

Challenge of having access to public utilities in Bukavu (DRC): Electricity, Water, Healthcare, Justice, and Education

Vincent Mukwege Buhendwa

DRC, living in Rwanda: Licence (Bac+2) in Social Communications (2001) Licence (Bac+2) in Philosophy(2001), and Master in Public Administration & Development Studies (2015), Doctorate Program candidate in Communications.

Abstract

The enjoyment of human rights cannot be effective for citizens unless they equally have access to public utilities such as water, electricity, healthcare, justice and education infrastructures and facilities. As s pointed out by a research published by Yash Ghai & Jill Cottrell in 2004, “without securing economic and social, as well as civil and political rights, the most deprived, vulnerable and powerless peoples of the world remain excluded from the enjoyment of their essential human entitlements.(...)what is essential is that all human rights are translated into practices so that their enjoyment becomes a reality”.¹ Indeed, deprived peoples, whether in Africa or worldwide, the lack or the absence of public utilities is a sign of underdevelopment and citizens who do not have access to water, healthcare, electricity, education, and even information have a little chance or not to improve their livelihoods and contribute to the economic growth of their countries. So, I am not assuming that citizens do not need state or governmental control to allow them enjoying their rights. For, “in modern societies, rights cannot be fully protected by preventing governmental intrusions in the lives of citizens”.² In the contrary, the lack or the absence² of the state authority (and control) is somehow worse than freedom. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), since 1990, the state has been collapsing and the major yardstick of such a collapse can be found in the public administration in terms of lack of governance leading to corruption, tax evasion, impunity and no access to public utilities. In this article, I first focused on the topic by dealing with the methodological aspects I used to collect data, the findings of the research. Then, findings will be discussed in terms of recommendations to raise decision-makers ‘awareness on the relationship between public utilities access and human development or well-being. Finally, within my conclusion, I came up with some limitations or gaps to overcome in order to improve this study.

1. Methodological approaches I have to mention that this study was conducted from 2013 to 2014 in Bukavu, the capital of the South Kivu Province in DRC, as part of my research in Public Administration & Development Studies, at the Catholic University of Bukavu(UCB). The research was entitled “*Ethics in Public Administration in Bukavu. Towards a Philosophy of Development through Corruption Tackling*”. The observation and exploration of the research site have been supported by a literature review dealing with ethics in public administration and development around the world, in DRC and in South Kivu. I made a profit of deductive approach in the treatment of collected data since it seemed easier to start from general points to particular ones, i.e. from the ethical crisis in given states to DRC and South Kivu and its public administration which might be understood as a microcosm of a failed state.

