation by the people was to protect themselves against the shenanigans of the state and to compete against it, particularly for its enormous power and the resources at its disposal.

Therefore, devoid of the alienation that has characterised state-society relationship, it is in these "alternate polities" that the people of Africa have overwhelmingly decided to repose trust and confidence. Similar developments also took place in the traditional political systems. They decided build up welfare schemes that met and are still meeting the basic socio-economic needs of the people. Moreover, they are providing infrastructures, including water supply, electricity, clinics, and markets (Ake, 1993, 14-15). With the traditional polities taking over some of the core duties of the state, Ake concludes that "Powerful as the state is in most of Africa, it is often quite irrelevant except as a nuisance (Ake, 1993, 15)." He says that it is in the context of the strained relations between the state and society in Africa that analysts of the African situation ought to begin to come to terms with the structures, processes, and the performance of the public service on the continent. This is even more so because "[t]he state is not really the quintessential public institution that it is assumed to be. It is not *res publicae*. It is not the state of all; it is at best the state of some. (Ake, 1993, 15)" The state that is thus constituted, its constituent arms cannot be different: "the administrative apparatus is not really a public service, more than not, it is just an administrative apparatus (Ake, 1993, 15)."

Moreover, in the acrimonious atmosphere of the state-society connection "politics is not peaceful competition for the control and exercise of state power ostensibly in the public interest." Rather, "… a bitter struggle among political factions for the appropriation and privatization of state power (Ake, 1993, 15)." What then is the implication of this state-society conundrum? For Ake, it is impersonal rule, phenomenon of exclusion, longevity in office and hostility to pluralism by African leaders (Ake, 1993, 15). But notwithstanding all the efforts by African leaders to reduce the consequences of their privatisation of the state and its apparatus, including the public services, all their strivings have met with complete failure.

 Performance Evaluation of Public Services in Africa

The foregoing exploration of Ake's thinking provides the background against which according to him, the public services in Africa must be evaluated and judged. First, it is not really that African civil and public servants are "corrupt, unpatriotic, high-handed, and prone to press public office into the service of parochial concerns although all that happens too (Ake, 1993, 15)," it is just that they are afflicted by a far more complex and complicated disease." The real deal in the case of Africa's public services is that it is not serving the "public" it is meant to serve; and the state to which it is a very important part is not as developed as their counterparts in the Western world. Both are not "concrete universal but a disorderly aggregation of particularities (Ake, 1993, 15-16)." This chaos has in turn been kept going by "a state which has turned society into its enemy, politics into warfare" and has "thrown up political formations which have displaced it [the state] as the primary focus of political allegiance" (Ake, 1993, 15-16). As a result of all this, the state then is not a public institution. Thus, whatever the opinion on the poor attitude and behaviour of public servants in Africa, it will still continue because the state is after all not a public arena, but a space for intense and unending bourgeois struggles. Consequently, the negative ways public servants in Africa behave and operate in their place of work would appear normal (Ake, 1993, 16). That is, taking into consideration their history and context within which they operated.

 Yet another challenge facing the state in Africa and by extension its public services is that Africa actually has two separate polities. The first is the "central formal" political system which encompasses the state. Under this system, the transition from power to authority has been very difficult and this has been due to the fact that "right remains largely coextensive with power, accountability and political participation are generally lacking… (Ake, 1993:15-16)." Furthermore, this political system is composed of people and socio-economic groups that seem alien to one another and do not form a "public" or "interpretative community (Ake, 1993, 16)." Moreover, they do not speak the same "grammar of politics." Hence, the relationship between the constitutive elements of this central political system is based purely on strength. This certainly perverted political system is so cut off from

many Africans that it has forced them to invent new "informal alternative polities" that are based on "region, primary loyalties, sub-nationalities" and so on (Ake, 1993, 16). According to Ake, these polities have the kind of homogeneity which the central political system, including the state, lacks. Furthermore, they have collectively constituted themselves into *the "publics,"* which are also linguistic entities and "interpretive communities" within which they indeed speak the same "grammar of politics." It is in these alternative polities that the "authentic African state" is located.

