

The promotion of developmental local government to facilitate a developmental state

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ABSTRACT

Unemployment and poverty levels in South Africa since 1994 have increased such that the Gini-coefficient – the disparity between the rich and the poor – has grown rapidly over the years. In overcoming the challenges faced by communities, the South African government accepted the concept of a developmental state as the answer to the plight of the poor. It is argued that municipalities could be utilised to address some of the socio-economic challenges. This article contributes to the discipline, by classifying South Africa in terms of the characteristics of a developmental state and measuring it against other developmental states. The concept *developmental state* is clarified and the post-apartheid local government sphere, which has its own unique set of challenges, is examined. Developmental local government, as a concept that has been developed with the idea of promoting a developmental state at the local sphere of government, is also explored. The policy initiatives for the promotion of development are discussed and the policies that were implemented since 1994 are critically analysed. Finally, the challenges that hinder municipalities in their attempts to facilitate a developmental state are assessed and recommendations are made.

INTRODUCTION

According to a forecast made by Moeletsi Mbeki (2011), South Africa will experience civil disobedience in the year 2020 if the current political situation

does not change. Since the inception of South Africa's democratic dispensation in 1994, local government has not been capable of attaining the developmental goals set for the country by the ruling party. The apartheid government's system of separate development left a legacy of human development being based on a set of criteria that include race and gender. A democratic South Africa thus inherited a dysfunctional local government system based on ineffective structures in some communities. The system promoted the belief of exclusivity and racially based community participation. The discussion on the achievement of a developmental state cannot be separated from developmental theories emanating from the disciplines of Public Administration, Economics and Political studies. Within this theoretical frame, issues relating to human development from a local government point of view need to be explored. The discussion of a developmental state will highlight the precautions that are necessary to achieve the goal of building a developmental state. This can be done by equipping the municipal employees with the tools that will enhance their personal development, so that they can play a role in encouraging municipalities to implement particular characteristics associated with the developmental state theory.

The research on which this article is based investigated the possibilities of utilising municipalities as efficient structures towards building a developmental state. It is argued that municipalities do indeed have a developmental role to play in the total construction of a developmental state.

The research was aimed at assessing the policies instituted by the South African government since the introduction of a democratic dispensation, with the intention of fast-tracking the development of the country, thus ensuring the creation of a developmental state. The extent to which these developmental policies have outlined the role to be played by the local sphere of government in a developmental state is emphasised. Such policies include the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (1994), the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) initiative (1996), the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (AsgiSA) (2005), and the New Growth Path (NGP) (2010).

A concise definition of a developmental state within the South African local government framework is provided. This is important as it will demystify particular characteristics associated with the concept, *developmental state*. Next, the post-apartheid local sphere of government, which is assumed to create an environment that is conducive to the enhancement of a developmental state, is assessed. The contribution made by post-apartheid policies is subsequently explored. It is argued that the identified policies promote the creation of a developmental state, through developmental local government system.

THE DEVELOPMENTAL STATE

South Africa has a unique history of colonisation, war and oppression. When the first democratic government took office in 1994, it inherited a society divided on racial lines, with the black majority mainly being deprived and poor. With an economy in which about 20% of the population – mainly white people – had control of the economy, a major change was imperative and the government faced considerable challenges. It has been argued that to overcome these challenges, a developmental state in South Africa is needed. Van Dijk and Croukamp (2007) conducted a reflective study that emphasised the social origin of the concept *developmental state* in the context of local government in South Africa. The focus of their study was not on how municipalities can be used as critical institutions to assist in the realisation of a developmental state, but on locating the concept in the social sciences. Thus, their study was aimed at establishing how the concept is defined and used in the social sciences discipline.

The concept of the developmental state originated in East Asia in the 20th century. In East Asia, countries created mechanisms that enabled the state to intervene in the affairs of the private sector. The mechanisms include, *inter alia* the creation of an economic planning commission, the implementation of market-defying selective industrial policies and total state control of the banking sector (Chang 2010:83). During the second half of the 20th century, the Scandinavian countries (including Denmark, Norway and Sweden) were broadly associated with the characteristics of a developmental state. Chang (2010:84) contends that more prominently, the Scandinavian countries focused on selective industrial policies and the promotion of research and development. In the context of the social sciences, development in its broadest sense is a form of social change. The change agent – that is the state – plays a pivotal role in promoting developmental intervention in society (Theron 2008:3). A developmental state would normally strive to generate and maintain the economy of a country, through institutions established to promote a developmental state. Netshitenzhe (2011) claims that there are different paradigms that can be followed in creating a developmental state. He argues (2011:6) that, “It depends on the path, states choose to achieve the developmental objectives, as well as the instruments such states use to this end”.

