

Representative Bureaucracy in the South African Public Service

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ABSTRACT

The research question of this article is to examine the extent to which the South African public service conforms to the concept of representative bureaucracy. A representative bureaucracy is understood to be one that consists of a workforce that reflects the composition of the citizens of the country. Furthermore it is held that if a public service reflects the diversity of the society within which it functions, then it is more likely to be responsive to all the diverse interests and make policy that reflects this.

Data on race, and gender up to 2010 was obtained from the Department of Public Service and Administration's PERSAL data base. The methodology used was that of a longitudinal study of affirmative action data across four time periods, namely 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010.

The data shows that the democratic aims of representative bureaucracy have largely been fulfilled in respect of race and gender although there were certain distinctive findings:

- *Blacks are underrepresented at senior management level;*
- *Whites are overrepresented at senior management level;*
- *Females are overrepresented in public service in relation to workforce;*
- *Females are underrepresented at senior management level;*
- *Whites are underrepresented at lower levels of public service.*

Has a representative bureaucracy led to better service delivery? The evidence is mixed at best. There is general consensus that there are poor skills levels in the public service albeit co-existing with pockets of excellence. More systematic research is needed to examine this relationship.



INTRODUCTION

Affirmative action in South Africa is a topic that generates a great deal of emotion. Advocates of affirmative action argue that it is necessary to ensure the equitable transformation of South African society. Opponents state that affirmative action is leading to the appointment of poorly qualified staff and the lowering of standards. What is often lacking from this debate is systematic data. We are of the belief that affirmative action is best examined through the conceptual lens of representative bureaucracy. The research question of this article is to examine the extent to which the South African public service conforms to the concept of representative bureaucracy.

The article attempts to use limited empirical scholarship on affirmative action in South Africa in two ways (Cameron and Milne 2008, Milne 2009). *Firstly*, as pointed out, it now draws on the theoretical framework of representative bureaucracy. *Secondly*, it uses data updated to December 2010. This data on race and gender up to 2010 was obtained from the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) PERSAL (Personnel and Staff Information System). The methodology used is that of a longitudinal study of affirmative action data across four time periods, namely 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010.

REPRESENTATIVE BUREAUCRACY THEORY

The argument behind the need for a representative bureaucracy lies in the notion that the public service plays a political role and a policy-making role in the governance system. In a democratic system of government it is necessary to reconcile the idea of a permanent and non-elected bureaucracy with elected politicians and democratic values (Frederickson and Smith 2002:61 and Mosher 1982:7, cited in Frederickson and Smith 2002:61). There is debate among both politicians and academics about the relationship between democracy and bureaucracy. The bureaucracy is often viewed as a threat to democracy, as it is not elected yet exerts a great deal of power over citizens. It is, however, a general argument that if the bureaucracy is representative of the citizenry then the threat it potentially poses is decreased (Cox, Buck and Morgan 1994:250). A representative bureaucracy provides one way of legitimising the political power of the public service (Frederickson and Smith 2002:61). This challenge goes to the heart of democratic theory of administration (Waldo 1952:102, cited in Frederickson and Smith 2002:61).

The term *representative bureaucracy* was first coined by J. Donald Kingsley (1944), who originally advanced, through his work on the British public service, “the argument that the civil service should reflect the characteristics of the ruling social class” (Frederickson and Smith 2002:62). The basis of representative bureaucracy has changed over time and has moved away from just representing the ruling social class to representing the population as a whole. This change in the basis for a representative bureaucracy was put forward by Samuel Krislov. Krislov advocated race, ethnicity and gender as a more appropriate basis of comparison between society and the public service (1974:20). A representative bureaucracy is therefore understood to be one that consists of a workforce that reflects the composition of the citizens of the country (Deleon 2007:113).

A representative bureaucracy within a democratic system of government is specifically relevant in South Africa. The public service in 1994 was not only unrepresentative of all

the people in South Africa but was also functioning within a new democratic dispensation, which meant the bureaucracy potentially posed a threat to democracy.

