

Introduction

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The prospects for successful public service administration and governance around the globe are becoming increasingly negative. This is due to a myriad of challenges governments are facing, which, amongst others, include the triple threat of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. Other challenges faced include high levels of corruption, resource mismanagement by public sector officials, the emergence of new systems and technologies, and climate change. The challenges faced in South Africa are similar, but the context is different. Almost three decades after attaining democracy, the country is still reeling from the extreme impact of the apartheid regime. Apartheid was a grand theory under the National Party that not only laid the foundation for racial and discriminatory policies but also had a negative impact on all aspects of life. It had a social, economic, political, and cultural impact, especially on the black African population (Tshishonga, 2019:168).

During this era, high levels of segregation and racial exclusion were implemented to specifically deprive the black African majority population of services and opportunities. Separate development laws and policies were implemented, which only favoured white people's advancement and prosperity. Multiple laws and policies have been denied and stripped African people of their human rights, dignity, and freedom (Chipkin & Meny-Gibert, 2012; Gumede, 2014;

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Tshishonga, 2019). Consequently, apartheid was categorised into occupational, geographical, and political spheres (Tshishonga, 2019). Separate development laws forcefully removed various indigenous and ethnic groups from areas of potential development to non-productive spaces with less potential to facilitate any successful development aspirations. South Africa's apartheid terror and administration, spanning over four decades, left a legacy that will take many years to rectify.

Since 1994, the democratic government has been striving to transform the lives of the country's citizens, aiming to influence socio-economic conditions, especially those affected by the apartheid system. To put it another way, the establishment of democracy in 1994 marked the beginning of an inevitable journey to undo the harm apartheid had caused. The establishment of these systems stimulated fundamental policies aimed at the reconstruction and development of society. First, it addressed the need to provide previously denied basic needs; second, it aimed to grow the economy; and third, it promoted social and economic development (Madzivhandila, 2014). "It was on the bases of this moral imperative given the shadow of apartheid and its resulting structural barriers to social and economic development that the promotion of social inclusion, redress and equity became the centre stage of policy formulation" (Madzivhandila, 2014:766).

Apartheid used policies and laws to practice separation and racially inclined development. As a result of this, the democratic government was required to pass new laws and develop policies and legislation to redress the impact of apartheid while paving a way forward for not only the previously marginalised black African people but for the newly formed rainbow nation, which prescribed equal rights for everyone in the country (Chipkin & Meny-Gibert, 2012; Gumede, 2014). However, this process could not be as straightforward and simple as everyone might have expected and wanted it to be. There were a variety of complex issues that the democratic government had to face and manage. This

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included the conversion of physical and financial resources into concrete service-delivery outputs for all, not just the white population as it was done in the past (Madzivhandila, 2014 :769).

The formulation and adoption of different policies were established as a paramount step towards social transformation through integrated social and economic development by the government in collaboration with social partners. This process was also undertaken to seek appropriate ways to unpack and address the deep-rooted structural causes of poverty and inequality in the country. There was a need to formulate policies with the purpose of discovering and presenting the true meaning of democracy. Additionally, the formulation of policies was also to enrich the human rights discourse and to reshape social welfare in the country (Rapatsa, 2014:887). The underlying broad objective was to foster a public administration that is inclined towards creating united, non-racial, non-sexist, and democratic service provision (Gumede, 2014:10).

The writing and adoption of the 1996 Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) were at the heart of this process. The impetus of the South African Constitution, amongst others, was to strongly emphasise the need to strengthen the rights of people to have access to health, sufficient food, water, and social security (Madzivhandila, 2014:766). These are basic human needs that black people were deprived of during the apartheid regime. The other important aspects the Constitution prescribes and which act as pillars for democracy include the presence of equal protection before the law, the right to human dignity, freedom of expression, and association, respect, and conformation to the Constitution as the supreme law. In addition, the adoption of important programmes and policies after 1994, such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1994; Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) in 1996; Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA) in 2005; and the National Development Plan (NDP) in 2012, was established to bring

about transformation for most of the South African citizens (Gumede, 2014; Madzivhandila, 2014).

The RDP aimed at addressing the many social and economic problems facing the country, such as housing, shortages of jobs, inadequate education and health care, and the overall failure of the economy. While GEAR looked at measures to stabilise and build the economy, which was struggling during the transition period, AsgiSA intended to accelerate the growth of the economy as well as redistribute wealth. It was sought to mobilise the desperately needed hope for social change through integrated social and economic development (Gumede, 2012). The NDP, termed Vision 2030, was viewed as a consensus-building mechanism towards some envisaged end-state in which poverty, inequality, and unemployment would have been drastically reduced (Gumede, 2012).