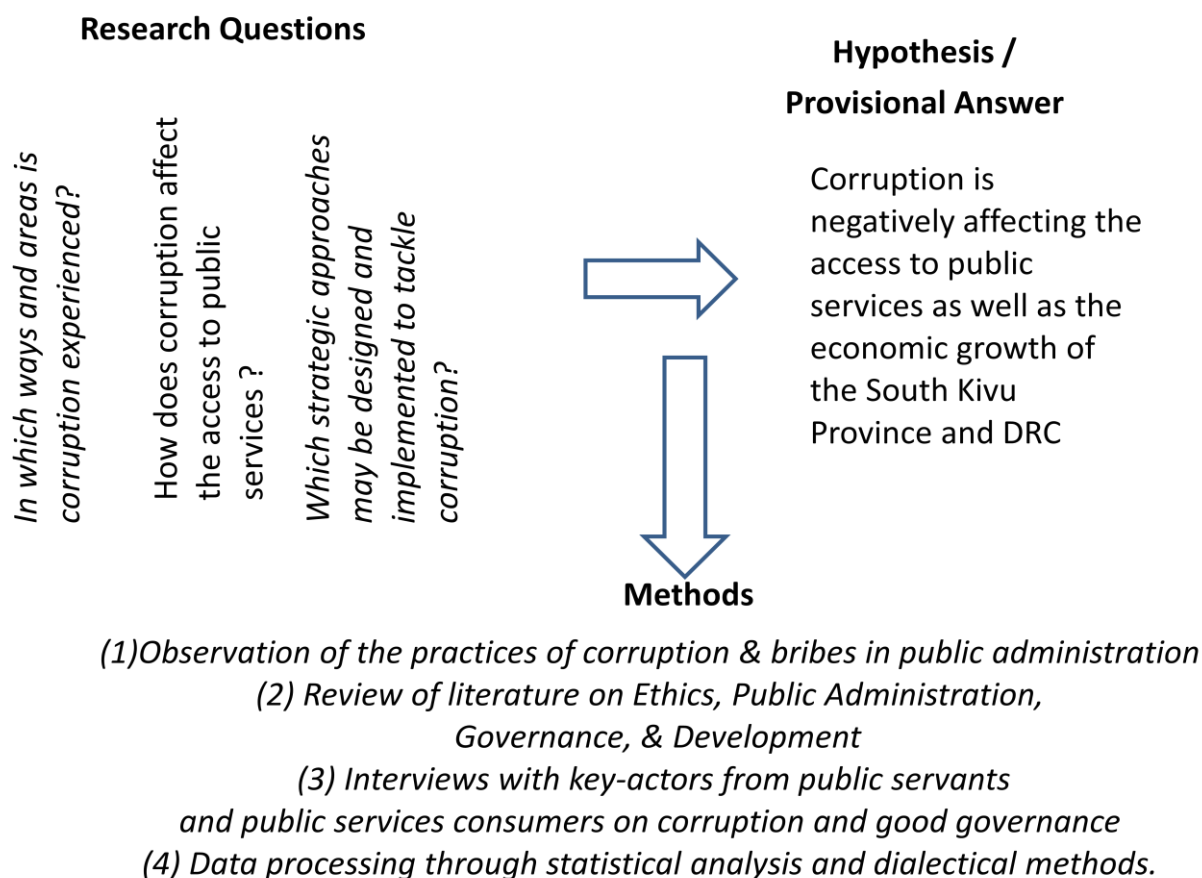
¹ Yash Ghai & Jill Cottrell, *Economic, Social & Cultural Rights in Practice*, Interights, London,2004, p.17

² *ibid.*p.45

The available literature on ethics in public administration and development is mainly in French and has been translated into English or interpreted by myself when needed. Secondary data from the review of literature have been treated and compared with other primary data collected from the ground through interviews, and life stories.

Thus, a diversity of methodological approaches has been required so that it may be possible and easy to collect, treat and present the results of this research study. Dialectical methodology has been of a great help to explain the results of the research and present them in terms of recommendations. This study is an investigation upon violation of ethical principles in Public Administration in Bukavu.

This topic and its title point out the fact that in a given society there are moral values which have to be observed in the public administration. Such values are the main pillars of democracy, development and national well-being. Therefore, public servants and the government have to implement best practices in the public administration to allow citizens have access to utilities such as food, shelter, healthcare, education, water, electricity, etc. On one hand, where people have access to those public services or utilities, there is a sign of development and well-being. Thus, economists and sociologists have elaborated techniques and methods in terms of indicators to assess the well-being in a country or society. On the other hand, where ethical and moral values are not rooted in public administration, the common good is not shared equitably since the access to utilities is regulated by passive and active corruption, fraud, cheating and lying, misappropriation of public funds, etc. In this jungle where ethical values are not observed, the state has failed or collapsed and the hope of well-being or development has obviously moved away. In short, a bitter struggle against corruption in public administration is understood as one of the main pillars of development and well-being which is supposed to be both individual and collective.



The above methodological approach was supported by investigations through a questionnaire answered by 45 key informants including mainly public servants, private sector agents, and other anonymous individuals from (1) Inspection Provinciale de la Santé which coordinates healthcare facilities throughout the province; (2) Parquet de Bukavu that receives complaints and prosecutes offense cases; (3) Regideso, a state company in charge of water supply throughout the country and provinces; (4) Société Nationale d'Electricité, a state company in charge of electricity supply; (5) FARDC which means the Armed Forces of DRC; (6) PNC, the DRC National Police (7) LICOSKI, an association of consumers with South Kivu; (8) SALCORI which is an anti-corruption league; (9) Coordination Provinciale de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel, in charge of elementary, secondary and professional schools; (10) NGO; (11) UCB (Catholic University of Bukavu); (12) UOB (Public University of Bukavu); (13) UEA (Evangelical University in Africa); (14) Households (15) Youth groups; etc.

2. Research findings

The following section gives an overview of the main findings or results of the research that were performed through the above methodological approaches as well as the questions answered by informants.