The main principle of representative bureaucracy theory is that if a public service reflects the diversity of the society within which it functions, then it is more likely to be responsive to all the diverse interests and make policy that reflects this (Krislov, 1974). Therefore, according to the representative bureaucracy theory, if a public service is representative then the political role that it has, can be accommodated along with some of the basic tenets of democracy, such as majority rule, minority rights and equal representation (Frederickson and Smith 2002:61). The representativeness of the bureaucracy also has important symbolic value, indicating that the political system is open and democratic.

The relevance of creating a representative bureaucracy has a visible relationship with the rationale for implementing affirmative action in post-1994 South Africa. There is not only a link in terms of theory, but most of the affirmative action policy language is that of representative bureaucracy (Naff and Uys 2005).

There are two related components of the representative bureaucracy theory: passive representation and active representation. Passive representation refers to the extent that the public service reflects the composition of the population of the country, including historically disadvantaged communities. Active representation is the relationship between passive representation and the extent to which those interests represented are part of policy formation, implementation and outcome (Bradbury and Kellough 2008:700). Active representation is where the actions taken and the policy preferences expressed by bureaucrats are similar to the preferences of people they are demographically like in the population (Wise 2003:344).

The value of the theory of representative bureaucracy is debated by some, as it is argued that people from different social backgrounds can have similar experiences, resulting in them being able to identify with each other based on experiences rather than gender or race (Meier and Nigro 1976 cited in Deleon 2007:113). Authors argue that the bureaucracy itself acts as a socialising agent to the people employed in it, so that public servants learn to behave in a certain way due to the nature of the public service as opposed to behaviour based on race, gender or disability (Baldwin 1968 cited in Deleon 2007:113). Selden, Brudney and Kellough (1998) show that attitudes can also be a predictor of behaviour, where people who are not from marginalised backgrounds can act on behalf of people who are not viewed as marginalised (cited in Deleon 2007:113). However, advocates of representative bureaucracy argue that this type of trustee situation is insufficient. It is not adequate that those whose interests need to be put forward are not physically represented (Deleon 2007:113–114).

CONTEXT

Having a representative bureaucracy in the South African context concerns service delivery, distribution of power and the legitimacy of public administration in a relatively recently established democratic system of governance. It must be noted that most of the discourse around representative bureaucracy is centred on the representation of minorities. This is not the case in the South African context where the focus is on the representation of the majority in the public service.

The *White Paper on Affirmative Action, 1997* sets out the picture of the public service resulting from the apartheid legacy. The top level of the public service in 1994 was dominated by white Afrikaans males. There were some black managers in the Bantustans but even there white males were over-represented. During apartheid the majority of the public service



consisted of black persons, especially African. However, they were denied the opportunity to advance up to management positions as the majority of black people were employed to do menial work with low pay. Gender stereotyping resulted in the majority of women, irrespective of race, being employed in lower level positions in departments such as education and health. There were very few women in senior management positions (DPSA 1997).

The public service was in general characterised by a lack of representivity, legitimacy, accountability, transparency and service delivery (DPSA 1995). Affirmative action policies were not only developed in the context of lack of representivity and skewed racial composition but also to combat a particular ethos. These legacies made up the combined inheritance of the racial profile of the public service in 1994. This resulted in a politically untenable situation for a democratic government; mainly a predominantly black government was faced with a largely white senior public service (Cameron and Milne 2004).

LEGISLATION

South Africa's first public service reform document, the *White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1995* was the first policy document of the government to define affirmative action. It describes affirmative action as "laws, programmes or activities designed to redress past imbalances and to ameliorate the conditions of individuals and groups who have been disadvantaged on the grounds of race, colour, gender and disability" (DPSA, 1995). Affirmative action was also defined by the policy developed for its implementation, the *Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998*. In this policy, affirmative action is described as being corrective steps used in the creation of an equitable environment, specifically for those people who had been historically disadvantaged because of discrimination.

