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Education, Education, Citizen Participation and Democratic Governance: A new South Africa Case study.

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Abstract. Much of the writing on citizen participation in South Africa and elsewhere focuses more on responsiveness, responsibility, representativeness but loose sight of the complexities surrounding these processes. Citizen participation tends to be looked at in isolation rather than in relation to citizen empowerment through education. This paper examines the controversy over citizen participation and feasible involvement of citizens in democratic governance processes in South Africa. This is achieved through the use of the CLEAR theoretical frame work which helps in understanding hidden processes and struggles which take place in citizen participation and their influences on democratic governance. While elements of citizen participation practices are evident in the perceptions of some South Africans as a vehicle for democratic governance, it remains a complex concept influenced by multifaceted socio-economic dynamics and practices such as the politics of that era (post-apartheid era). Citizen participation remains one of the best vehicles towards democratic governance though fraught with some complexities such as lack of citizen empowerment and hidden exclusionary practices in some key organs of government. The existing opportunities for citizen participation in South Africa remain complex and exclusive because they tend to favour those who are natural vocal, “educated”, generating a scenario which increases hidden political inequality and undemocratic governance.

Key words: Citizen Participation, empowerment, democratic governance, participation discourse, Constitution.

Introduction

Socio-economic related problems in South Africa which include issues of security, environmental challenges, land issues, rural sustainable development and urban blight (housing related problems) made South Africans to realise the inflexible and unresponsive nature of bureaucratic practices. South Africa realised joined-up governance and networks as suitable flexible and responsive alternatives, where social networks and actors operate in structural relationships-characterised by mutual respect necessary for the existing challenges and new knowledge-driven global economy.

When democratic governance refers to public organisation and public action aiming at positive societal changes, it captures one of the major socio-economic changes in the history of South Africa (the democratic dispensation of the 1990s'). The democratic dispensation was characterised by a cry for democratic governance which arose in large part out of a political crisis a product of apartheid policies and mismanagement practices. The new South Africa state had to change in response to national and international demands. Domestically the state had to change policies because of rising demands of its citizens. The demands arose from popular discontent with the apartheid state's failure to handle the economy and education with its apparent culture of unresponsiveness. In South Africa democracy was viewed as the opium of the oppressed and vital aspect of educational change and sustainable development (Michels and De Graaf, 2010). Citizen participation as a vehicle towards democracy is perceived is applauded by most people (Arnstein , 1971).

The South Africans wanted more effective state organs which are more transparent and accountable. They wanted more decisive leaders guided by different governing structures such as the Constitution of 1996 which favours citizen participation in governing the country. The institutional changes were built on broader social changes, including changing norms of citizenship, increasing advocacy. The Constitution of 1996 has open venues inside and outside of the electoral representation for democratic governance. South Africans were and expected to have a voice in matters affecting them, youth leading the way, as they participate more in formal democracy.

Governance structures

Strong governance structures (constitution, judicial, constitutional court, Committee system in parliament) supported by active participation of organisations such as Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), African National Congress (ANC) and South African Communist Party (SACP) through their treble alliance) have been regarded as vital organs for sustainable development by the (ANC) in its capacity as a movement and government. The South African Constitution of 1996 saves a guiding principle and a foundation for promoting good governance in all spheres of government and the private sector. The Constitution of 1996 urges that the democratic processes should be driven by citizen participation from all sectors of society. Participation is expected to occur from local communities through different forum which are sensitive to the needs of people (Land Reform policy Discussion

Document, 2012). This aims at building mutual trust in government and improvement of good governance through the existing policy instruments, structures such as the educational research, judiciary and courts (OECD, 2011).

The South African government under Mandela's presidency crafted different pieces of legislations to facilitate citizen participation across all the spheres of government. For example, key legislation with respect to household sanitation was crafted (the Water Service Act number 108 of 1997), the National Water Act number 36 of 1998 and the Municipal Structures Act number 33 of 2000. These acts aim at promoting community based approaches which ensure long lasting benefits on local economic development and educational changes.