In the case of a democratic South Africa, the idea of a developmental state emerged during the tenure of President Mbeki (1999-2004), despite the developmental policies that had emerged earlier, i.e. the RDP, which had been initiated already in 1994. This came as a reaction to the alarming rate of the increase in inequality and poverty levels in the country. Accordingly, the recently established National Planning Commission (NPC) of South Africa

(2011) notes that the Gini co-efficient is at its highest peak since democratisation in 1994. Despite the constitutional democracy, inequality among South Africans is gradually increasing. As pointed out in the National Development Plan of the NPC, the Gini co-efficient increased from 0.64 in 1995 to 0.7 in 2011 (National Planning Commission 2011:3). Against this background it is clear that promoting the establishment of a developmental state is imperative. A developmental state will aim at the reduction of the Gini co-efficient through the implementation of progressive policies where the people's quality of life will be improved and maintained.

In order to avoid ambiguities in this discussion, a developmental state is identified as a state that uses all the necessary mechanisms and institutions at its disposal to achieve successful economic intervention in a specific country. According to Edigheji (2007:3), to be developmental in the South African context, implies equity, justice, enabling a rapid growing economy and improving the quality of life for all citizens. This should lead to successful economic activity that will stimulate employment opportunities and subsequently alleviate poverty among the citizens in a country. As indicated in the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*, (section 153) requires all municipalities to promote the developmental duties to ensure the effective and efficient management of its administration, budgeting and planning, in order to promote socio-economic development (RSA 1996). This is imperative to satisfy the basic needs of the people.

Within the South African three-sphere government system as set out in section 40 of the Constitution (RSA 1996), each sphere exists in its own right and authority, and can make binding decisions applicable to the sphere concerned. An integration of government policies is vital for a developmental state. This underlines the importance for the three different spheres to co-operate with one another when performing their functional activities. This co-operation should ensure that the spheres complement one another when implementing the policies. In South Africa it is often argued that the national sphere of government is more important than the provincial and the local spheres. This misconception is caused by the privilege the national government maintains, in collecting and distributing the national revenue, in terms of the *Division of Revenue Act* (Act 5 of 2012), passed annually. The funding allocation and distribution to the provincial and local spheres are done by the national sphere of government, hence the assumption of its superiority. National government could undermine the authority of a provincial government by assigning functions and performing actions without consultation. Sections 100 and 139 of the Constitution assign the national and provincial spheres powers to intervene in the provincial and local governments respectively. This intervention can only take place should the spheres (provincial and local

governments) fail or cannot reach service delivery targets as set out in the Constitution and other legislation. Du Plessis (2012:13) postulates that the interrelatedness and interdependence of the spheres of government referred to in the Constitution, 1996, suggest that local government executes its functions within a national and provincial policy framework. It is important to note that the priority areas for government activities are determined nationally, although the operational implementation may differ in provinces and in municipalities. It is argued that a developmental state can encourage economic growth and development in the country. However, the growth of the economy will be dependent upon the implementation of the required processes and the introduction of mechanisms necessary to achieve developmental goals.

UTILISING LOCAL GOVERNMENT: A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

The purpose of local government, as one of the three spheres of government, is to provide basic and other municipal related services to the citizens directly in a particular area of jurisdiction. Arguably, local government could be seen as the sphere of government that is directly associated with the daily lives of the citizens. It should thus be acknowledged that the local government sphere is required to obtain the participation of the citizens in determining the quality and quantity of services delivered. Local government should play a pivotal role in ensuring the provision of basic services, namely water, refuse removal, sanitation, and electricity. The provision of such services is essential to maintain an acceptable standard of living. Local government has, over the years, served as the sphere of government that aims to promote the relationship between the 'governors' and the 'governed'. This relationship can arguably be achieved, by taking the following steps (Hanekom 1988:18):

- ensure a proper linkage between the government and the people over which it governs;
- promote greater community participation; and
- ensure a flourishing democratic political system.

The acknowledgement of the above-mentioned requirements could develop participatory democracy, where the citizens are at the epicentre of the activities involved in the determination of the way in which they are governed. Governments that practise participatory democracy are characterised by the citizens taking ownership of the governing processes, especially its policy making. An example of such a system can be seen in Mumbai, India, through the system called the *Panchayat Raj*, which is a system that exploits the *Gram*

Sabha (a legitimate committee within the community) in achieving the expected participation of the community members (Nambiar 2001:3114). In such a system, public participation is imperative as it determines the needs, expectations and aspirations of the citizens and translates them into the achievable goals.