There are a number of policies in democratic South Africa, which include affirmative action: the Public Service Act, Proclamation 103 of 1994 (RSA 1994a), the *White Paper*

Table 1 Labour Force Survey – Race

	2000	2005	2010
African labour force	11 638 000	12 416 000	12 788 000
Africans as % of labour force	72,38	73,96	73,62
White labour force	2 192 000	2 099 000	2 098 000
Whites as % of labour force	13,63	12,5	12,08
Asian labour force	473 000	523 000	568 000
Asians as % of labour force	2,94	3,12	3,27
Coloured labour force	17 76 000	1 714 000	1 917 000
Coloureds as % of labour force	11,05	10,21	11,04
Labour Force Total	16 078 000	16 788 000	17 371 000

Source Statistics South Africa 2010

on Reconstruction and Development (RSA 1994b), the *White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service* (RSA 1995), the *South African Constitution 1996* (RSA 1996), the *White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service* (RSA 1997), the *White Paper on Affirmative Action* (RSA1998a), and the *Employment Equity Act*, (RSA 1998b). However, the overarching legislation governing representative bureaucracy in South Africa is the Constitution.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, includes affirmative action policies within the Bill of Rights as well as within the chapter on public administration. Section 195(1) (i) of the Constitution states “public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness and the need to address the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation”. Some argue that the constitutional provision that makes representivity mandatory refers only to broad representation where gender and race composition should be broadly reflected upon for employment appointments (Smuts 2009).

The original target for race was that by 1999 all departments should have 50% blacks at management level (DPSA, 1995). It must be noted that this was set as a minimum target and was revised to being representative of the society as a whole (DPSA 1998). The Cabinet reviews its affirmative action targets against the labour force surveys. The third quarter 2010 labour force survey revealed that the labour force consisted of 73,62% African, 12,08% white, 11,04% coloured and 3,27% Asian. The overall percentage Black labour force is 87,92% (Statistics SA 2010). In terms of representative bureaucracy theory in the South African context it is these numbers that should be used as a basis for assessing the extent to which a representative public service has been achieved.

The target set by affirmative action policy for women was not disaggregated into different racial groups. The original target set for women was 30% at senior management level (DPSA 1995). This target was reached in March 2006, and in light of this being achieved, Cabinet revised the target to 50% by March 2009. The new target is relevant not only to senior management but across the whole of the public service (Public Service Commission (PSC) 2007:60). The revised target set by Cabinet is also roughly in line with a population level of 52%, however, this is slightly overrepresentative in terms of the labour force of South Africa where females represent 44,81% of the labour force (Statistics SA 2010).

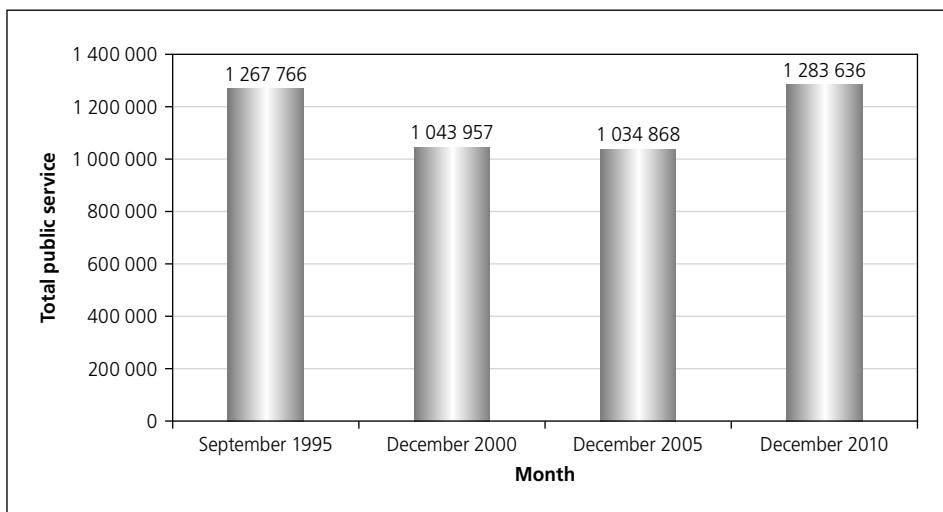
Table 2 Labour Force Survey – Gender

	2000	2005	2010
Female labour force	7 570 000	7 669 000	7 784 000
Females as % of labour force	47,08	45,68	44,81
Male labour force	8 508 000	9 112 000	9 587 000
Males as % of labour force	52,92	54,28	55,19
Labour Force Total	16 078 000	16 788 000	17 371 000

Source Statistics South Africa 2010



Figure 1 Total Public Service



Source DPSA 2010

ANALYSIS OF PERSONNEL AND SALARY INFORMATION SYSTEM DATA

The data contained in this section draws from previous work done by the authors of this article where the data was obtained from a detailed analysis of PERSAL. The salary classifications on which the tables below are based are senior management, highly skilled supervision, highly skilled production, skilled and lower skilled. There was a separate management category until December 2004 when it was combined with the Senior Management category. For the purpose of this paper the numbers have been combined.

