Development And Service Delivery in Post-Apartheid South Africa: “Quality” Versus “Quantities” of the Pre and Post-Apartheid South Africa

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Abstract

This paper intends to determine the contestation between the quality and quantity of service delivery in comparison between pre-apartheid and post-democratic South Africa. There are relative arguments that persist that quality and better service was provided in South Africa during the apartheid government era as compared to the current democratic system era. Contrary to these arguments, post-apartheid South African politicians boast about the service they are providing at the best quality and having closed the segregated service delivery system that was provided and practiced by the apartheid regime. This paper is conceptual, and it uses a desktop methodology to argue and compare the two perspectives in an attempt to find a truthful answer to it. This paper concludes that within the midst of the contestation of such arguments, the current beneficiaries perpetuating such scale of comparison are ignorant of the different contexts of eras of development and challenges and opportunities within which the two regimes operate.

Keywords: Development; Post-apartheid; Service Delivery; Quality; Quantity.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide development has been defined and understood in different contexts (Sebola, 2009) because of different individuals and their backgrounds involved in its implementation. While different contexts of development exist, it is agreed that development is about the advancement of positive changes in circumstances that are beneficial to most citizens. Most scholarly literature puts South Africa in the best position of development in all contexts of African regional success. However, not all scholars share the same sentiments on this aspect. To a particular extent, many even view South Africa as the prominent role player in the region with the potential to lead regional affairs, because of its better political and economic stability, as well as relatively developed infrastructure. While South Africa is viewed as such at both continental and regional level, its ability to satisfy its citizen domestically through quality service delivery remain problematic to the extent that a comparison with the apartheid system service delivery is unavoidable. While such comparative assertion exists among other scholars and citizens, it is not a terrain that can be easily explored for fear of being either seen as counter-revolutionary or anti-progressive. Therefore, in this article, the question to be answered is whether or not the South African democratic government provides service at a lower quality than the previous apartheid government system. In addressing this question, the article will keep its relevance to the following: 1) Integrated Service Delivery Model, 2) Conceptualising development in the South African context, 3) Apartheid Service deliveries versus democratic service deliveries, 4) Pre-apartheid infrastructures versus post-apartheid infrastructures.

This paper is grounded on the Integrated Service Delivery Model. The rationale for the selection of this model is based on the assumption that both quality and quantity of service delivery can be achieved through a model that ensures an integrated approach to the delivery of services. The model itself refers to the process of building connections between services to work together as one to deliver services that are more comprehensive and cohesive, as well as services being more accessible and more responsive to the needs of families and their children. The model implements a comprehensive, efficient, effective quality service delivery system that contributes to a self-reliant society (Department of Social Development, 2005). According to Shokane et al., (2017), the model makes available the resource requirements for effective implementation. The delivery of high-quality service is an important pursuit for service providers who seek to create and provide value to their customers (Lodorefos et al., 2015). The model also refers to how services given in silos or disconnections are broken to reduce the duplication of efforts, improve sharing of knowledge and lead to better results for individual families and communities. A simple definition of Integrated Service Delivery Models is “the process of building connections between services to work together as one to deliver services that are more comprehensive and cohesive as well as more accessible and more responsive to the needs of families (Prichard et al., 2010). It can be deduced from this that, only the user’s perspective of service is important in determining whether the service is of better quality or not. Therefore, granting service users the right to protest if they feel the service provided is of substandard quality, and the service provider an opportunity to improve service provision rather than punishing those protesting against them. In South Africa, the government claims to be providing better service, however, that is discounted by the numerous service delivery protests, which emanate from the public outcry about both the poor quality and quantity of services provided to them.
The model though preferred in modern development and public administration discourse, the model is not without problems. The model naturally involves multiple stakeholders for its success. According to Salhani et al., (1994), these complex social relations may not ignore the influence of the whole network of social service relations which includes politicians to clients on the implementation process. Moving from the perspective that public service has become more of a business than a service from politicians (M. P. Sebola, 2018), the implementation of the Integrated Service Delivery Model will be problematic. Hence the success of the model in achieving both the quality and quantity of service is problematic considering the political influences which often misdirect intentions of development projects for popular political gain. The success of this model is based on the assumption that “services, providers, and organizations from across the continuum are working together so that services are complimentary and coordinated in a seamless unified system with continuity for the client (Suter et al., 2009).