Achieving development through participation

In the local sphere of government, municipalities use public participation as a measure to deepen local democratic culture. Thus, local democracy ensures the promotion of the delivery of goods and services to the community. This creates an inextricable link between the processes of public participation and development. Public participation in South Africa is construed to mean any activity from the election of the representatives to consultation of citizens when formulating legislation by those elected. Democracy, whether direct or representative, is an imperative practice for all spheres of government. What seems to be a challenge in a contemporary state is the undisputable growing number of the citizens. This rapid population increase makes full participatory democracy impossible, as people cannot participate directly, in their own government. Public participation is an essential element of democracy, which makes it a sacrosanct initiative for every citizen. According to Arnstein (2003:246), public participation is a process that involves a power struggle in terms of who gets to make the decisions. Thus, it exists where the distribution of authority is enhanced to deliberately include the underdeveloped and powerless (who could be excluded from the political and economic processes). On the one hand, Clapper (1993:13–14), defines public participation as the efforts of all the people affected by political process to influence the government's activities. On the other hand, Creighton (2005:7) identifies public participation as two-way communication and an interactive process through which the public's concerns, needs, and values are made known and incorporated into the government's decision making. It can thus be deduced that public participation is an intricate process that involves the people affected in determining their own policies towards the satisfaction of their needs, concerns and aspirations through the government. Municipalities have the potential to involve the people in a participatory process to enhance the local economy and thereby create sustainable livelihoods.

Public participation aims at achieving a developmental local government, thereby creating an environment that is conducive to growth. For growth to ensue, it is important for municipalities to understand the needs of the community. These needs can only be acquired through an integrated development plan (IDP). An IDP is a strategic process through which municipalities aim to effectively achieve their developmental goals. However, for the IDP to be effective, its processes will depend on the quality of the planning involved, that is, municipalities should

aim at achieving effective delivery of services through rapid development and the promotion of local community participation (Subban and Theron 2011:98). Public participation is an integral process that involves intensive planning in so far as the decision-making processes are concerned. Through this intensive planning, an integrated development plan emerges within municipalities. As such, the basis of an IDP entails the constitutional principles, and is aimed at promoting representative democracy as well as development in local government. It is important for participation to take place in local government, since municipalities, as the facilitators of IDP, are the agents of the state closest to the local communities (Du Plessis 2012:21).

Developmental local government: a key to achieving growth and community development

According to the *White Paper on Local Government* (RSA 1998:17), developmental local government is defined as a local government that is committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives. Subban and Theron (2011:98) highlight the importance of deepening the local democratic culture, where development and participation would be seen as intertwined concepts.

The *White Paper on Local Government* (RSA 1998) notes the following characteristics as those of a developmental local government:

- maximising social development and economic growth
- integrating and coordinating development planning
- promoting a democratic development
- building social capital at the local level to enable local solutions to development challenges

It is evident that the goals the state ought to achieve in terms of development are the same as those of the municipalities. Thus a congruent approach towards overcoming the developmental challenges is suggested. This approach would require that a functional system of local government be utilised. All policy considerations must be passed in the local sphere by way of a consultative process, because municipalities are government structures that could be used effectively to mobilise citizens.

Municipalities differ in their composition and functioning. As a result of the lack of a common framework applied in municipalities, some municipalities often find that they are faced with unintended malpractices, which have the potential to render the municipality's service delivery ineffective. National legislation provides a framework for the individual municipalities, where it is

expected that the communities would intensively participate in the municipal procedures applicable (Reddy, Nzimakwe and Ramlucken 2012:51). Municipalities must at all times strive to obtain extensive consultation with the people. Non-involvement of the public could be regarded as the most important limitation because it defeats the purpose of attempting to mobilise the community to support local government. Involvement of the people can be enhanced by improving the methods of organising community gatherings such as the ward committee meetings.

POLICY INITIATIVES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Since democratisation in 1994 the South African government has formulated major policies in order to facilitate development. These policies emanated from the African National Congress (ANC) led alliance and were technically introduced in government as they were derived from the principles and policies of the governing party. These developmental policies include:

- the Reconstruction and Development Programme 1994–1996 (RDP);
- the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme 1996–2000 (GEAR);
- the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa 2006 (AsgiSA); and
- the New Growth Path 2010 (NGP) (Mthethwa 2011:30).