There is a general trend that is identifiable from numbers of the overall public service. There is a decline in the total public service from 1995 to 2000. The numbers remain relatively constant to 2005 after which the numbers of the overall public service increase considerably by 2010. The size of the overall public service at the end of December 2010 then exceeds the original size of the overall public service in 1995. The decrease in public servants from 1 267 766 in 1995 to 1 043 957 in 2000 can be attributed to the adoption of reform policies along the lines of New Public Management (NPM), such as downsizing being implemented. From 2000 to 2005 there was a slight decrease in the number of public servants to 1 034 868 and then a substantial increase to 1 283 636 in 2010. This increase could be accounted for by a departure from NPM influenced neo-liberalism. In conjunction with this, there is a move to strengthen the centre of government in support of a stronger developmental state (Fraser-Moleketi 2006).

In line with the downsizing of the state in the late 1990s, the total number of women in the public service showed a decline from 1995 to 2000 from 618 603 to 533 777. There is then a slight increase in 2005 to 580 122 and then substantial increase in the number of women in 2010 to 723 183 which is higher than the number of women in the total public service in 1995. This increase is in line with affirmative action policies promoting an increase in the number of women in the public sector.

Table 3 Total Public Service – Gender

	September 1995	December 2000	December 2005	December 2010
Total number of females in public service	618 603	533 777	580 122	723 183
Females as % of total public service	48,79	51,13	56,06	56,34
Total number of males in public service	649 163	510 180	454 746	560 453
Males as % of total public service	51,21	48,87	43,94	43,66
Total public service	1 267 766	1 043 957	1 034 868	1 283 636

Source DPSA 2010

In relation to the targets set, in 2010 women have exceeded 50% across the public service as a whole. In comparison to the labour force total (44,81%) the percentage of women have exceeded the percentage representivity in the public service as a whole as females are 56,34% which is an over representation of the labour force population.

The total number of Blacks has increased from 75,33% of the public service in 1995 to 90,29% in December 2010 which is above the labour force total of 77,92%. The empowerment of Africans has been the *holy grail* of affirmative action and it can be seen that 78,48% of the public service consists of Africans compared to the Labour Force survey of 73,62%. Whites have fallen from 24,67% in 1995 to 9,71% in 2010.

Table 4 Total Public Service – Race

	September 1995	December 2000	December 2005	December 2010
Total number of Africans in public service	806 782	747 947	778 304	1 007 459
Africans as % of total public service	63,64	71,65	75,21	78,48
Total number of Whites in public service	312 772	167 272	126 640	124 683
Whites as % of total public service	24,67	16,02	12,24	9,71
Total number of Asians in public service	27 662	37 344	31 087	41 956
Asians as % of total public service	2,18	3,58	3,00	3,27
Total number of Coloureds in public service	120 550	91 394	98 837	109 538
Coloureds as % of total public service	9,51	8,75	9,55	8,53
Total number of Blacks in public service	954 994	876 685	908 228	1 158 953
Blacks as % of total public service	75,33	83,98	87,76	90,29
Total Public Service	1 267 766	1 043 957	1 034 868	1 283 636

Source DPSA 2010



Table 5 Senior Management Level – Gender

	September 1995	December 2000	December 2005	December 2010
Total number of females in management	274	928	2 045	4 240
Females as % of management	7,94	19,85	29,32	34,73
Number of African females	126	441	1 295	2 559
African females as % of management	7,72	20,9	18,57	20,96
Number of White females	131	356	456	1035
White females as % of management	4,97	11,63	6,54	8,48
Number of Asian females	8	62	153	356
Asian females as % of management	0,5	2,74	2,19	2,92
Number of Coloured females	9	69	141	290
Coloured females as % of management	1,01	3,68	2,02	2,38
Number of Black females	143	572	1589	3205
Black females as % of management	4,15	12,24	22,78	26,25
Total combined management and senior Management	3 449	4 674	6975	12 209