Unlike the relationship between Africans and the central political system, that between the people and the alternative polities is reciprocal: "[a]s people give to the community, so it gives to them." Subsequently, when the people started to observe that the latter relationship was a more mutually beneficial one, they turned in large numbers to these polities for security, emotional support, and social welfare. What further recommends the informal polities is that they are to a very large extent participatory and function on the principle of consensus-building. Thus "[t]here is strict accountability of power, its operative norms are inclusive rather than exclusive, emphasis is on cooperation rather than competition, responsibility rather than rights and power (Ake, 1993, 16)." Ake further argues that at the level of alternative polities, "…political behaviour is markedly different. There is a healthy regard for the rules, and manifest evidence of thriving civic culture; public-spirited, attention to ones obligations, honesty, integrity, and considerations for others (Ake, 1993:16-17)."

Similarly, the same set of political actors who at the central political system level behave very irresponsibly, will in another breath behave well in the alternative polities. The latter behaviour is given practical expression by diligently carrying out minor community development projects assigned to them. Whilst they demand and collect bribe, and steal public funds, interesting enough some of them give away to institutions belonging to the alternative polities (Ake, 1993:17). Ake argues that this dualism in character and behaviour "…is not a peculiar schizophrenia; this dualism illustrates with poignant simplicity, the structural constraints on behaviour and the pitfalls of explaining the performance of the public service in Africa in psychological terms making moralistic judgements about what public servants in Africa do"(Ake, 1993:17). Added to all this, is the cultural dimension of this *Janus* like quagmire. To start with, the core values of African cultures are contradictory to those at the foundation of western-oriented bureaucracy: market, and the state. Whereas African cultures set great store by communalism, western cultures, from which are borrowed such concepts/practices as bureaucracy, market, state, and so forth, place very high premium on privatization of things (Ake, 1993:17).

Furthermore, in the western traditions, the human being is strongly defined by separateness, independence, and conflict. Indeed it is privatisation that gives identity, autonomy and freedom. For Africans, the human being is located in the communal, wrapped up in the concept of *ubuntu* (Ake, 1993:17). Under this unique African concept, individuals find their identity only because "they belong to a community, their freedom lies in the concrete capabilities, privileges, and immunities which derive from a communal life (Ake, 1993:17)." A, the people's integrity is related to their being part of a community and the way they handle their rights, benefits and responsibilities make them genuine and active members of a community (Ake, 1993:17). Lastly, is the complete rejection of the privatisation of communal interests and this will make it impossible for the absolute alienation of the people from the community, where morality and integrity are the core principles.

In contradistinction to the foregoing, is the place of privatisation in the personal and group interests under the western traditions. Ake argues that "the privatization of interests is the correlate of the privatization of being…sociability becomes problematic and we have to rationalize a linkage between privacy and the possibilities of autonomy, freedom and morality." In essence, "communalization of being and of interest militates against the norms of bureaucracy [in Africa]" and it is an important alternative platform of legitimacy. The features of communalism include encouraging collective use of wealth, serving as a strong glue of social solidarity, empowering poor communities to manage well economic scarcity without the collapse of the communities and serving as the tool of community self-help projects, which is the backbone rural development in Africa (Ake, 1993, 117).

Having critically discussed what he believes is the right theoretical underpinning of the contemporary crises of public services in Africa, Ake then sought to sketch out the key problems of the institutions. He argues that what had always passed off as ethical and accountability issues in Africa's public administration are just façade. Indeed, these challenges are constructed more "by a way of perceiving and valuing…with distortion…" (Ake, 1993:17) and this cannot help in having a clear understanding of the problems of the public bureaucracy (Ake, 1993:18). Contrary to what outsiders and other commentators have identified as problems, which Ake insisted are not psychological, or "character deficiency…of morality." (Ake, 1993:18). What then are the problems?