The transition of RDP to GEAR

The primary goal of the policies was to create an equitably balanced society, within which all the basic needs of the people are met. During the period 1994–1996 the facilitation of the RDP created a platform for engagement to introduce the notion of development to the cross-cultural and multiracial society in the post-apartheid South Africa. As development became a dominating element in the government's agenda, it moved to the centre of the debate. The implementation of the RDP was significant as the policy emanated from the ANC's 1994 election manifesto which promised quality of life for all. To illustrate its significance, an entire ministry in the presidency's office was dedicated to ensuring successful implementation of this policy.

Due to particular challenges, e.g. lack of finances, both practical and political, the Reconstruction and Development Programme was not successful and the government could not achieve most of the objectives intended. It is a reality that approximately one million people per year migrate to the cities in search of economic opportunities. Since 1996 the movement of these migrants from the rural to urban areas has created over 3 000 new informal settlements (Dinokeng Scenarios 2012). Mthethwa (2011:31) contends that the RDP's replacement by

the Growth Employment and Redistribution initiative was a strategic one as this macro-economic strategy aimed at stabilising the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and foreign currency markets. Policy makers in the office of the Deputy President formulated the Growth and Employment and Redistribution policy, but without consultation within the tripartite alliance, which includes the ANC, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). As was in the case of RDP, the assumption was that government policies do not need the approval of all the alliance partners. In the period 1996–2000, GEAR dominated the government's agenda as the government adopted it as its strategic policy for economic stability. Because of their non-involvement in the formulation, the alliance partners criticised the GEAR policy, claiming that its 'neo-liberal' and 'macro-economic' nature compromised the social issues that ensure development. Growth Employment and Redistribution had particular shortcomings towards reaching its objectives, which were to stimulate investment and increase employment and development. Both the RDP and GEAR were policies which had the potential to improve the conditions of society, through municipalities, by utilising government-supported programmes in encouraging a co-operative government.

Policy shift to a macro-economic strategy

In 2006, the government led by President Thabo Mbeki introduced the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA) with the primary purpose of increasing the economic growth of South Africa by creating development targets. Critics dismissed AsgiSA as a policy strategy arguing that it had unrealistic policy goals. However, despite all these shortcomings, AsgiSA created a platform that identified institutional challenges that impede growth and employment creation in an economy. The current NGP introduced in 2010, aims to create suitable livelihoods for all citizens. It aims to do this by focussing on the creation of employment and the alleviation of poverty.

All developmentally related policies by municipalities do not encourage active participation in the economic activities. Ordinary members of the community recognise municipalities as the critical immediate government institutions. This reiterates the importance of citizen participation in municipal policy making. Residents within a municipality are constituents to their respective municipalities. These are the individuals whose quality of life is targeted. The development of the country could yield positive results as the lives of the citizens will be improved through the delivery of quality services. In his 2009 State of the Nation address, President Jacob Zuma emphasised the importance of involving the people in the task of creating a developmental state, and linking the developmental state to the improvement of the delivery of services. It was argued that this approach will

create employment opportunities and subsequently improve the standard of living of the people. This begs the critical question: How will municipalities contribute to the formation of a developmental state?

Developing through community partnerships: a case of Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP)

The most important indicators of a developmental state are the ways in which the resources of the country are distributed and the way in which employment is created. These two factors have a major influence on the growth of the country's economy and general development. Within a municipal sphere, a developmental state could be introduced through the promotion of the EPWP in order to fast-track the skills transfer in that the unskilled and semi-skilled individuals can have an opportunity to be employable. Once they are employable, they will possess the potential to release the burden from the government in the form of social grants and other welfare interventions by the government. The ultimate goal of the implementation of the EPWP is threefold: to eradicate poverty levels within the indigent communities in the country, to increase employment opportunities through the transfer of skills and to reduce the Gini-coefficient of 0,7 to below 0,5 in the next 10 years. Municipalities play a major role in implementing the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP). The EPWP is a government initiative aimed at bridging the gap between growing the economy and addressing the large number of unskilled and unemployed potential workers in municipalities. This is done in a way that ensures that everyone benefits from the economic development of the country (EPWP 2011). The EPWP initiative involves creating temporary employment opportunities to the unemployed, thus transferring skills. This will give them the competitive advantage of being employable (Thornhill and Madumo 2011:139).

The government could use the municipalities, through the EPWP initiative, to achieve local development. The EPWP cuts across all the government departments and all the three spheres of government to provide skills in the infrastructure, environmental, non-state and social sectors (EPWP 2011).

