DEMOCRATIZATION OF STATE INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES:

A CRITICAL INGREDIENT FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

Ву

Sebenzile Masango

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Introduction

Having done Public Administration and Economics as major subjects in my undergraduate degree, I qualified for admission to postgraduate studies in both subjects. I felt persuaded to further my studies in Public Administration, hence the decision I took. I became more interested to an academic career in Public Administration.

As an ordinary citizen; initially I wanted to, among others, understand some basic things about government. For instance, the functioning and the role of government; why the provision of certain services is the monopoly of government; and what makes governments of different countries to differ from each other.

Furthermore, upon realising that governance is a process which affects the daily activities of people as individuals and groups within a country, I became interested in making a contribution towards it. There are many other ways by which I could have done this, but I chose to study public administration and contribute as a teacher and scholar in the discipline. Finding the study of Public Administration interesting and manageable added an impetus in the process and that encouraged me to study the subject from undergraduate to postgraduate.

This lecture is entitled "Democratization of state institutions and processes: A critical ingredient for Good Governance". The title is addressed from a South African perspective.

In itself 'democratization' is a wide field of study which can be subdivided into various subfields. The content of this lecture is mainly derived from the key focus areas of the research I have conducted. My research mainly contributes to the building and strengthening of democracy and good governance.

STATE INSTITUTIONS AND THE DEMOCRATIC VALUES

The public sector is comprised of state institutions which are established through legislation and financed with taxpayer's money. The state has three organs which are the legislature, executive and the judiciary. The legislature is responsible for the formulation of public policies, the executive is responsible for the implementation of such policies, while the judiciary is mainly responsible for the adjudication and interpretation of the law. The scope of policy implementation is broad and it covers the bulk of the work which is supposed to be done by government. It is a process in which all employees of government are involved - ranging from the cabinet to the lowest ranking government employee. Public administration falls within the executive organ of the state and it is responsible for the implementation of policies through administrative and managerial functions which are undertaken in public institutions and through the rendering of services to the society on behalf of government. In fact public administration is the state machinery for service delivery.

The introduction of democracy in South Africa gave the government a mandate of creating a democratic state and society. This mandate is completely different and also opposed to that of the apartheid regime which prevailed prior to 1994. It is encapsulated in the current Constitution of the Republic of South Africa which was adopted in 1996. In pursuing a specific goal, it is important to note that the means by which the goal is pursued may determine whether or not such a goal is achieved as well as whether it is achieved within the set or anticipated timeframes and how it is achieved.

Organization theories clearly show that organizations, irrespective of their models, are established in order to pursue and realise certain goals. For this to happen an organisation needs, among others, an organisational structure or organogram which will ensure that different sections and positions are arranged such that their incumbents are able to perform their functions efficiently and

effectively in a coordinated manner while pursuing the organisational goal. This contributes towards making the organization fit for its purpose.

When the democratically elected government came to power in South Africa, it became clear that government departments, parastatals, and other government entities which existed then were not fit for the purposes of pursuing the goal of democratising the state and society. It is for this reason that a change in the structural arrangement of the entire spectrum of state institutions as well as changes in the hierarchical structures of some individual state institutions were necessary. Subsequently, following the inauguration of the first democratically elected president of the Republic, Nelson Mandela, this process commenced. It was done through the restructuring of government departments and other state institutions as well as the establishment of new state entities. Some of the state institutions mentioned in Chapter 9 of the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa emanated from this exercise for instance. The dynamic nature of the society and organisations requires that organizing should also be a dynamic and an ongoing process. Hence the restructuring of state institutions is also an ongoing exercise. This is a process which, among others, led to the splitting of the then Department of Education into two departments, namely, Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education, as well as the mergers of some Historically White Universities with their Historically Black counterparts. The names of some government departments and state institutions were changed for the purpose of aligning them with the mandate of democratizing the state. Examples in this regard include the changing of South Africa Police to South African Police Service, Foreign Affairs to International Relations and Cooperation, and the Ombudsman to the Office of the public protector.