The South African government adopted all these policies and legislation, along with many others, to bring about change and transform the lives of its citizens. Unfortunately, the initiatives associated with policies and legislation passed by the democratic government were met with many challenges. The democratic government struggled to address the structural and institutional challenges associated with inequalities, high levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment (Nengwekhulu, 2009; Matyana & Thusi, 2023). Even though much has been done to try and transform the majority of the South African population; poverty, poor health services, an acute shortage of housing, and declining education standards still challenge the country. These challenges were exacerbated by underutilisation and/or unsustainable use of natural resources; poor or lack of access to socio-economic infrastructure and services; lack of access to water; low literacy and poor skills levels; poor migratory labour practices; and overdependence on social grants and other forms of social security (Madzivhandila 2014). Issues of corruption, nepotism, and interference in the day-to-day management and administration of government departments by political principals are also common (Nengwekhulu, 2009). New

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problems associated with climate change and global warming are also impacting progress towards achieving successful public administration and governance in South Africa.

Within this context, this book is premised on the understanding that, three decades after the attainment of democracy in South Africa, there are pockets of success in the country from which to learn and mobilise. At the same time, there are also specific remedial opportunities the country could adopt to facilitate much-needed transformation. These include issues of ethical leadership, building capacity, professionalising the public sector, and embracing technological advancements to provide services to South African citizens.

Issues of ethics, in most cases, go hand in hand with accountability and transparency in public administration and governance. The government should be open, transparent, and accountable to its people. This will lead to fewer episodes of maladministration and restrain corruption. Ethical leadership is also important to ensure effective and efficient service delivery, thus achieving the goals of the public sector (Tshaka, 2009; Mbandlwa; Dorasamy & Fagbadebo, 2020). Ethical leadership represents the ability of public officials to distinguish between doing the right thing and the wrong thing in relation to the use of state resources. Thus, the moral credibility of individual leaders plays a significant role in decisions made by government leaders, and it determines whether leaders are ethical or unethical (Mbandlwa et al., 2020). The issue of limited skills, knowledge, and capacity is blamed on the failure of the government to deliver services. Thus, improving service delivery will, in one way or another, depend on the availability and development of skills and capacity among those employed in the public sector.

To address some of the major challenges facing the South African government, it is paramount to invest in developing the skills and knowledge of the people. This is already evident with the current call for the professionalisation of the public sector. It is acknowledged that professionalisation

of the public sector can enable public officials to execute the mandate of the government successfully and ethically (Mathonsi et al, 2022). This can be done through education, training, and development. Thus, investment in this process will successfully transform the public sector. Furthermore, the South African government requires adaptive, professional, technically proficient, imaginative, and innovative employees. This includes embracing the idea of the adoption of new technologies and innovation.

The world is currently experiencing a major technological shift that is transforming every aspect of socio-political and economic life, including service delivery (Thani, 2020; Mathebula, 2021; Temitope; Jhon & Qwabe, 2023). The South African government needs to embrace these changes if service delivery is to be improved. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) presents opportunities for the South African government to address time and cost efficiency and improve customer satisfaction (Temitope, Jhon & Qwabe, 2023). In other words, embracing 4IR will provide major implications for public administration in the country, especially in delivering basic services such as water, sanitation, healthcare, electricity, and education.

This book comprises of three (3) thematic sections with a total of thirteen (13) chapters aimed at exploring, explaining, and addressing the complexities surrounding public service administration and governance in South Africa in the past three decades. The first part of the book looks at perspectives on ethics and governance practices. Five (5) chapters of this section address issues such as ethical leadership in the public sector, corruption, whistleblowing, and public service auditing. The second part of the book is focused on leadership and management practices. Important topics in this section include public sector performance management, transformational leadership in the context of management, and employee core self-evaluation and leadership as governance practices in post-colonial Africa. The last section of the book explores emerging innovative approaches in the public sector. Five (5) chapters of this section address issues

of mass media in municipal governance, the role of the youth in socio-economic development, and NDP prospects in the context of entrepreneurship and small business development. The last two (2) chapters in this section are focused on the prospects of 4IR and the role it will play in improving the public sector and curriculum reforms in the scholarship of public administration.

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