Source DPSA 2010

In terms of gender there has been a substantial gain in terms of representivity, with the number of women at senior management level growing from a negligible level of 7,94% to over 34,73% from 1995 through to 2010. However, there have been a number of challenges encountered in attaining this and indeed the 50% target throughout the public service has not been attained at the management level. The former Minister of Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) stated that there has been a decline in the number of women at the level of directors-general (*Cape Argus* 2 July 2008). There also appears to be a greater number of women in the public service concentrated on traditional caring professions such as teaching and nursing (PSC 2004 and Ministry of DPSA 2006:26).

There has been an increase in staff at the senior management level from 3 449 in 1995 to 12 209 in 2010. This can be attributed to an increase in the total number of people employed at management level in line with the need for more professional staff to run the developmental state (Cameron and Milne 2008:16).

At senior management level, the percentage of whites in 2010 has more than halved from the figures in 1995, but in terms of real numbers there has been an increase in the employment of whites in the management service from 2 161 in 1995 to 3 259 in 2010. Comparatively, the number of blacks has risen from 1 288 in 1995 to 8 950. This shows substantive gains in terms of real numbers.

In terms of racial categories at the senior management level, the target for blacks was set at 75% by Cabinet in April 2005 (PSC 2006: viii). When the percentages of blacks is looked at in 2010 it is 73,31%, is just below the target. It is also lower than that of the overall percentages for the total public service (90,29%) and that of the labour force statistics.

Table 6 Senior Management Level – Race

	September 1995	December 2000	December 2005	December 2010
Total number of Africans in management	1148	1904	3880	7089
Africans as % of management	33,29	40,74	55,63	58,06
Total number of Whites in management	2161	2206	2024	3259
Whites as % of management	62,66	47,2	29,02	26,69
Total number of Asians in management	68	285	538	1013
Asians as % of management	1,93	6,1	7,71	8,3
Total number of Coloureds in management	72	279	533	848
Coloureds as % of management	2,09	5,97	7,64	6,95
Total number of Blacks in management	1288	2468	4951	8950
Blacks as % of management	37,34	52,8	70,98	73,31
Total combined management and senior Management	3449	4674	6975	12209

Source DPSA 2010

This shows that there still exists an over representation of whites in the senior management service management level of the public service.

Table 7 Highly Skilled Supervision – Gender

	September 1995	December 2000	December 2005	December 2010
Total number of females in highly skilled production	3 901	9 394	38 688	117 023
Females as % of highly skilled production	18.45	26.63	40.6	56.95
Number of African females in highly skilled supervision	1 371	4 168	23 604	80 926
African females as % of highly skilled supervision	6,48	11,81	24,77	39,38
Number of White females in highly skilled supervision	2 225	4 272	10 192	20 111
White females as % of highly skilled supervision	10.52	12.11	10.69	9.79
Number of Asian females in highly skilled supervision	150	541	2 283	6 185
Asian females as % of highly skilled supervision	0,71	1,53	2,4	3,01
Number of Coloured females in highly skilled supervision	155	413	2 609	9 801
Coloured females as % of highly skilled supervision	0,73	1,17	2,74	4,77
Number of Black Women in highly skilled supervision	1 676	5 122	28 496	96 912
Black Women as % of highly skilled supervision	7,92	14,52	29,9	47,16
Total Highly Skilled Supervision	21 149	35 282	95 301	205 489

Source DPSA 2010



Highly skilled supervision by supervisors are required is the middle level of management. There has been a substantial increase in the total number of people employed in this category. The total number of women has also increased and in fact this category has exceeded the 50% target for women in 2010. This is indicative of the efforts to increase the middle management level of the public service. The reasons for this may include the need to increase the pool from which senior management comes (Cameron and Milne 2008:16). In terms of gender composition, women now make up over 56,95% of the officials employed at this level. This shows an overrepresentation of women at middle management in relation to the labour force population statistic of 44,81%.