It is important to note that the primary role of the local sphere of government is not to create employment but to provide basic services. However, municipalities' can also contribute positively to the creation of a developmental state that is to engender a culture whereby citizens start participating in the affairs of the government they have elected. Thus, they realise the aspirations of the people in general (Subban and Theron 2011:98). This should be possible, moreover in a state where constitutional democracy is the order of the day. As such, the primary role that would be played by local government in this

instance should be to organise the society behind the banner of ‘developmental state’ and start working towards establishing such a state.

CHALLENGES FACING MUNICIPALITIES

In order to reach a situation where a state is a developmental state, particular factors must be guarded against if a municipality is to be effective. These factors include (*SA Yearbook* 2011/2012:260; RSA 2009:28; Thornhill 2006:322-323):

- corruption and maladministration;
- a lack of administrative capacity to deliver the required services;
- a lack of financial control systems to ensure transparency and accountability; and
- a lack of political stability, which has an impact on sustainable policy direction.

Corruption and maladministration

Corruption and maladministration exist in all the spheres of government – in particular in municipalities. Corruption and maladministration, which seem to be the main impediments to growth and development in municipalities, lead to non-delivery or a slow pace and even inadequate service delivery. A possible reason for these problems is that in local government the system does not have a common framework for monitoring and evaluation. In some of the municipalities the appointment of the senior administrative workforce is influenced by political affiliation (Reddy, Naidoo and Pillay 2005:49–50).

Lack of administrative capacity, control system and political stability

According to the Local Government Audit Outcomes of 2011, 87% of the municipalities (including municipal entities) in Gauteng depend on the assistance of consultants to perform their financial management functions (Auditor-General 2011:20). This shows a general lack of administrative personnel in municipalities to perform particular tasks. Political instability is a challenge that emerges as a result of political interference within municipalities. This instability is triggered by the limited five year term of office for councillors, where incumbents are not guaranteed a re-election. Political instability handicaps the daily functioning of municipalities.

According to section 60 of the *Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act*, (Act 56 of 2003) the municipal manager is the accounting

officer of a municipality and plays a pivotal role of the overall management thereof. In 2011, out of 278, 83 municipal managers had not been fully appointed in their posts, but serve in an acting capacity. This means that 30% of the municipal managers are appointed in an acting capacity in this critical managerial position. The breakdown of acting municipal managers per province is illustrated in Table 1 below.

The instability, as shown by the replacements of municipal managers within a five-year term of office, will have dire consequences for the growth and development of local communities, could be associated to political party power struggles. This demonstrates a clear lack of administrative capacity. It could also be argued that municipal managers are replaced as a result of the political climate and through interference. The average term of office for a South African municipal manager is 2.5 years instead of five years (runs concurrently with the municipal council) as set out in the legislation.

It is often observed that the national sphere of government would create and impose a policy on to the local sphere. This has serious consequences because the activities involved in the policy frequently over-ride the normal functions of a municipality. For example, during the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup tournament, the national government promulgated a policy that required all the hosting cities to unwind their municipal by-laws in favour of that 'FIFA World

Table 1: Provincial breakdown of municipalities with acting municipal manager

Province	No of municipalities per province	Acting Municipal Manager No. %	
Eastern Cape	45	8	17.8%
Free State	24	5	20.8%
Gauteng	12	2	16.7%
KwaZulu-Natal	61	17	27.9%
Limpopo	30	9	30%
Mpumalanga	21	10	47.6%
Northern Cape	32	8	25%
North West	23	13	56.5%
Western Cape	30	11	36.7%
Total	278	83	29.9%

Adapted: SA Local Government Research Centre (2012:3)

Cup policy'. This caused a problem because at times the municipality's capacity to deliver on particular projects had not been assessed.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to initiate a debate on the utilisation of the local sphere of government in order to instil a culture of growth and development in the lives of the people of South Africa. Principally, it was argued that local government, which is perceived to be the sphere closest to the people, is viewed as having the capability to facilitate a developmental state. Literature on the nature and character of developmental state was assessed and it was found that the South African situation is different from those of other developmental states, i.e. Scandinavian countries. The policies that aim to achieve a developmental state were investigated and it was found that developmental local government is a critical component in establishing a developmental state. It was argued in the article that the objectives of a developmental local government are the same as those of a developmental state. Various challenges that prevent municipalities from facilitating a developmental state through their established mechanisms were identified. Overcoming such challenges would translate into the effective usage of a developmental local government, through municipalities to facilitate and achieve a developmental state in the national sphere.

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