DISCUSSION
Conceptualising Development in the South African Context
Development is conceptually a contested terrain. The argument about its conceptual discourse is deeply rooted in different perceptions by different scholars of different intellectual orientations involved in its discourse. Thomas (2004) argued that the concept has been argued: “both theoretically and politically, as it is inherently both complex and ambiguous”. Thus far it may seem that everything may qualify to be developed as long as it involves the change for the welfare of the people. Practically any role that concerns the welfare of the people is to be viewed as a developmental role whether political, economic, or socially orientated. Although ambiguous, complex, and contested, many have argued that development should be about positive changes seen in society after a perceived transformational agenda. The notion of a positive change, however, remains controversial in the scholarship of development, since good or positive change is perceived differently by those experiencing development (M. Sebola, 2009). For most of the time in South Africa, a perceived good or positive development is to be racially skewed and justifiable to correct the previous allocation of resources. This is mostly because, in a country of political redistribution agendas, the first and long era of development will focus on the previously disadvantaged, creating a long period of biased benefits of good development to new beneficiaries. Such a one-sided benefit of good development will be unfairly perceived by the previous beneficiaries as bad development for them. Reyes-Ortiz (2001) however, argued that development “is understood as a social condition within a nation, in which the authentic needs of its population are satisfied by the rational and sustainable use of natural resources and systems”. Thus far the developmental context of South Africa has been controversial to confuse both the previous beneficiaries and the current ones, both not claiming to benefit fairly from resources. While the outside world views South Africa’s development positively and differently, for a relatively perceived good economy, politics, and infrastructure, the internal affairs suggest a contradictory state of affairs. The public’s continuous service delivery protests about both lack of service delivery and poor-quality infrastructure and public outcry about high levels of corruption suggest a different picture of the development in the country. (IKEJIaku, 2009), however, states that South Africa, like Nigeria, has long passed the stage of take-off in development and is therefore considered sustainable growth or a developed country by the standard of measurements. Therefore, suggesting that
a failure to deliver quality service to the public by the South African government will be an intended action, not emanating from economic problems. Worldwide, good and quality service deliveries are linked to good economies.

**Apartheid Service Deliveries Versus Democratic Deliveries**

The promise of good life, equality, and freedom has created a high level of expectancy and pressure for the post-apartheid government to deliver quality service to the people. According to Lues (2007), the main function of public service in South Africa is service delivery. Even though service delivery is claimed to be a Constitutional right, pragmatic realities suggest a challenging conundrum, where that right simply becomes a fancy idealistic right. Competing the ghost of the apartheid service delivery put the current administration in a position of adopting unworkable policy choices which creates instability rather than satisfaction from the citizenry purported to be served. Thus far we have witnessed more conflict between the government and the public on service delivery than satisfaction. A conflict that often ended in tragedy like the Andries Tatane Case. We witnessed the worst broken relationship between the government and its people. Mabitsela & Raseala, (2022) view trust between the government and its people as “the most important foundation upon which the legitimacy and sustainability of political systems are built”. Poow & Munyanyi, (2022) noted that “delivering public goods requires that processes facilitating relationship building and mutual respect among stakeholders be well designed to establish better communication and conflict management”. More often, it has been argued that old South Africans who lived during the eras of these two regimes can argue the comparison and conclude that the apartheid service delivery was even better. Not only, are the old South Africans longing for the Egyptian lifestyle, but several public service studies confirm that service delivery has not been rated as successful. And such might not be a unique situation for the South African government, because generally, the administration of states worldwide has taken a service delivery approach towards its citizens, however with limited quality focus. A service delivery approach undertaken by developed nations might be serving citizens better, but for developing nations, the approach does not succeed. Pretorius & Schurink (2007) indicated that “rapid changes fuelled by the world economy and technology have been forcing organizations worldwide to transform themselves to become more responsive and competitive”. Therefore, according to Wilantika & Wibisono (2021) ignoring quality service provision has created more loss of public trust in government with a high potential for civil revolt and to a worse extent civil wars in other countries. In public administration setup, the provision of quality service is likely to be exaggerated, especially because quality service is a concept well-developed in the private sector to foster the relationship of trust with the customer. Sibanda (2012) indicated that “the public sector still lags behind the private sector in embracing the market-orientated philosophies and initiatives for monitoring and evaluating service delivery”. The use of quality management systems in the government sector is likely to be inappropriate and irrelevant considering the public service focus against that of the private sector (Al-Ibrahim, 2014). In South Africa, the responsibility for quality service delivery is mostly vested in our local government sphere, a sphere which is plagued by several political misfortunes, emanating from poor training to ignoring the role of literacy in local politics. M. Sebola (2015) noted that formal qualifications and quality training are specifically ignored in the sphere which is given the most operational
responsibility for service delivery. van Antwerpen & Ferreira (2016) also noted that “poor service delivery by South African local government is crippling South African business and impending growth”. One can argue that the current South African government, might not be underperforming as claimed by current beneficiaries, but the problem could be that the focus of the State administration worldwide has taken a service delivery approach that is not incongruent with the available resources in most developing countries.