Table 8 Highly Skilled Supervision – Race

	September 1995	December 2000	December 2005	December 2010
Number of Africans in highly skilled supervision	6 231	14 649	57 570	139 190
Africans as % of highly skilled supervision	29,46	41,52	60,41	67,74
Number of Whites in highly skilled supervision	12 577	16 510	24 464	36 810
Whites as % of highly skilled supervision	59,47	46,79	25,67	17,91
Number of Asians in highly skilled supervision	767	2 062	5 608	11 550
Asians as % of highly skilled supervision	3,63	5,84	5,88	5,62
Number Coloureds in highly skilled supervision	1 574	2 061	7 659	17 939
Coloureds as % of highly skilled supervision	7,44	5,84	8,04	8,73
Number of Blacks in highly skilled supervision	8 572	18 772	70 837	168 679
Blacks as % of highly skilled supervision	40,53	53,21	74,33	82,09
Total Highly Skilled Supervision	21 149	35 282	95 301	205 489

Source DPSA 2010

The number of people employed in the category has increased considerably across all racial groups, particularly Blacks, where the number has increased from 8 572 in 1995 to 168 679 in 2010. This increase is also reflected in the percentages where Blacks represent 82,09% of this middle management level. There has been a substantial decrease in the percentage of Whites in the highly skilled supervision ranks. However, despite this 41,56% drop there has been a growth in real numbers of over 24 000 Whites.

Highly skilled production include nurses, human resources and financial clerks and administrative officers. There is a slight decrease in numbers in the category of highly skilled production workers from 1995 to 2010. However, both the numbers and percentage of females has increased over this time span and females, as a percentage of this category are overrepresented in terms of the labour force, comprising 61,02% of the category.

Table 9 Highly Skilled Production – Gender

	September 1995	December 2000	December 2005	December 2010
Total number of females in Highly skilled production	324 866	324 866	339 115	328 576
Females as % of highly skilled production	55,5	55,12	60,3	61,02
Number of African females in highly skilled production	199 117	219 721	248 567	253 928
African females as % of highly skilled production	32,45	37,28	44,2	47,16
Number of White females in highly skilled production	99 271	65 942	51 195	38 968
White females as % of highly skilled production	16,18	11,19	9,1	7,24
Number of Asian females in highly skilled production	9 204	10 871	10 811	8 340
Asian females as % of highly skilled production	1,5	1,84	1,92	1,55
Number of Coloured females in highly skilled production	32 990	28 332	28 542	27 340
Coloured females as % of highly skilled production	5,38	4,81	5,07	5,08
Number of Black females in highly skilled production	241 311	258 924	287 920	289 608
Black females as % of highly skilled production	39,32	43,94	51,19	53,79
Total Highly Skilled Production	613 675	589 333	562 424	538 438

Source DPSA 2010

Table 10 Highly Skilled Production – Race

	September 1995	December 2000	December 2005	December 2010
Number of Africans in highly skilled production	351 257	393 106	412 087	416 670
Africans as % of highly skilled production	57,24	66,7	73,27	77,38
Number of Whites in highly skilled production	184 006	120 761	82 331	60 312
Whites as % of highly skilled production	29,98	20,49	14,64	11,2
Number of Asians in highly skilled production	18 941	23 207	18 309	13 948
Asians as % of highly skilled production	3,09	3,94	3,26	2,59
Number Coloureds in highly skilled production	59 471	52 259	49 697	47 508
Coloureds as % of highly skilled production	9,69	8,87	8,84	8,82
Number of Blacks in highly skilled production	429 669	468 572	480 093	478 126
Blacks as % of highly skilled production	70,02	79,51	85,36	88,8
Total Highly Skilled Production	613 675	589 333	562 424	538 438

Source DPSA 2010

The total number of staff in this category has declined since 1995. Blacks are 88,8% of highly skilled production category and Whites 11,2%. This is very close to the labour force totals of 77,92% and 12,08% respectively.