2.1. How do Congolese citizens observe the lack of governance and its consequences in the public administration?

This question was answered by main informants who provided the following statements: (1) Accountability is not rooted in public servants minds, seniors and subordinates agents; (2) Deadlines and work hours are not respected; (3) Human resources are available but not used or consumed; (4) Nobody in charge of absenteeism and casualness sanctioning; (5) Lack/absence of water & electricity access is related to the lack of good governance; (6) A group of privileged persons (ruling leaders) is legally enjoying the maximum of the public services (in Bukavu, for instance, they do not pay water and power supplies); (7) some universities, faculties of medical sciences are set up and are training future physicians while those universities do not have even a microscope; (8) in public or state universities, library and other scientific equipments have not been renewed for ages and are still dilapidated and stricken.

2.2. Which indicators show that bad governance does not facilitate access to public utilities and services in South Kivu and DRC?

This strategic question allowed me to collect few statistical data available in public libraries, public administration offices. From those data, I learnt that since Mobutu's regime until now, there is mismanagement, misappropriation of public funds and successive conflicts which main factors of poverty, poor alimentation, and poor healthcare; (2) 17,3% of non-pregnant mothers are malnourished in DRC while 13% are malnourished in urban area; (3) Infections and intestinal parasitic are caused by dirty water and affect a person's health and his/her well-being; (4) In January 2006, for Bagira, Kadutu and Ibanda, "Regideso" produced 4,409, 8320 m³; this production decreased at 181,762 m³ later and is still decreasing while the population growth is increasing each year; (5) Only 22 % of the population have access to drinking water; 12% in rural areas and 37% in urban ones; (6) 40% of Inga dam's potentialities are exploited and most of the production is exported while national demand is not satisfied; (7) in 1998, 10 % of the population have access to electricity, 13,642 subscribers in Bukavu town (companies & households); (8) In 2013, subscribers were 26,000 for Nguba, Ibanda, Muhungu, Nyawera, and Industriel. The production did not increase while the numbers of subscribers are daily increasing; this production is even declining

because of the lack of improved technologies, after 20 years, the infrastructures are the same. DRC has 35 % of the global electricity potentiality of African continent. It has 8 % of the energy produced worldwide.

2.3. *How do people deal with corruption and bribe in DRC and around the world?*

This was a comparative question which incited some informants to address specific concepts used to deal with corruption in DRC and other African countries. The answers provided by informants pointed out a certain trivialization of corruption and bribe practices.

- According to a joke, a machine made to detect and catch thieves caught 25 in Kinshasa (DRC); 10 in Bujumbura (Burundi), 5 in Kigali (Rwanda); 15 in Brazzaville, before being itself finally stolen by thieves in Abuja (Nigeria);
- In DRC, a “politician” is the synonym of the “liar”;
- In Africa, governance issues are common: political conflicts, tribalism, corruption, bribes, etc;
- Corruption is also institutionalized in Nigeria where the access to electricity is likely in DRC: the Nigeria National Company in charge of power (NEPA= National Electricity Power Authority) is known as “Never Expect Power Always”;
- In Tanzania, the ruling party, “Chama Cha Mapinduzi” is known as “Chukua Chako Mapema”, which means, “take yours early”;
- In Zimbabwe, the President Robert Mugabe won a fake lottery prize of Z\$ 100 000 thanks to corruption, and people are still wondering whether the President Mugabe was really among the needy of Zimbabwe to benefit from such a fake prize.

2.4. *Which approaches should be designed and implemented to promote governance and development in South Kivu and DRC?*

This question has allowed the collection of suggestions and recommendations that may help decision-makers to develop good policies and improve governance, by promoting social well-being for their citizens claiming for having access to public services. The following recommendations resume those wishes:

(1)give priority to education so that people may get into the practice of suitable behaviors; (2)put delinquents on their guard to compel them to behave themselves suitably; (3)to do so, DRC needs strong-minded leaders and rulers who are likely to militate for and implement the rule of law for corruption and impunity tackling; (4)the more you have access to education and healthcare, the more you have access to national wealth and opportunities; (5)Understand that Economic growth is linked to national production and wealth; (6)Need of the respect of property rights to encourage or stimulate internal and external investments; (7)Pressure on national policies are needed to access to water and electricity, education, healthcare in DRC;