Key sites for citizen participation and governance

The judiciary and policy formulation forums are key sites for advancing citizen participation and good governance. The courts are used as avenues of institutional engagement, together with the Bill of Rights and the Constitution of 1996. Organisations such as Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre have once used the institutional approach in addressing societal matters. In 1998 TAC found itself in a court in a succession of cases against the government on HIV/AIDS related policies or matters (Reitze and White, 2010). The political changes led to a stronger judiciary and rights based regime supported by the Constitution of 1996. The democratic South Africa has used the laws of the land to address the inequality of the past, reducing group based disparities, addressing women's inequalities and subordination in both public and private life (Albertyn, 2007). In South Africa courts have granted a significant array of rights to different groups defined by their sexual orientation and gender and this help in bringing them into the constitutional community, the best route towards good governance (Albertyn, 2007). The law exercised by the courts is important in promoting citizen participation and democratic governance but it has to be executed effectively because it can be limited by inadequate enforcement and interpretation which may lead to a situation where peoples' lives remain unchanged. Citizen participation and democratic governance guided by the law and facilitated by empowerment and training should be a force for positive societal changes. Different laws crafted in the 1990s' served as a vehicle for promoting citizen participation in South Africa. These include the Gatherings Act of 1993 which helps in managing public gathering, marches and public protest and the Dangerous Weapons Act of 2013 (Act no 15 of 2013) promulgated to address the possession of weapons during public gatherings and mass demonstrations but they remain complex because some of their provisions are sometimes inconsistently applied by some concerned parties. For example, in the case of the Madeberg municipality service delivery protest and Mothotlung public protest incident in 2014 which resulted in individual's death yet citizens were highlighting their concerns and challenges to government.

Citizen participation is perceived by the African National Congress (ANC) government as a means of making citizens' voices heard in key developmental matters at national, provincial and local level. Citizen participation has the potential to help citizens to understand their rights and responsibilities, develop skills and knowledge to participate in the country's complex developmental practices (developing and nurturing governance which is

characterised by institutional transparency and accountability, peace and stability), communication between local citizens and provincial government, improving service delivery and empowering communities to solve local conflicts, ensuring that people enjoy freedom of speech, association, peaceful protest and access to independent media and information. Citizen Participation is used as a persuasive strategy of inclusion and exclusion of some citizens, particularly through educational practices such as hidden privatisation in private education) (Ball and Youdell, 2007). Hidden privatisation of public education has an impact on equality of educational access, active participation, experiences and outcomes-democratic governance (Ball and Youdell, 2007). Hidden privatisation masked the gap between the most advantaged socio-economic groups and the least advantaged groups.

Citizen Participation as discourse

Citizen participation as discourse is sometimes deployed as tactics in participation struggles by different groups in arenas such as in political negotiations or public consultation meetings and policy formulation. Different organisational groups such as women organisations are always waging a war/struggle over gender equality and women's rights in African culture and customs. Women are in constant struggle to secure their rights, interests in the face of opposition from men (Albertyn, 2007). These struggles are perceived as a vehicle towards democratic governance.

The complexities and contradictions in citizen participation are usually obscured by the language of official government documents, policy formulation practices which tend to disregard the messiness of real life, common usage of the word-participation and the process itself. In some situations the common usage of the word citizen participation often wrongly suggests a political neutral process connected with good governance. Yet citizen participation is always political because it involves struggles and discussions over values, interests and peoples' ideologies. It is a complex vehicle towards democratic governance because it provides means for government to make decisions based on public interests and aspirations. It inculcates the culture of democratic practices such as respect of diversity of opinions (Barnes, 1999).

Citizen participation and democratic governance in South Africa

The wind of change which swept South Africa and some pockets areas of the African continent in the 1990s' made citizen participation in the political arena the best option for democratic governance. South Africa's democracy became representative democracy in which the elected party representatives decide. This is viewed as the best option for democratic governance in today's interconnected socio-economic complex world.