Pre-apartheid Infrastructures Versus Post-Apartheid Infrastructures

South is believed to have inherited a country lagging in various areas of development and infrastructure backlogs. Such as in telecommunications, water, transport, health, education, roads, and housing. The post-apartheid government moved from the premise that “the public sector infrastructure of the apartheid government benefited the minority against the majority” (South Africa, 2014). Therefore, the focus was on the interests of the majority of the poor South Africans which access should be based on equality and fairness. Indeed, South Africa’s claim for intention to improve the infrastructure to benefit all. Such an approach was to counteract their predecessors whose developmental objectives were biased and selectively benefiting the minority. In using their approach, the current regime failed to mitigate the potential challenges and limitations to the achievement of such an objective. Qwabe (2013) noted that the current South African public sector lacked critical capacity constraints in ensuring the delivery of infrastructure in terms of cost, quality, and time. We all accept the fact that previous infrastructure provision was skewed in which the majority were overlooked for such benefit in favor of the minority (Makhathini et al., 2020), however, we can also not ignore the need to address such problems with caution so that the status quo cannot be worsened or what is called change may not be seen as retrogression by the poor people. There was indeed a shortage of housing in backlogs of about 2 and 3 million and backlogs in road infrastructures and other services, before democratic dispensation. Some of these infrastructures were indeed provided in satisfactory quantities by the post-apartheid government. Between 2011 and 2014, various achievements were recorded in terms of infrastructure deliveries, which include education facilities, healthcare facilities, housing, sanitation, and electricity (South Africa, 2014). Moreover, about 2 and 3 million Reconstruction and Development Programme (low-cost housing) were achieved in 2017. It is clear that, while some achievements were made in terms of quantities as promised in 1994, service backlogs remain in some areas where there is most rapid growth (Palmer et al., n.d.). Such a limit reduces the chances of post-apartheid South Africa to claim complete victory in the war against poverty and access to infrastructure facilities by the marginalized they claim to benefit. Housing and road infrastructures have remained a major concern for end users in South Africa. And the two have been major causes of service delivery protests in the country. However, South Africa’s responsibility to provide reliable infrastructure in such areas has remained problematic and unachievable (Mashwama et al., 2019). People have complained about both the quality and quantity of the infrastructure provided to them. It is, however, that measuring quality infrastructure in South Africa remains difficult (Fourie, 2008). Malete & Khatleli (2019) indicated that “effective service delivery is hindered by capacity constraints, governance, insufficient skills, and funding”. Moreover, even if some infrastructures were put on and those which existed before them, such infrastructures may not have been well
maintained. Generally, infrastructure maintenance remains a problem, considering the municipality’s capacity to generate revenue in their localities. It is noted that in South Africa, despite the natural political limitation of local councilors imposed by their skills, our municipalities continue to be seen and given the responsibility of major service delivery projects. According to Moletsane (2014) municipalities are responsible for water supply, sewage collection, and disposal, refuse removal, electricity and gas supply, health services, roads and stormwater drainage, and municipal parks and recreation. Binza (2005) also noted that in South Africa, the developmental role of local government was meant to relieve the municipalities of their dependence on provincial and national government and aid their inhabitants. It can be argued that such an approach is not only a high-risk expectation in public administration but highly improbable considering the different states of South African municipalities and their politics. The utilization of the one-size-fits-all approach to South African municipalities while they have different capabilities, creates difficulties for quality service delivery.

Numerous cases of substandard houses and poor-quality roads were reported as major causes of the citizen’s dissatisfaction. In 2013, the Public Protector, Thuli Madonsela presented to parliament a report on Low-Cost housing, where houses were built without foundations, and from materials that crumbled at the touch (South Africa, 2014). And yet, the government claims major achievements in that regard and takes pride of the quantities delivered in housing of about 3.7 million houses in 2014 (South Africa, 2014) and an improvement to 5 million houses in 2019 (Ramovha, 2022). Numerous statistical claims were also made about roads being improved and constructed. However, the citizens and road users complained of potholes that characterized post-apartheid South African roads more than the previous regime. The poor road conditions, though not researched, could have resulted in numerous road accidents and the death of many road accident fatalities. While the claim of healthcare infrastructure development was claimed as successful, long queues and shortage of medicine continue to characterize the quantity service delivery claimed against the quality service expected by the citizens. Slowly this dissatisfaction later led to numerous service delivery protests. There have been more service delivery protests, in post-apartheid South Africa, than they were in the previous regime. Previously, South Africans complained mainly about the right to political freedom and equality. One may argue that there were no service delivery protests because protests were either outlawed or because services were of acceptable quality or services were accepted as they were given. According to Malete & Khatleli (2019), the service delivery protests showed that still after many years of democracy, South African citizens remained dissatisfied with the level of service delivery promised to them. To others, these protests signaled the reality that the citizens see no change in the service delivery approach of our current regime. Many South Africans see no quality in any post-apartheid service delivery, including even the mere security of the citizens of the state. The quality of state security officials is also in scale of comparison. Even though service delivery protests in South Africa are a reflection of the will of the poor and are only concentrated in rural areas and townships, the elite in the suburbs of the country, depend on the poor to address such on their behalf. Indeed, service delivery in South Africa has been both of lower quality and unreliable at times, in which instance at most it greatly inconvenienced and endangers the local communities (Reddy, 2016).
Are the Protests and complaints about the quality and quantity of post-apartheid infrastructure service delivery justifiable?