Organizing public institutions for the purposes of pursuing and realising the mandate of democracy after 1994 does not appear to have been a simple task. However, as a product of Constitutional stipulations and various restructuring and adjustment processes, the current South African state institutions provide a framework of a state machinery which is fit for the purposes of democratizing the state and the society. This shows that meaningful progress has been made with regard to establishing and setting up of state institutions which are appropriate for democratizing the country.

State institutions are established as means to an end rather than an end in themselves. Their respective mandates of rendering specific services is in conjunction with the mandate of democratizing the South African society and rendering their respective services in a democratic manner. While state institutions are rendering their services, it is important that their own internal practices and processes are also democratic so that they preach what they are also practicing. On this point there may be divergent views. However, in terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the mandate of the state and state institutions remains that of democratizing the country. Clearly, it is feasible to pursue and realise democracy through democratic state institutions, but the feasibility of using undemocratic institutions to pursue and realise a democratic order remains questionable.

Institutions have staff members who are responsible for ensuring that goods are produced and services are rendered according to the mandate of their institution. Considering this fact, if Taylor's Scientific Management theory was applicable to the current realities, we would be having less problems than we currently have in Human Resource Management. Such a scenario would save institutions from the various pathologies which are associated with Human Resource Management in both the public and the private sector.

As far back as 1911, Taylor's theory of scientific management proposed an approach which would lead to significant increases in employee productivity in organizations through four *specific principles* (Robbins 1990:38). Among the criticisms which were levelled on Taylor's Theory of Scientific Management was the fact that it ignored the role of the human element in employee productivity. Its critics argued that it suggested that in order to generate and sustain high levels of productivity, people should be as productive as machines (Henry 1979:66).

The Hawthorne studies which were conducted between 1924 and the early 1930s complemented the shortcomings of the Scientific Management Theory (Robbins 1990: 38 -39). They included various experiments which were conducted during this period. One of those experiments involved the manipulation of the intensity of light while work was in progress. In this particular experiment the study found that, in some instances, workers reacted to the level of the intensity of light, although the exponents of this theory could not explain some of the behaviour of the workers emanating from this study. This indicated that unlike machines people are influenced environmental factors and they can subsequently react to such factors in various ways which need not be in accordance with expectations. The Hawthorne studies are commended for having introduced an era of organizational humanism in the workplace.

Efficiency and effectiveness in public administration can hardly, if at all, be realised when the human element is not given its due attention in Human Resource Management. Hence, human beings play a major role in public administration. Furthermore, in a democratic dispensation the institutions of public administration as well as members of the society in general influence and are also influenced by the democratic values.

The bureaucracy which has been established in order to ensure the effective functioning of public administration includes the hierarchical

structures of public institutions and their chains of command. Human resource is an indispensable component of public administration which is also a source of life for public institutions. Public institutions operate within various types of environments, including political, social, economic and religious environment. The dynamics from these environments influence the manner in which public institutions operate. Hence the democratic values from the political environment affect the manner in which public administration operates.

On the other hand, officials who are employees of public institutions are extracted from the diverse population emanating from within and outside the Republic of South Africa. As a result, there is diversity in terms of race, gender, culture, religion and background within the workforce of the civil service. This is a foundation for diversity of personal values among the employees of the civil service. The legislation and the code of conduct which applies to all civil servants is intended to ensure that people are able to work effectively with each other irrespective of their diversity. The said code of conduct is consistent with the values of the Constitution which also apply to public administration and the society. Those Constitutional values have a tremendous role on the manner in which public administration operates as well as in social cohesion.

The democratic values of the Republic of South Africa are stipulated in the country's constitution. In terms of Section I of chapter I of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996),

The Republic of South Africa is one, sovereign, democratic state founded on the following values:

- (a) Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms.
- (b) Non-racialism and non-sexism.
 - (c) Supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law.

(d) Universal adult suffrage, a national common voters' roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness.

The inculcation of the aforementioned values in state institutions and the society is one of the critical factors for South Africa's newly found democracy. In this regard, research from the academic fraternity can also play a pivotal role.