Table 11 Skilled – Gender

	September 1995	December 2000	December 2005	December 2010
Total number of females in skilled	111 950	116 516	131 162	195 723
Females as % of skilled	44,79	52,97	58,94	56,14
Number of African females in skilled	65 399	83 256	100 947	165 013
African females as % of skilled	26,17	37,85	45,36	47,33
Number of White females in skilled	34 767	17 407	10 667	7 874
White females as % of skilled	13,91	7,91	4,79	2,26
Number of Asian females in skilled	1 815	3 088	2 808	2 919
Asian females as % of skilled	0,73	1,4	1,26	0,84
Number of Coloured females in skilled	9 696	12 765	16 740	19 917
Coloured females as % of skilled	3,99	5,8	7,52	5,71
Number of Black females in skilled	76 910	99 109	120 495	187 849
Black females as % of skilled	30,77	16,82	54,14	53,88
Total Skilled	249 919	589 333	222 550	348 646

Source DPSA 2010

The skilled category includes artisans, clerks, secretaries, drivers and nursing assistants. There has been an increase in the number of skilled staff, from 249 919 in 1995 to 348 646 in 2010. The number of women has also increased at this level of the public service, with women representing 56,14% of the total number of people employed.

Table 12 Skilled – Race

	September 1995	December 2000	December 2005	December 2010
Number of Africans in skilled	158 687	165 816	173 650	297 856
Africans as % of skilled	63,5	75,38	78,03	85,43
Number of Whites in skilled	64 300	25 444	15 478	11 116
Whites as % of skilled	25,73	11,57	6,95	3,19
Number of Asians in skilled	4 363	8 862	5 281	5 109
Asians as % of skilled	1,75	4,03	2,37	1,47
Number of Coloureds in skilled	22 569	19 853	28 141	34 565
Coloureds as % in skilled	9,03	9,03	12,64	9,91
Number of Blacks in Skilled	185 619	194 531	207 072	337 530
Blacks as % in skilled	74,27	33,01	93,05	96,81
Total Skilled	249 919	589 333	222 550	348 646

Source DPSA 2010

There has been an increase in total numbers employed at this level. However, in both number and percentage terms, Whites have declined from 25,73% in 1995 to 3,19% in 2010. This shows a substantial underrepresentation in terms of the labour force survey. This could be because a large number of blue collar Whites have left the public service (Cameron and Milne 2008:16). In this category, Asians and Coloureds come close to representing the population in 2008 with percentage representation at 1,47% and 9,91% respectively. However, Africans are overrepresented in terms of the 2010 labour force at 85,43%.

Table 13 Lower Skilled – Gender

	September 1995	December 2000	December 2005	December 2010
Total number of females in lower skilled	161 896	82 073	69 030	65 705
Females as % of lower skilled	42,65	42,16	46,81	58,43
Number of African females in lower skilled	115 871	71 634	60 777	60 402
African females as % of lower skilled	30,53	36,79	41,21	53,72
Number of White females in lower skilled	26 032	1 012	1 011	663
White females as % of lower skilled	6,86	0,52	0,69	0,59
Number of Asian females in lower skilled	1 841	1 222	640	445
Asian females as % of lower skilled	0,49	0,63	0,43	0,4
Number of Coloured females in lower skilled	18 152	8 205	6602	4 195
Coloured females as % of lower skilled	4,78	4,21	4,48	337
Number of Black females in lower skilled	135 864	81 061	68 019	65 042
Black females as % of lower skilled	35,79	41,64	46,12	57,34
Total Lower Skilled	379 574	194 693	147 471	113 442

Source DPSA 2010

The lower skilled category includes cleaners, farmhands and labourers, messengers, road workers and security guards. The total number in the lower skilled category has declined considerably from 379 574 to 113 442 in 2010. The numbers of both men and women have declined across the period under investigation. In percentage terms, however, the level of representation for women has grown by over 15% to 58,43%.

The percentage of Whites in this category has declined from 13,1% in 1995 to 1,14% in 2010. In comparison the percentage of Blacks has increased from 86,9% to 97,99% over the same period. However, the numbers across all the racial categories have decreased. This pattern can be explained by the increase of outsourcing at this level. A number of positions have also been reclassified to the skilled category, which could be one reason for this decrease in numbers across this category (Cameron and Milne 2008:18).