Citizen participation has promoted a strong vibrant civic society and securing a form of accountability based on public scrutiny facilitated by civic society and organisations such as COSATU. They monitor government and institutions decisions and practices (by focusing on performance accountability) to ensure that they are fair and just. Performance accountability focuses on stakeholder satisfaction with outputs. Performance accountability is achieved by measuring departmental outputs, targets, benchmarks, standards and indicators which provide

a basis for monitoring and auditing the performance of public agencies (Bevier, 2011). These help in highlighting the problems of democratic governance and in informing public policy for societal change-through continuous capacity building of grassroots actors to oversee the performance of governments' departments. It also helps in promoting citizen engagement and social networks which allows citizens to express their views and demands on government's practices. Social networks help to avoid "thin" democracy and "thin" democratic governance because it encourages people to listen to diversity of opinion and therefore promotes mutual respect, understanding and inclusiveness in a country with a history of exclusionary practices.

Citizen empowerment and participation through Social networks

Networks are schools for democratic governance and democracy because its where democratic practices are nurtured and learned. There is a relationship between citizen participation and empowerment because meaningful citizen participation and good governance depends on empowerment. Empowerment has the potential of creating creative citizens, able to help themselves and others as opposed to passive citizens who are unable to adapt to the changing environment (Delahaij, 2004). Empowerment is about helping individual citizens, organisations, and communities to be in charge of their lives (Rappaport, 1984). This suggests that empowerment is a facilitator for citizen participation and the latter is a vehicle towards democratic governance. This highlights the integrative perspective of empowerment, an important element in context of good governance. It also notes that good governance depends upon a broader view of empowerment which is not based on "thin" citizen participation.

Citizen Participation through networks and supported by empowerment has a potential of promoting democratic governance because of its educative function and integrative function (Michels and Graaf, 2009). Citizens learn how to debate public issues, trustworthiness and reciprocity (in universities, civic organisations and trade unions). Citizen participation contributes to the inclusion of citizens in public matters, and encourages civic skills development, gives government an opportunity to tap into wider source of expertise, information, perspectives, potential solutions, building public trust in government, raising the quality of democratic governance and strengthening civic capacity. In this regard government is not viewed as only the custodian of governance, democracy and expression of the common good and interest of the people but a guarantor of democracy and facilitator of societal change through a well-functioning democracy.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the CLEAR Theoretic framework which is characterised by these factors:

- Can do-that is, have the resources and knowledge to participate;
- Like to-that is, have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation;
- Enable to-that is, are provided with the opportunity for participation;
- Asked to-that is, are mobilised by official bodies or voluntary groups;

- Responded to-that is, see evidence that their views have been considered (Lowndes, et al.2006 p.286).

The CLEAR theoretical framework is important in exploring whether the citizen participation processes fit in the context. It notes that citizen participation strategies need to be sensitive to the local context and other social dynamics. The framework helps in understanding that participation depends on the individual and his skills and individual resources and association with a public entity. The “Can do” and “Like to” factors focus on the individual citizen as a person while the “Enable to” and “Asked to” and “Responded to” focus on the environment of the individual. These include civic infrastructure, community networks and existence of public policy systems. The framework is an instrument helpful in finding out whether enough is done to stimulate citizen participation and which areas needs more attention. It also helps in ascertaining the quality of the relationship between empowerment and citizen participation. Understanding the existing relationship between empowerment and citizen participation is important because the factors (civic infrastructure, community networks need to be stimulated by empowerment.

Methodology

It is difficult to assess the full impact and consequences of changes of governance without exploring systemic changes in citizen participation through different lenses, such as documents (critical review of policies, acts, research based evidence and journals). For this work a case study is deemed as powerful and illustrative of changes in governance through citizen participation and it allows for deeper and more penetrating analyses of what such changes mean in different spheres of political context. It also helps in giving a detailed examination of one or multi-setting, thus relevant to this research focus which is to explore governance through citizen participation. This study does not aim at making some generalization but providing a clearer and deeper understanding of citizen participation in relation to governance in South Africa and its influence on practice.