Known is the fact that democracy in South Africa was achieved in 1994. Before that era, service delivery protests were not fashionable, because political rights to protests were limited by the apartheid constitution. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, gave rights to South Africans to protest any action which they might feel infringed on their rights, be it civil, socio-economic, or political. The provision of quality service delivery is a right in South Africa enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. Heyns & Brand (2016) noted that Socioeconomic rights are complex if enshrined with other rights in the Constitution as the failure by the state to afford them due to insufficient resources may collapse other rights. We have indeed noticed how these rights are now a major cause of instability, in which instance the state appears like it is failing in all its service delivery promises. Of course, the ignorance of socio-economic rights by the South African government would have had negative implications on the trust of the citizens who believed in them before democratic achievement. The apartheid Constitution did not provide either political or socio-economic rights to the majority of the South African citizens. In fact “very little housing was provided for Africans with difficult legal tenure requirements in urban areas being conditional on urban employment and long leasehold or rental tenure, and thus were never allowed to own homes” (South African Human Rights Commission, n.d.). In terms of Section 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the state is obliged to ensure that everyone has access to adequate housing. Therefore, to protest against the failure of the present government to provide services by comparison scale with the previous regime may produce an unfair conclusion. There is no clear scientific evidence that suggests that apartheid infrastructures were indeed of better quality than the current quantities. Some writings against such refer to those houses as unhabitable. According to Marutlulle (2021), substandard housing remained a legacy of the apartheid system after two decades of democracy. Fair enough to conclude that the delivery of housing whether of poor quality or quantity, was delivered with limited resources at the capability of the government, unlike where such access did not exist. Discarding quality or quantity, South Africa still faces the limitation of providing adequate housing as the housing deficit has risen from 1.2 million in 1994 to 2.5 million households in 2020 (Ramovha, 2022). The inadequate housing deliveries may emanate from causes that range from insufficient resources to dependency by South Africans who threatened the fiscal sustainability of the project.

Protests about road infrastructures are also common service delivery concerns. The government covered quite a good number of kilometers on that front. Concern about the quality and how those are washed away by drizzling rain concerned the citizens. Such is not far away from the truth especially considering that the government has become a big business (M. P. Sebola, 2019), especially for construction mafias and tenderpreneurs. Tenderpreneurs are in all probability racially black. The question is: are all tenderpreneurs bad simply because they are black? Important to note before we conclude on the quality and quantity of post-apartheid service delivery, is to look at the different time frames and context of the two regimes. The quality claimed on pre-democratic South Africa, is not based on facts that can be sustained through science. The assumptions of these qualities are often based on ignorance of factual realities of different time frames and challenges. There were instances where road
CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that all regime eras need to be recognized for their different roles in development and service delivery. The pre-democratic era provided a skewed development based on segregation which to a particular extent did not respect the plight of the poor African people. The road infrastructures which are alleged to have been of good quality were not even done for the majority but were done for the white motorists, although blacks were not excluded from using those. However, black South Africans did not have the resources even to use on those quality roads talked of. A better-quality service targeted at the minority is easy to achieve for those minorities and the few. The challenge faced by the post-democratic South Africa was to provide quality service to all and at the right time and space as promised. We all know the limitations of resources and the demands of the public which by far exceed what the government has. The South African post-democratic leaders inherited a country that owed international financial institutions and those debts were to be settled though. The paper therefore concludes that the question of whether pre or post-South African government provided quality or quantity is not significant because the two regimes operated at different time scales and eras. The challenge of each era does not make the other era, exclusively better than the other on service delivery quality, except where that comparison is made on the aspect of a democratic scale.

REFERENCES