First, is the character of the state in Africa and its relations with society. This has brought about not just a public, but many "publics" competing between and among them to hijack and dominate the state; and done with little respect for morality and ethics. The second dimension of the dilemma of public bureaucracy is the problematic of clashing legitimacies of the different polities and at different levels within each nation-state. First is the structural-political level at which the seemingly real state, whose public is nominal, is in serious conflict with the informal kinship-based local authorities that are relatively homogenous and actually the real public. Two, at the structural-cultural level the conflict is between the legitimacy of the values of indigenous African cultures and the values of the modern state and its agencies - bureaucracy and market. Third, on the epistemological level, there are issues relating to the problematic that insistently privileges the Western experience over any other around the world and sees Africa only in the image of the West. And anything outside of this hierarchy is warped (Ake, 1993:18-19).

But identifying and discussing the objective conditions within which African public services operate in, do not cancel out the many subjective aspects of the African situation. Ake submits that Africans do have choices to do a range of bad things or do really good things. Actually, the people "collectively decide in a daily plebiscite the quality of [their] institutions and even [their] own lives and [they] bear responsibility for [those] decisions whatever the state of objective conditions (Ake, 1993: 19)." For Ake, unless the objective conditions in Africa are married with the subjectivities of Africans and the choices they make, it would be difficult to explain and understand many of the negative situations on the continent, including the deepening crises of its public administration.

Apart from identifying and analysing socio-economic and political problems in Africa, Ake also offered some solutions for the problems of its public services. But such is the complexity of these problems that simple solutions will not suffic. They must be fundamental and long term. First, because a "public" is yet to be fully developed on the continent this must be created or developed. Second, concepts such as patriotism, public service, civic virtues and obligations to public institutions are meaningless unless the political society in Africa is truly a "commonwealth" and to a greater extent culturally homogenous, especially in the political realm. This will be along the Western European experience, which presupposes the breakdown of primary group solidarities (religious, ethnic, cultural, and so on) and re-linking the "freed" individuals in capitalist commodity relations. But why so, did Ake not criticise the imposition of western values and institutions on Africa?

 But for Africa, the breaking down and re-linking of individuals will certainly take some time to be fully achieved (Ake, 1993: 19). When these are fully achieved, the "public" created through such homogenisation concepts such as accountability, public service, civil virtues, political culture, and political morality will then begin to make sense; and will also improve ethical standards and accountability in the public bureaucracy (Ake, 1993:19). Even then, all these amount to simply copying western political culture, traditions, and institutions, which are alien to Africa's experience and reality (Ake. 1993: 19). Hence, Ake called for a change towards new direction and advised Africans to look inward and dig deep into their heritage. This is because waiting for full homogenization to take place in Africa will be long and can only be achieved well after industrialization, atomisation, and the creation of capitalist market in Africa (Ake. 1993: 19). For Ake, introducing homogenization into contemporary Africa amounts to applying a wrong and alien medicine to a peculiar local ailment. Rather, the best solution for a continent with a long and chequered history and many differences, including ethnicity, religion, race, class, and geographical location is "harmonization, reconciliation and consensus-building across…social pluralities (Ake. 1993: 20)." Concretely, Africa must aim at achieving unity in diversity and not rigid uniformity (Ake, 1993: 20). Additionally, every group representing any particularity must be integrated "…into equitable sharing of the rewards and burdens of common citizenship through democratic discourse and… practice and through assiduous commitment to negotiated consensus (Ake, 1993: 20)."