Research tools

Documentary evidence

This study is based on documentary evidence. Documentary evidence (such as the South African Constitution of 1996, relevant journals and articles) were used by the researchers because of the nature of the study which traces the pulling and pushing factors of the change processes and its management practices. Documentary evidence is crucial in understanding the factors which triggered and also stifles the change process and peoples’ behavior. Sometimes the complexities and contradictions in citizen participation are usually obscured

by the language of official government documents, policy formulation practices which tend to disregard the messiness of real life, common usage of the word-participation and the process itself.

Change in governance can be triggered by critical programme reports on organizational performance and citizens' behaviour. For example, urgency of change can be conveyed by citing the future needs of students or other stakeholders, appealing to students' best interests, or uncovering and tackling the perceived inadequacies of the current educational programmes. Through official documents (policy documents, minutes from meetings, annual reports and dossiers) researchers get access to official perspectives and to change initiators' perspectives (Biklen, 1992).

Data analysis

The data was analyzed using the phenomenological approach which helped the researcher to make sense of the documentary evidence and eventually the formation of these themes: citizen participation for societal change, inclusion complexities, new conditions and irreconcilable policy differences, individual psychology and citizen participation, sites for citizen participation.

Discussions

Citizen participation for societal change

Within the South African context citizen participation is perceived as a mean through which individuals seek for societal change service delivery. Citizen participation at national activities is viewed as a mean to empower citizens with attitudes relevant to existing societal challenges (positive self-esteem and sense of inclusive community attitudes). This is important in a country with a history of exclusionary practices. Citizen participation is given the first priority by the South Africans in respect of the country's Constitution of 1996 which state that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in diversity. South Africans are guided by the Constitution of 1996 in the process of healing the division of the past and in establishing a society based on democratic values, non-racism, non- sexism, social justice and fundamental rights. The Constitution of 1996 provides South Africans with a law based opportunity to participate on matters pertaining sustainable governance and sustainable development. Citizen participation is usually perceived as an important aspect of democracy and good governance. Citizens' involvement on matters pertaining the country help them take more interest in public matters and urge them to listen to a diversity of opinions, one of

the best route towards an inclusive society. Since 1994 South Africans participated in their democratic elections effectively. For example, in the 1994 elections the ANC received 62.6% votes, National party 20.4% votes, Inkatha Freedom Party 10.5% votes, Freedom party 2.5% votes and Democratic party 1.7% votes. In the 1999 the ANC received 66% votes, Democratic party 9.55% votes, Inkatha Freedom party 8.58%, New Democratic party 6.87%, United Democratic party 3.42% and in the 2004 elections, the ANC received 69%, Democratic party 12.37%, Inkatha Freedom party 6.97 and the United Democratic party received 2.28% South African Election Commission report, 2009). Peoples' interest and political engagement in political national elections in South Africa depict that political institutions are not yet in deficit as compared to other countries where voting has been stagnant (Franklin and Ebdon, 2005; Lijphat, 1997). The voting pattern in South Africa depict that South African voters have stable preferences and the vibrant of the voting process does not diminishes the significance of electoral authorisation.

Inclusion complexities

With respect to inclusion, voting which encourages citizen participation is expected to promote inclusion in South Africa, as all citizens are formally equal as noted within the Constitution of 1996 but the electoral system tends to add some hidden exclusional practices caused by the locus of decision making in complex scenarios in South Africa (Reitzes and White, 2010). Collective decision making tend to fall into the hands of the National Executive Committee of the ruling party, this tend to undermine the spirit of inclusive governance because it concentrates power in the hands of the NEC, which allows decisions to be announced and then defended. This practice makes the governing party weak in decision making and lacking the power to take decisions in deliberation with the affected publics. This notes that the recognizable forms of democratic governance, representation characterised by elected officials convened in National Executive Committees (NEC) are not enough to carry out normative purpose of democratic practices such as good governance, characterised by accountability, inclusiveness and being sensitive to the needs of citizens. This shows the institutional complexities of the ANC as a party and governing party. Reitzes and White (2010) p 16 also noted that the NEC was once given the mandate to oversee all ANC structures, including parliamentary causes, office-bearers such as the whips and Committee Chairperson. In addition, Butler (2007) also noted that power and information were increasingly concentrated on the hands of a small elite and this had both negative and positive consequences on internal democracy and good governance. This is also supported by the manner in which the scorpions were dismantled. Such a move was against the principles of democracy. Peoples' voices on the dismantlement of scorpions were denied and ignored. Petitions signed and representations made in parliament were ignored on the pretext that the Polokwane conference was representative of the South African people. Yet, Polokwane conference consisted of 400 delegates from branches without enough power to act on such a matter of high magnitude. This undermined democracy and democratic governance and perpetuated the culture of hidden exclusionary practices. The exclusion of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) from the Inter-faith Council by the Zuma administration (Reitze and White, 2010 p.88) its another practice which undermined citizen participation and