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SEVICE DELIVERY

Democracy in South Africa came with a challenge of, among others, including the previously excluded sectors of society in public affairs. It also opened a window of opportunity for the Historically Disadvantaged Individuals to access and occupy positions in the higher echelons of the labour market which were dominated by white males during the apartheid era. For some, this raised questions about the suitability and capability of members of society from the historically excluded sectors of society for the crucial roles associated with those positions. This is among the reasons which brought a sharp focus on issues such as good governance to the platforms of academic debate and research in the formative years of democracy in South Africa.

In order to get the desired outcomes out of the democratic process in a developing country such as South Africa, there is a need for economic growth – a phenomenon which is also the product of good governance.

According to the World Bank, the eight major characteristics of good governance are participation, rule of law, consensus, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, transparency and responsiveness (www.unescap.org/pdd). The correlation and mutual relationship between the tenets of democracy and the characteristics of good governance is a clear indication that

proper application of democracy and its ideals could serve as a catalyst for good governance. Good governance is the key towards promotion of effectiveness and efficiency in both public and private sector institutions. It contributes significantly towards the promotion of professionalism and elimination of corruption.

I can trace my research in the area of democracy and good governance back to the beginning of my academic career in the early 1990s.

Aligning Recruitment, Selection and Placement Practices with Democratic norms

When I was doing my masters degree research on recruitment and selection of candidates in the public service during the dawn of democracy in South Africa, I noticed that providing human resource in an institution is a crucial step which gives life to the institution and enables it to function.

Getting the Human Resource Management process right at the stage of recruitment and selection of candidates is a very important ideal for all the other stages of Human Resource Management. This stage contributes significantly towards the institutions' ability to pursue and achieve its initially intended objectives. If institutions are to be democratized, their recruitment, selection and placement practices should be consistent with democratic norms. If democratization is not given its due attention at this stage of Human Resource Management, it becomes more challenging to democratize during the other stages of the management process.

During the era of the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the South African Public Administration was dominated by Cloete's generic administrative model. The study of generic administrative process of policy-making, organising, staffing/personnnel, financing, work procedure, and controlling dominated the discipline of Public Administration. On the other hand, the introduction of the New Public

Management movement which was intended to champion the introduction of private sector ideas in public administration was a notable challenger to the dominance of the generic administrative model. The study of Public Administration during that era gave me the impetus of focussing my research on the sub-field of Human Resource Management in Public Administration, specifically on the recruitment and selection of candidates in the South African Public Service.

Appointment of candidates to positions on the basis of merit has long been an ideal which all institutions are purported to be striving for. However perceptions of the public do not always concur that the merit principle is applied appropriately when appointments are made. This was exacerbated by some questions which were asked when one applied for positions in the public service prior to the introduction of the democratic dispensation in South Africa and the perceptions of cadre deployment later, during the introduction of the democratic era. For instance for positions in the Public Service, the applicant would be asked the name and occupation of his/her father, and the reasons for which the population group and ethnical group (in the case of Blacks) were asked for, were not clarified. These questions were clearly irrelevant to the applicant's suitability for employment, and they were clearly unjust and unfair. Furthermore, although it could be argued that cadre deployment (spoils system) could assist in promoting sensitivity to the political objectives of the governing party, appointment of individuals in a manner which is inconsistent with the relevant policies, and to positions they do not qualify for remains unacceptable in a democratic dispensation

The role played by recruitment, selection and appointment of candidates to vacancies in institutions has remained important since the existence of institutions with organised personnel establishments. The quality and quantity of employees which the institutions manage to attract, select and eventually appoint determine the ability of such institutions to achieve their purpose. While it may seem obvious for

anyone to understand that the benefits of recruiting, selecting and appointing the right person for the job are a contribution towards the prosperity and success of the organisation; and the challenge of inappropriate recruitment, selection and appointment process is the harm incurred by the organisation due to the negative impact of the inappropriate application of these processes; in practice recruitment, selection and appointment of candidates is an area which is associated with allegations of nepotism, corruption and other ills. However, this does not mean that all processes of recruitment, selection and appointment should be perceived with suspicion although all of them are by their very nature subjective and likely to fall prey of human error.