2.5. *Is there any hope to recover from bad governance and achieve development in South Kivu and DRC?*

Most of Congolese citizens are still optimistic and do not believe that their country is cursed. This optimism is fueled by the intellectual capacities of this huge country of more than 70 millions of habitants, by numerous populations who have the desire to free themselves from armed conflicts, lack of governance for a political and economic take-off, like

Brazil, India, China, or Japan. But, before we get there, it was reported that (1) Little progress is made by Matata government by banking salaries: salaries of PNC & FARDC agents and other public servants are not misappropriated anymore; (2) Economic growth in DRC is 7,2% while 6,7% was expected compared with 6,9% performed in 2011; (3) Since 2003, the economic growth is stable; demographic growth is around 3%; in spite of this, disastrous management of *Res publica* is observed; (4) DRC is the 3rd country in electric potentiality, after China (701 Twh) and Russia (1095 Twh); (5) DRC is a great country with a huge territory extended to 2,345,000 km² and an imposing population of more than 70 million people.

3. Conclusion:

A research study is somehow subject to gaps and limitations which may affect negatively its results or findings. At the end of this research, I noticed that an extensive assessment or survey on public services/utilities (shelter, food, education, healthcare, etc) would be needed throughout Bukavu town or the whole province. The short time I had, combined with the limited financial resources as well as the scope of the study within the province of South Kivu, did not allow me to meet those requirements and I may recommend other researchers to explore these aspects in their future investigations. Since this research seems to be highly interdisciplinary, teams of researchers from various fields of knowledge could deepen it and make improvements based on their respective expertise.

Sources:

- ACEMOGLU, D. & ROBINSON, James A., *Why Nations fail? The origins of Power*, African Economies, University of Oxford, 2009,
- ARISTOTE, *Ethique à Nicomaque*, Livre V, paragraphe 1129, par J. TRICOT, Paris,
- BOISSONNADE, E., *Le Mal Zaïrois*, Hervé Mouvan (Editeur), Paris, 1990.
- DELEDALLE, G., *La philosophie américaine*, Ed L'âge d'homme, 1983
- DOWDEN, R., *Africa. Altered States, Ordinary Miracles*, London, 2009,
- FOFANA, A., *Afrique Noire. Les enjeux d'un nouveau départ*, L'Harmattan, 1998,
- GHAI, Y. & COTTRELL, J. *Economic, Social & Cultural Rights in Practice*, Interights, London, 2004
- GILLIS, M. and alii, *Economie du développement*, Nouveaux Horizons,
- HUNTINGTON, S., *Le choc des civilisations*, 1999
- POUGALA, J.P., *Géostratégie Africaine*, Tome 1, Douala, Cameroun, 2015.
- JOSE, M., *Water Resource Planning in Rwanda*, in *Poverty Reduction Policies Relevance Test*, Butare, 2002
- MINISTÈRE DU PLAN (RDC), *Monographie de la Province du Sud-Kivu*, Kinshasa, 2005
- MUGARUKA, R., *Le type d'homme à former dans la perspective de la pédagogie inculturée*, in *Pour une pédagogie universitaire inculturée en Afrique. Actes du Séminaire-Atelier tenu à Kinshasa, du 13 au 19 février 2000*, Facultés Catholiques de Kinshasa, 2000,
- MUSHI Mugumo, F., *Insecurity and Local Governance in Congo's South Kivu*, in *IDS Prosperity and Poverty*, Profile Books, 2013,
- RDC, *Document des Stratégies pour la Croissance et la Réduction de la Pauvreté*, RDC, DSCR, juillet 2006,

Research Report, Vol.2012, n°74, Institute of Development Studies,London, 2012

SAMPLE, S.*Devenez un grand leader, Nouveaux Horizons, 2009,*

SEN, A , *Development as Freedom, New York, 1999*

BARUTI AMISI Ikumaiyete, Th, *Le déclin de la fonction publique en République Démocratique du Congo. Un problème d'homme, Editions MESS-Kinshasa, 2013,*

TODARO, Michael P, *Economic Development, 5th Edition, Longman, New York & London, 1994*

WALO Mbale Imbopo, *La problématique de la gestion des universités en République Démocratique du Congo : dimensions managériales, in Pour une pédagogie universitaire inculturée en Afrique. Actes du Séminaire-Atelier tenu à Kinshasa du 13 au 19 février 2000.*