democratic governance under his leadership. Under Mbeki administration it is also claimed that citizen participation was compromised. For example, when the Sexual offences Act 1957 was reviewed, one of the key important clause inserted was not based on consultation with Civil society organisations (CSO) and what worsen the situation was the poor mobilisation of Civil society to take its stand (Reitze and White 2010 p 43).

New conditions and irreconcilable policy differences and their impact on participation

Reitzes and White (2010) claimed that Mbeki's government became less involved in democratic interaction and dialogue with citizenry, as its focus was on policy implementation and delivery and less on democracy. Mbeki's era as the President of the republic was an era of delivery focusing on service delivery than on interest groups. Some government officials were claiming that training and workshops were enough and endless participation was hindering the implementation process (Reitzes and White, 2010). This notes that existing political conditions irreconcilable policy differences tend to influence citizen participation and political governance in complex situations such as in South Africa. For example, policy differences which existed between civil societies Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), South African Communist Party (SACP) and the ANC government compromised the standard of participation and governance particularly during Mbeki's term of office 1999-2008 (Reitzes and White, 2010). On the other hand, policies regarding privatisation and Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR), policy on HIV/AIDS and non-provision of anti-retroviral and the policy of "quiet diplomacy" on Zimbabwe had both positive and negative impact on citizen participation and governance. These policies led to the rise of social movements, such as the TAC, Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) and landless Peoples' movement (LPM). To an extent these policies promoted citizen's awareness and participation and governance because the masses gained an interest on public matters. Eventually, they positively challenged the government to focus on her mandate of serving the peoples' interests.

Individual psychology and citizen participation

Individual psychology and experiences and the nature of the governing party and its challenges (domestic and international pressure and responsibilities) inform divergent conceptions of citizen participation within government and society. Within the South African context, the leadership style of the ANC, were either influenced by their life experiences or their individual psychology. For example, other leaders of the ANC envisage a participatory democracy with the mobilised masses driving social transformation beyond the bourgeois zone. While others were less concerned with how or by whom decisions were taken at a particular time, as long as the decisions advances the country's interests. For example, it is claimed that Mbeki's government had a policy differences with civic society and it was less involved in democratic interaction and dialogue with citizenry, its main focus was on policy implementation and service delivery, which needed less direct citizen participation (Reitze and White, 2010). Jenkins, (2006) also noted that Blair personal difficulties and policy

differences with Gordon Brown did divide the party and this became toxic to the government and service delivery.

The existing situation and domestic and international pressure led to a change of strategies and on how the Mbeki government worked, because what had to be done required a new approach of citizen participation. For example, policies goals had been democratically decided upon during the Mandela presidency, therefore Mbeki's government was to focus on service delivery, negotiations with key stakeholders was replaced by "getting things done slogan". Democratic inclusion was not seen necessary for the process of service delivery on the nature of both domestic and international pressures facing the nation. What was happening in Mbeki's presidency to an extent resembled that of other modern governments, who practiced the left-centre systems (Blair and George W.B. Bush governments). Jenkins, (2006) stated that Blair style of government was presidential. Instead of reaching collective decision via collegiate discussion, he preferred to run an "individual government". Both Mbeki and Blair governments handed over modernised public services systems to their successors and they were also most criticised leaders because of their policies. Both leaders never worked for government before their party were given the mandate to govern. This had some influence on their manner they implement policies (see Jekins, 2006; Reitze and White, 2010).