Another contentious practice which could be seen as an extension of the selection period in the public service is the probationary period. The placement of a new appointee on probation for a specific period before his/her permanent appointment is confirmed is a method by which the new appointee is assessed further for the suitability of permanent appointment to the post. It provides the probationer with an opportunity to bridge the cognitive or perceptual gap caused by the difference between the duties and responsibilities of the post in which he/she is placed and those of the post he/she previously occupied. For candidates who lack practical experience, it provides them with such experience before they are permanently employed.

The application of probation period in employment process should be done with great care and caution since its negative outcomes could have bad consequences for both the employer and the employee. The employee's unpleasant experience of losing a job, especially in times of high unemployment rate; the costs of litigation which could be associated with this process; and the costs of repeating the recruitment, selection and placement for the same post do not auger well for both the employer and the employee.

The research I conducted on probation in the public service culminated into an article which I published with the late Professor Victor Hilliard.

The introduction of democracy has contributed towards addressing some of the challenges which were associated with the pre 1994 era in the recruitment, selection and placement processes in state institutions. However, the need to ensure that employment opportunities are available to all prospective applicants while the redress associated with South Africa's history of segregation is given its due attention remains a challenge.

Implementing and consolidating selected democratic ideals

Having been among the new generation of academics in the discipline of Public Administration at the dawn of democracy in South Africa, it became impossible for me not to focus my attention on the opportunities and challenges which came along with the introduction of democracy. With public administration being the machinery through which citizens were to get the proceeds of democracy, the focus, debates and deliberations within the discipline of Public Administration were bound to take this reality into account.

It was when I was conducting my doctoral research when I began to do research on "PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN POLICY-MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION". I still recall that that was a qualitative study with an empirical component. I must also state that the officials and councillors of the then City of Port Elizabeth, the Port Elizabeth Civil Society Forum, the Port Elizabeth Residents' and Ratepayers' Association, and the South African Civic Organisation, as well as community workers and selected members of the public were helpful during the processes of data collection for that study.

Public participation

The introduction of democracy in South Africa was preceded by a period in which public participation in policy making and implementation was limited and not supported by legislation. Black South African citizens were not given an opportunity to participate in general elections, or to make an input into the process of making and implementing policies that affected them. Their involvement in the process of policy implementation was limited to compliance with the policies of the government. In terms of Section 52 of Act 110 of 1983, which was the last version of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa during the apartheid era, voting in general elections was limited to Whites, Coloureds and Indians; Blacks were not allowed to vote. However, Blacks influenced policy making and implementation during that era through various ways which included boycotts and mass demonstrations.

Public participation in policy-making and implementation is an integral part of public administration and an essential ingredient of community development and democracy. It is not fair to expect citizens to support state institutions that appear foreign and/or incomprehensible with their way of life. Popular support for democracy and its institutions and policies is not, as may be assumed, expressed solely via the ballot box during elections, but is also dependent upon ongoing and regular interaction between the public and state institutions and their policies.

It was in view of the aforementioned state of affairs and the then newly introduced policy framework which is supportive of public participation in policy making and implementation, that I deemed it appropriate to undertake research on public participation. The basic intention was to investigate how the process of public participation in policy-making and implementation can be strengthened and made more fluid; and examine the impact of the process of public participation as well as the extent of awareness of the South African public with regard to its democratic rights and freedom and newly acquired opportunities of interaction in policy-making and implementation.

Public participation is an essential ingredient for good governance in any democratic country. It is a broad and relative concept which includes various forms of participation. Examples of which include citizen and community participation.

The role played by public participation in facilitating the interaction between the members of the public on the one hand and policy makers and implementers on the other, shows that it should be encouraged and preserved. This becomes more apparent when the role of public participation in democratising and controlling the making and implementation of policy, facilitating the exchange of information between the government and members of the public, promoting responsiveness to public needs, enhancing government's accountability, facilitating the processes of policy implementation and community development; is considered.