Not all of the issues canvassed for by Ake, however, could be achieved, particularly the unity of all stakeholders without first ensuring that the state, the fulcrum of change, must first be a legitimate institution. In the first instance, this can only be done by making changes to the actions of those exercising power and reorganisation of the existing political institutions and processes on the continent. One of the important processes requiring urgent transformation is how Africans are represented in the various political structures. According to Ake, the notions of representation currently in operations in Africa, which so far have not advanced the cause of Africa beyond the current crises "…presuppose the social atomism and organic solidarity of a market society." In contradistinction to this type of representation, however, is that under it representation will be based on nationalities or sub-nationalities. It is hoped then that this will guarantee the proper connection of the ordinary people - for example the peasant - with the central power, improve accountability, give room to African culture

to be an important part of the political structures and processes, increase the legitimacy of the central governments in the eyes the citizens and constituting the people into a "public" (Ake. 1993: 20).

Arguably, the most urgent of the important tasks that ought to be carried out before the true transformation of the political economy of Africa is the transformation of the state in Africa. The latter has been perceived as a hostile force whose only reason of being is to appropriate, exploit, or plunder. It is in turn thoroughly abused and exploited by its employees. Furthermore, it is viewed as a rich trophy that must be captured at all cost and be used without pity (Ake. 1993: 20). Therefore, for negative image of the state in Africa to be wiped clean, it must "…stand on consent rather than coercion, and turn power into authority, domination into hegemony" (Ake. 1993: 20). Moreover, it must replace informal polities which have become the real custodians of the primary loyalty of many Africans. This parallel structure to the state came about because unlike the state, it provides more security and social welfare services than the state could provide, especially during the implementation of the World Bank and IMF supported Structural Adjustment (SAP) in Africa.

Yet another solution proffered by Ake for solving the several problems of the public services and servants in Africa relate to controllers of state power on the continent. They have become the key source of most blames on the public servants and the service they provide. Indeed they monopolise and personalise power, and thus equipped, they often bend the bureaucracy to serve their political ends; thereby undermining all known ethos of ideal bureaucratic organisation. Thus, the public service, which is an important part of the state becomes "the victor's booty" and "is unable to sustain bureaucratic norms and unable to avert privatization" (Ake. 1993: 21). The consequence of this stranglehold of politics over public bureaucracy is that "politicians in power use administrative rules, public enterprises, the power of appointments, and promotion of senior public servants as their own political and economic resource and…undermine the performance of public service"(Ake. 1993: 21).
Set against the backdrop of the foregoing, to reform African public services, however, both politics and the state must undergo fundamental changes. Also to be changed is the economic environment of the public service. This is more so because these services have not escaped the debilitating economic situation on the continent, which has placed great limitations on the achievements of Africa's public bureaucracy. First, the wages being paid public servants are too small for them to effectively reproduce themselves. Consequently, many of them have resorted to self-help. Some have decided to take second or third jobs. For others, they have requested their wives to stay put in the villages; to work as farmers. Some others decided to turn little patches of land they can find in urban areas into little farmlands (Ake. 1993: 21). Finally, others have decided to operate in the informal sector: buying and selling consumer products. Indeed, public servants have simply *commodified* their official positions in order to achieve economic leverage (Ake. 1993: 22). But how is this done? For instance, "Office messengers who conceal, burn or advance files for a token fee, official drivers who collude with petrol stations in over-invoicing, officials who sell forms that should be free to the public" (Ake,1993: 22). But notwithstanding the damaging effects of all such scheming for money by government officials, Ake says instead of calling this "corruption," they should in fact be seen as "survival strategy." Thus, the officials' corrupt disposition is not necessarily immorality, but a "clash of moralities" (Ake, 1993: 22).

Meanwhile, corrupt attitude in the public services of Africa is not limited only to its lower cadre and staff. Senior members of Africa's bureaucracy are also not beyond unethical rascality. This is even in the face of the general belief that these public servants are over-pampered, better paid, extremely priviledged and therefore have no cause to be involved in corrupt practices" (Ake, 1993: 22). But if the truth be told, the senior bureaucrats are also caught in the vortex of poverty on the continent, especially beginning from the late 1980s onwards, when Africa embraced the World Bank/IMF engineered economic neo-liberalism - generally labelled "Structural Adjustment Programme." The effect of all this was that their income, which was very high when compared with those of lower ranks, continuously declined in value (Ake, 1993: 22). Ake captures the plight and the trigger for the moral dilemma these public servants faced.