Findings

The study found that empowerment through different educational means helps individual South Africans citizens, organisations, and communities to be in charge of their lives. This suggests that empowerment is a facilitator for citizen participation and the latter is a vehicle towards democratic governance.

The researcher found that citizen participation and governance are multifaceted practices influenced by different social forces and are interdependent. Citizen participation is influenced by a combination of socio-economic activities and the on-going dynamics of the context in which these processes (citizen participation and governance) are taking place. The dynamics of the context and peoples' actions and behaviours influenced the citizen participation in different ways in South Africa. The government of the day, for example, the Mandela government, Mbeki government and Zuma's government had different perceptions of citizen participation because of policy differences, leaders' psychology and domestic and international pressures. The Mandela government was more participatory in nature compared to the Mbeki's government because of the country was at the critical stage of transition and more policies were still formulated, therefore require more negotiations and bargaining. The key stakeholders in the politics of South Africa (ANC, COSATU, SACP, ANC youth league) interactions, particularly during Mbeki's presidency led to a new culture of working relationship. Mbeki's government developed a new version of citizen participation and new focus. His government was focusing more on policy implementation with less attention on negotiations.

The study found that the new version of citizen participation did not totally demoralised the positive spirit of civic society and did not destroy their knowledge capital but instead it created a new social force of civic societies capable and ready to challenge government practices through institutional structures-judiciary, courts and constitution. Thus citizen participation was enhanced.

The study discovered that the new form of citizen participation helped in promoting collaborations and partnerships of various kinds among civic societies. The partnerships open up various forms of flows of communication between different civic societies (TAC, APEF, LPM), people, sharing of information and ideas and educational values. The new form of citizen participation promoted a culture of citizen empowerment, a key ingredient for proper governance.

Conclusion

The study concluded that despite the citizen participation complexities in South Africa the political landscape of governance has been restructured by civic participation. There is a visible vibrant civic society in South Africa with capabilities to challenge government practices through constitutional structures such as the judiciary. For example, the Human Rights Commission and the University of Western Cape's Community Law Centre through the use of courts helped the informal settlers to win their rights to adequate housing and services.

Individual psychology, peoples' experiences and different perceptions of policies during Mbeki's presidency in particular activated and galvanised COS's to be engaged on controversial policies and in that process the masses were mobilised and empowered. The three contentious policies under Mbeki's presidency were GEAR and privatisation, disputes about HIV/AIDS policy, rollout of anti-retroviral, policy of "quiet diplomacy" towards Zimbabwe and the arms deal issue.

TAC campaigned for access to treatment for the poor people successfully highlighted the existence of meaningful citizen participation. TAC supported government and the ANC in their fight against unscrupulous pharmaceutical companies profiting from essential medicines. TAC remains one of the best examples of a very successful social movement that had an impact on HIV/AIDS health related matters in South Africa. TAC formed partnerships with national and international organisations (Health Gap Coalition, Oxfam and Doctors without borders) in that processes South Africans were empowered.

CSO's had some influence in shaping policies under Mbeki's presidency though they had an "unfriendly working relationships". Different social movement had some influence in shaping policies and governance under Mbeki's presidency. For example, Gun Free South Africa was actively involved in the formation of the Firearms Control Act, South Africa Gunowners Association actively involved in public debates on gun control. This promoted citizen engagement and social networks and avoided "thin democracy and "thin" governance and inculcated a new culture of listening to diversity of opinion in a country of a history of

exclusionary practices. The study noted that citizen participation in South Africa is influenced by a combination of factors – constitutional structures, history of the country and the ethnic combination of the citizens. Constitutional structures facilitated social movements to use multiple institutions and methods to engage the state (using research and education). On the other hand citizen participation was influenced by seismic social forces in a manner that challenged the country's governance systems. For example, the matter of disbanding the scorpions strongly challenged the legitimacy of the existing institutions and structures. This changed the citizen participation landscape in South Africa.

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