In order to make meaningful decisions about public needs and demands, policy makers and implementers should obtain current information about such needs and demands from the public. At the institutional level, employees should be involved, or at least be consulted, when decisions which are likely to affect them and/or decisions in which they are expected to play a role in their implementation are made. Otherwise, management may not get full commitment and adequate support in the implementation of such decisions from the employees who are supposed to participate in that process.

Although South Africa's Constitutional and statutory provisions reflect good intentions about public participation, with low levels of

knowledge about such provisions and inadequate interaction between public participation and policy-making and implementation, a fluid process of participation which could deepen, broaden and sustain democracy would remain a utopia.

In advancing my research on democratization, I have also focussed on freedom of expression, citizen empowerment for promoting access to public services, and gender equality.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Freedom of expression is intended to strengthen democracy. It is an avenue through which people can contribute towards government's agenda in various ways which include constructive criticism. For instance, in addition to the obvious attempt of portraying themselves as alternative government, opposition parties assist in the criticism and scrutiny of government programmes — a process which may assist in improving the quality of the agenda of the government of the day. Freedom of the expression is a constitutional requirement which is intended to ensure that people are able to exercise their rights and express their views about matters which affect their lives and also hold the government of the day accountable for its programmes. Interest groups use their right to freedom of expression to highlight their plight. In some instances this process leads to public protests.

MAINSTREAMING THE PLIGHT OF INTEREST GROUPS

To a certain extent it could be argued that the matters of concern which tend to lead to protest actions are those which are already on the government's agenda. They form part of the government's plans. For instance refurbishment of roads and the delivery of low cost houses which are subsidised by government for many areas are already on government's agenda. In fact, it is not uncommon to hear the authorities responding to memoranda of demands from protesters by saying that the matter was going to be addressed even

if there was no protest about it. Although members of the community may, in some instances, have been aware of this, the matter may still lead to protest action. This could be attributed to lack of patience and the perception that their plight is not given the priority they would like it to get. As a result they resort to engagements which may culminate into protest action because they would like their plight to be prioritised. Government has a multiplicity of programmes, all of which are driven by specific needs and are considered important by their recipients. The limited means in terms of human resources and/or capacity constraints, timeframes, financial constraints and so forth; make it difficult for government to implement all the programmes it would like to implement at the same time. As a result, it becomes necessary for government to prioritise the programmes. Interest groups who perceive that matters relating to their plight are lowranking in terms of government's priority could become disgruntled. This may lead to anger and frustration, especially if there are no convincing outcomes in their engagements with the government – a situation which may culminate into a public protest.

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC PROTESTS IN REVIVING AND SUSTAINING DEMOCRACY

Democracy is a process which includes governance and therefore is not limited to the periodic elections of government. It is a process in which people should exercise their rights including demanding accountability and responsiveness of government to public needs and demands. The public is empowered by the Constitution and legislation in South Africa to guard against practices which disadvantage them in an unfair and unlawful manner. In this regard they are free to raise their concerns whenever they deem appropriate. In some instances, the processes of raising such concerns are escalated to levels which culminate into public protests. The pressure they exert to the government by protesting contributes towards keeping democracy

alive. It draws the attention of government to the matter of concern and place the authorities in a situation which makes them feel compelled to engage with the protesters.

However, it is a great pity that people sometimes destroy public property which has been established for their own benefit when they are disgruntled about the responses of the authorities to their demands. This scenario has become common through some public service delivery protests and strikes in the past few years in South Africa and it remains unconstructive and unacceptable.

Citizen empowerment for promoting access to public services

Another aspect which is important for democratization is citizen empowerment. It is necessary for promoting access to public services and encourage public consultation. Through public consultation and engagement between citizens and public officials, citizens can be empowered for access to services.

The provision of goods and services in the public sector is influenced by the role played by the public officials as service providers, and by the citizens themselves as service recipients. In this process, the needs of citizens should be addressed by public officials. In order to ensure that this is realised, citizens have a responsibility to inform the officials of their actual needs, so that the real needs — rather than the perceived needs — of the citizens are addressed.