The price for resisting abuse of office is very high, often prohibitively. Those who hang on stubbornly to their integrity can expect that poverty and its indignities will be staring them in the face when they retire. Worse still, not many people… are likely to honour them for their virtue. In all probability they will be chided for their naiveté and held in contempt.

4.   What is to be done?
Having identified the core challenges facing Africa's public services, Ake then suggested some solutions. To begin with, the overall performance of the continent's public bureaucracies must change. But performance will not improve unless urgent solutions are found for the extreme poverty, low level of production in agriculture and manufacturing, and inequality in the distribution of economic surplus in Africa" (Ake,1993:22). Also, unless the

problematic of general poverty is solved, ethical values, civil virtues, and civil culture will continue to be completely absent from the continent's public services. But simply accelerating economic growth would not eradicate all the negative contradictions in the continent's public services. Whilst economic growth is necessary in solving the Africa's many socio-economic and political problems, this in itself will not be sufficient. One thing, however, is certain: an ethical and morally sound service can never thrive in the ecology of absolute poverty. In all, Ake did not proffer specific solutions to the problems identified. Rather, he was more interested in ensuring that all concerned first understand those problems!

5.   Criticisms and Conclusion

As discussed above, brilliant as Ake's analysis is, he never offered specific and practical solutions to the problems identified in Africa's public services. He seems to have given the various governments in Africa the latitude to work out their own solutions. This disposition does not in the opinion of present authors portend good for a continent in dire need of an efficient and effective regional integration experiment as the European Union; for economic and political development. Unless Africa moves in the direction of harmonisation of policies, programmes, and institutions, she will continue to remain underdeveloped and in abject poverty.

Second, unlike in other Ake's works, he shied away from talking about which economic ideology and system would best suit Africa in overcoming acute and wide spread poverty and underdevelopment on the continent. Both neoliberal capitalism and the short-lived socialist experiments in Africa have not made much improvement in the lives of the vast majority of Africans, rather they have made Africa poorer and more dependent on the outside world. Therefore, a new way of managing Africa's socio-economic and political reality ought to be formulated and put into practice. As a matter of urgency, Africa must transcend the current debilitating neo-colonial, neo-imperialist, and neoliberal capitalist mode of economic production it is currently operating and return to the mixed economy system that was adopted at independence, and is currently being successfully run by the Scandinavian countries. This system was, however, jettisoned in Africa beginning from the late 1970s - at the behest of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the eschews that it was breeding corruption, neo-patrimonialism, and underdevelopment. This of course is not entirely true because under it, between 1960 and 1975 African economies grew at the rate of 5.7 per cent. Mkandawire (2010:17) argues that during the same period of the 20 fastest growing economies in the world, nine of these were in Africa, and only three of them had mineral resources of note and value. Similarly, the annual GDP per capital growth was positive and on the average it was 2.6 percent per annum. This result was far better than the GDP per capita growth in the 1980s when the IMF/World Bank supported Structural Adjustment Programme had been introduced, declined by 1.3 percent annually. This decline was despite the fact that Africa had implemented the Programme for more than ten years (Bangura: 2020). It was only in the 2000s that annual average picked up again at 4.8 percent and rising up to 5.9 percent in 2007(Gumude, 2017: 5).

Furthermore, under the mixed economy system, there is a place for both the public and private sectors; and at its core is a robust and elaborate social welfare system that takes excellent care of the vast majority of the peoples in the various jurisdictions in the northern European region. This is the model of economic production and distribution of surplus that can truly pull millions of Africans from, poverty, misery, and lack. Under the Scandinavian model, the role of the public service is to truly provide various welfare and civil services to the people at no *direct* cost to them, as they do not to pay at points of accessing such crucial and beneficial services as transportation, health, housing, education, social care, and so forth.