Table 14 Lower Skilled – Race

	September 1995	December 2000	December 2005	December 2010
Number of total Africans in lower skilled	289 459	172 472	131 046	102 514
Total Africans as % of lower skilled	76,26	88,59	88,86	91,17
Number of total Whites in lower skilled	49 728	2 351	2 284	1 277
Total Whites as % of lower skilled	13,1	1,21	1,55	1,14
Number of total Asians in lower skilled	3 523	2 928	1 349	840
Total Asians as % of lower skilled	0,93	1,5	0,91	0,75
Number of Coloureds in lower skilled	36 864	16 942	12 792	7 811
Coloureds as % of lower skilled	9,71	8,7	8,67	6,95
Number of Blacks in lower skilled	329 846	192 342	145 187	111 165
Blacks as % of lower skilled	86,9	98,79	98,45	97,99
Total Lower Skilled	379 574	194 693	147 471	113 442

Source DPSA 2010

CONCLUSION

The research question was to examine the extent to which the South African public service conforms to the concept of representative bureaucracy. It can be seen that the democratic aims of representative bureaucracy have largely been fulfilled in respect of race and gender although there were particular distinctive findings:

- Blacks are underrepresented at senior management level,
- Whites are overrepresented at senior management level,
- Females are overrepresented in public service in relation to workforce,
- Females are underrepresented at senior management level,
- Whites are underrepresented at lower levels of public service.

The appointment of more Blacks and females into the public sector has also had important symbolic value.

The question of whether a more representative bureaucracy has led to more responsive service delivery is a more difficult area to answer. The assumption is that because an increasing number of public servants are able to communicate in indigenous languages and have a greater understanding of the needs of communities which were neglected under apartheid, service delivery will be improved (Republic of South Africa 1997). A representative public service will be more responsive to the population that it is representing; with the consequence that the bureaucracy would have greater legitimacy within a democratic society's improved service. A more representative bureaucracy would result in more public servants who could possibly identify with citizens, because they have a greater understanding of the sectors of the population who were neglected during apartheid. An

example of this is that there are more public servants who are able to communicate in South African languages other than English and Afrikaans and could therefore be understood by more of the population.

Has a representative bureaucracy led to active representation and accordingly better service delivery? The evidence is mixed at best. There is general consensus that there are poor skills levels in the public service albeit co-existing with pockets of excellence. This has been acknowledged in government reports and by academics (see various PSC reports, Butler 2008, Cameron 2009). To what extent is affirmative action the main cause for poor service delivery? One of Africa’s finest Public Administration academics, Ladipo Adamolekun argues that, while there is a need in almost every modern state to combine merit with some form of representativeness, “in practical terms merit is subordinated to a so-called concern with representativeness that is, in many cases, a cover for patronage or a crude quota system, characterised by opacity” (2004:7). In South Africa there is some evidence that representativeness is a cloak for patronage and consequentially poor service delivery (Cameron 2009, 2010).

Having stated that there are other reasons for poor service delivery such as high management turnover, high vacancy rates, the brain drain to the private sector and rapid vertical mobility in the public sector for officials who have not yet developed the necessary skills (Cameron 2009). More systematic research is needed to examine this relationship between active participation and service improvement.

While Adamolekun does say that there should be an expiry date attached to affirmative action Jacob Zuma has said that no sunset clause for affirmative action is in on the cards. “We have not reached a stage when we should say affirmative action is on the way out” (*Cape Argus*, 16 September 2008). The government has come under a great deal of pressure from black economic empowerment groupings to retain affirmative action. Where affirmative action has been less successful is in the private sector as can be seen from the table below.

Table 15 Race Representivity Private Sector Senior Management

	2009
African	12,90%
White	68,60%
Asian	9,30%
Coloured	6,30%
Foreign Nationals	2,90%

Source Public Service Commission 2010:70–71

What these statistics suggest is that perhaps needs to be different discourses and indeed different policies in respect of the private and public sector. While in some categories of the public service a case can be made for scrapping affirmative action. The private sector is some way from meeting targets. The previous minister of the DPSA, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi pointed out, affirmative action is not a numbers issue, but it is about creating opportunities (Interview, 28 November 2008) With this goal in mind attention needs to be



drawn to the poor implementation of affirmative action in the private sector, where there is an elite who has benefited from these policies possibly to the detriment of the majority (Vavi 2010). Affirmative Action in the public sector cannot be responsible for creating all the opportunities for the South Africans.

Finally, while the Constitution states that “Public Administration must be broadly representative of the South African people” it does not necessarily say that race must be the basis of that representivity. Given the rise of the African middle class, is it not possible to consider a more class based approach to affirmative action in the future?

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