Citizen empowerment is one of the critical factors that could contribute towards enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the provision of goods and services. For instance, when citizens are well provided with knowledge relating to their rights, as well as the obligations and the roles of public officials as service providers, they could participate meaningfully in the processes of service delivery;

since, in such cases, they could demand their rights and hold the government accountable.

GENDER EQUALITY

On gender equality, targets which were set in the first decade of democracy have demonstrated the democratic government's commitment and willingness to make progress in this regard. South Africa's being a signatory to the Millennium Development goals with goal number 3 being to promote gender equality and empower women is just one of the examples in this regard. Although it could be argued that some progress has been made regarding gender equality in South Africa, the current scenario still indicates that much more needs to be done.

The policy framework adopted since 1994 demonstrates that the South African democratic government is committed towards ensuring that all forms of discrimination against women which have the potential of perpetuating or promoting gender inequality in the workplace and society in general are eliminated. It promotes the advancement and empowerment of women as a means of redressing the historical injustices which have led to the current reality of gender inequality which is characterised by, among others, limited access to opportunities and resources for women. It is intended to enhance the status of women and eradicate gender inequalities.

However, there are notable improvements regarding the advancement and empowerment of women. This is more prominent in government than in other sectors: women are ascending to positions of power in certain public institutions.

The aforementioned indicates that gender equality remains a crucial goal to be pursued in the South African labour market and the society

in general. Therefore initiatives designed to improve and support gender equality should be supported. This includes, among others, supporting the enforcement of legislation on gender equality rather than implementing gender legislation as a compliance exercise as well as providing support to institutions and mechanisms established to promote gender equality. On the other hand, the debate about the qualitative and quantitative approach in the implementation of policies and other initiatives for gender equality remains an important factor since both approaches have advantages and disadvantages.

Inculcating the values of the Constitution in Public Administration and the Society

Advancement and consolidation of democracy with respect to the aforementioned democratic ideals is achievable if the letter and spirit of the Constitution is upheld by all. In a paper which I presented at a conference in May this year, I highlighted the need to promote the inculcation of values of the constitution to all sectors of the society as well as in government. The concerns about corruption and maladministration, which have been raised in various platforms of the media, as well as verdicts of some court cases, suggest that some politicians and public officials do not always uphold the Constitution and adhere to its values. It is important to note that this is not limited to the political levels, it also applies to the administrative and management levels of state institutions. The conduct of politicians and public officials that is inconsistent with democratic values and upholding of the Constitution, retards the processes of democratizing the state and its institutions. The implementation of legislation and service delivery should be in keeping with the democratic values enshrined in the Constitution. Of concern is the fact that this is not always the case, hence there is a need to inculcate the values of the Constitution to politicians, public officials and members of the public

in general since that may assist in advancing and consolidating the gains of democracy in South Africa.

Conclusion

In conclusion, for democracy to flourish, it must be underpinned by values which contribute towards the creation of an environment which is conducive towards its development and consolidation. Such values should not be merely words on a piece of paper which have no bearing to the way people live and the manner in which the institutions of government carry out their mandates. Government should continuously encourage public officials to share the values of democracy and render their services to the society accordingly. In a democratic country citizens have a civic responsibility of creating a culture which is conducive to democracy by, among others, sharing and promoting livelihood which is consistent with democratic values.

Democratizing state institutions by making their workforces to be representative of the society is necessary, among other reasons, in order to make state institutions not to appear foreign and strange to the society they are supposed to serve. In this regard it is also important to note that democratization should be undertaken as a genuine process which does not harbour disguised fronting in which people are given positions without authority. Due to challenges associated with it, the process of democratizing state institutions is not a matter which should be left to chance, it needs a deliberate effort which, among other ways, could be undertaken through Human Resource Management processes of recruitment and selection.

Public participation is central and critical for the democratic process. People have struggled for the right to participate in political and administrative process of their governance in various countries of the world. An ongoing process of educating citizens, especially in democratic countries, about the importance of taking advantage of their rights and participate in public affairs is important and it contributes towards strengthening democracy.

The development and prosperity of South Africa's democracy is dependent on good governance and democratization of state institutions. Therefore ongoing research on democracy and good governance has an important contribution to make in this regard.

THANK YOU

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