Third, in focusing closely on the state and public services in Africa and their ethical and moral values, Ake glosses over many of the public services' internal problems. For a start and in a general term, there is acute shortage of skilled manpower and equipment in the services. This situation has adversely affected their ability to deliver services to the people efficiently, effectively and with economy. Second, there is also the overstaffing of the services, especially at the lower levels. Since industrialisation and manufacturing, which all over the world provide a lot of real employment for the people, are still very marginal on the continent. There is therefore large employment on the continent. To save face for their inability to make massive employment available for their citizens many politicians in Africa resorted to using public bureaucracy as a platform for the employment of their hangers-on, family members, and friends. As a result, public services in Africa have become unmanageable, overpopulated, and out of control. Third, the continent's public services are in reality orphans. Nobody seems to set great store by them. Everywhere on the continent they are treated as leprous. They are unloved and completely loathed. This negative attitude can be traced back to their colonial beginning, when they were totally alienated from the people. It is not only the ordinary Africans that are cynical about these public institutions, even their political masters, the politicians, more often than not do not stick out their necks to defend them from the onslaught of verbal and non-verbal attacks from the public. At the slightest trouble in the political economy,

especially in the economic realm, the sector is often made the scapegoat. When the IMF/World Bank's neoliberal Structural Adjustment programme hurricane started sweeping across the continent, starting from the early 1980s, one of the state's arms that was quickly offered to the new gods of Africa as sacrificial lamb was the public services, and this was on the altar of commercialisation and privatisation of government most agencies and assets. All this was done in the misguided attempt to roll back the role of the state in the lives of the people and hand over the economy to a self-serving private sector.

Four, another major challenge plaguing the public services, which Ake fails to grapple with, was the manipulation of religion and ethnicity by public servants to move ahead and to use it to exclude others from the reward systems and to push their adversaries out of the institutions entirely. All of these have polarised Africa's public services. Five, Ake also misses out the point that the public services became self-absorbed to the extent that all they really cared for was the affairs and interests of members of the top echelon – to the exclusion of that of the public they are serving and members of the lower rung of the same services. Six, there were those conflicts between the old guard public servants, who inherited the mores, ethos, procedures, and cultures of colonial officials and the much younger, technically savvy, well educated, and lately recruited public servants. The former saw the latter as upstarts, disrespectful and incorrigible, while the latter saw the former as poorly educated, technically incompetent and local bumbling workers. The disunity thus created has continued to affect the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the public services.

Seven, also missing from the discourse above is the legendary inflexibility of public administrators in Africa. Raised in the abiding culture of colonial public bureaucracy's adversarial antagonism against the people, it has been difficult for most of them to adjust to the changing dynamism in Africa. This negative behaviour can be attributed to their personal insecurity and lack of confidence. Eight, yet another inadequacy of Africa's public bureaucracies that did not feature in Ake's analysis, but very germane to any serious attempt to understand the challenge of African public services, is the extreme lack of coordination of the various parts and activities of the public services. Nine, Ake's glowing tributes to the great virtues of the local alternative polities seem overdrawn and extremely utopian. If these attributes ever existed in Africa and were effectively deployed, this must have been in the early years of postcolonial Africa. By the 1980s onwards, when the IMF/World Bank sponsored neoliberal Structural Adjustment Programme swept through the continent, most of the vices Ake located in the centralised political systems of Africa had penetrated deep into the alternative polities. Such is the level of penetration that now there seems to be no difference anymore between the different types of African polities. Finally, arising from their colonial heritage, the continent's public bureaucracies are mired in the culture and process of distribution of surplus rather than production of goods and services. Thus, rather than serving as instruments of economic development, African public services have become drain pipes of national resources. Conclusively, genuine reforms of the public services will therefore entail radical transformation of the state, economy, and the internal processes and structures of the public services themselves.

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