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Reviewed by Patrick Bond

EDITORIAL

LIES, DAMN LIES!

Mashupye H Maserumule
Chief Editor

Often editorials of scientific journals are written as prefaces. These two are not the same. A preface introduces a publication, where the contents of the different chapters that it contains are simply summarised. An editorial serves a much bigger purpose, for it is an editor's opinion written to engage scholarship on various matters of public interest. This is what this article seeks to achieve. Instead of simply summarising the articles that make up the content of this edition – dealing with a myriad of issues from neighbourhood revitalisation in Nigeria to precarious workers in South Africa's public sector – this editorial opines on the perils of lies in the praxis of politics. As the American writer and humourist, Mark Twain, would put it: "lies, damn lies".

Lies are insidious. They negate the truth and are at odds with science. They destroy personalities, organisations and political systems. Their perniciousness is untenable. A Bissau-Guinean and Cape Verdean theoretician, Amilcar Lopes da Costa Cabral, irked by the ruinous effect of lies, enjoined in his Party Directive of 1965: "Tell no lies; claim no easy victories" (Handyside, 1969). Lies propagate falsehoods. Peddled with

seductiveness so that many believe them, lies are driven by opinionated prejudice. They cast aspersions on the integrity of those who are committed to the truth. They preponderate in the praxis of politics as inherently part of it. The concept for this has always been propaganda – falsification/manipulation of facts or downright falsehoods peddling one-sided messages to secure collective attitudes, emotions, opinions, and actions of the targeted audience for a particular ideological or political end (Ellul, 1965). In many countries, propaganda is institutionalised as part of the system of government, in one way or another.

Is post-truth a corollary of propaganda or has it come to describe a totally different phenomenon in the evolution of politics? The term "post-truth", which recently made it into the English dictionary, became a much bandied about word in 2016. This followed Donald Trump's election as the president of the United States (US) and the United Kingdom's (UK) severing of ties with the European Union (EU) – what came to be known as Brexit. Writing about the Iran-Contra scandal and Persian Gulf War in *The Nation* in 1992, the late Serbian-American

playwright Steve Tesich said: "We, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in some post-truth world" (*The Guardian*, 2015). This is where this word is traced to. It is used to describe instances where "objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (*English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, on-line). But doesn't this suggest synonymy with propaganda?

Propaganda is about falsifying or contesting the truth while post-truth accepts the truth, but undermines it with conjured up fantasies. In other words, in the post-truth world, the truth "is of secondary importance" (*The Economist*, 2016:11). But aren't these concepts of the same parlance as a lie, inherently embodied in the praxis of politics? As English novelist George Orwell put it: "political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind". What does this mean? An American conservative political activist and the figurehead of the New Right, Paul Weyrich, answers aptly: "politicians often lie". It doesn't matter whether a lie is a function of propaganda or post-truth. A lie is a lie. But is it acceptable for politicians to lie? In other words, as asked in *The Economist* of 10-16 September 2016, "does it matter if they leave the truth behind entirely, [for] they have always lied?"

The former premier of the Mpumalanga province in South Africa, Ndaweni Mahlangu, said it just doesn't matter at all. He said this justifying the appointment of disgraced politicians to his executive council (Jacques Modipane, Steve Mabona, & David Mabuza), who all had lied before and later recanted their lies after they were exposed. Mahlangu said: "It

is acceptable for politicians to lie" (South African History Online, 1999). His honesty crudely lacked political sophistication and was distasteful to many. He embarrassed the governing party and was severely chastised. But was the governing party really saying that the fact that politicians "have always lied" does not make it "acceptable for [them] to lie", or was the chastisement aimed at his frankness about a political lie, which he verbalised publicly as its deployee? Lies are an inherent part of politics. Tell me of a politician who never lied.

History is riddled with examples of a political lie. The German Chancellor, Adolf Hitler, promised peace in exchange for him having Sudetenland, to satisfy his insatiable territorial demands. He wanted the possession of "Lebensraum" (The History Place, 2001). Sudetenland was part of Czechoslovakia, where millions of Germans settled following the redrawing of borders after the First World War. The then British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, agreed to Hitler's demand to Sudetenland. The agreement was dubbed "peace for our time" (Zak, 2007). Hitler got Sudetenland, but failed to keep his side of the bargain. He went against his word when he later wanted all of Czechoslovakia (Trueman, 2015). Things came to a head when his territorial ambition extended to Poland. The British declared war against him. Lies caused wars. They fractured relations among the nations.

America's 39th president, Jimmy Carter, promised that the rescue of the hostages at its embassy in Tehran would not be a military operation. It later turned out to have been one. He lied (Zak, 2007). If Michael Wolff's *Fire and Fury* is anything to go by, America's

president Donald Trump is the symbol of a lie – a man who disdains science and indulges in populism. He is projected in the book as America's egregious *faux pas* in the history of its political leadership. Trump retorted exasperatedly to Wolff's book and dismissed it as package of lies, in the same way he rebuffed the media as peddlers of "fake news". He became the president of the US through a lie, and is managing the American affairs by a lie. So was Jacob Zuma of South Africa, who replaced Thabo Mbeki as the president of the African National Congress (ANC) and of the country.

Lies were used to oust Mbeki. Those who had imbibed the lies and acted on them confirmed this, ten years later, in an interview with the Gauteng-based radio station Power FM, where the "habit of telling lies" in the governing party was laid bare. Among them were Julius Malema and Zwelinzima Vavi. Malema was the president of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) while Vavi was the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) secretary-general – all staunch allies of Zuma's driving the campaign to get rid of Mbeki. Together with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL), the ANCYL and Cosatu were hell bent on replacing Mbeki with Jacob Zuma.

Zuma had just been relieved of his duties as the deputy president of the Republic of South Africa by Mbeki following judge Hillary Squires judgement that he enjoyed a "corrupt relationship" with Schabir Shaik. A vicious campaign against Mbeki was launched as an act of vengeance, based on the lies that he wanted to change the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* so as to remain

the president of the country beyond the allowable maximum tenure. It was said that Mbeki wanted to unleash state power on those who differed with him. The seductiveness of these lies incensed the youth league, which declared that it was "prepared to take up arms and kill for Zuma". Vavi said Zuma was an "unstoppable tsunami".

Lies sustained Zuma for almost two decades. Despite that the ANC is historically known for its ideational profundity, which guided the liberation struggle, Zuma's leadership redirected it to a lie. The British multinational public relations, reputation management and marketing company, Bell Pottinger, determined the political discourse of the ANC, prescribing incendiary concepts such as "white monopoly capital" and "radical economic transformation", which it imbibed to structure its policy positions. All of these became Cyril Ramaphosa's challenge, as he took over as the president of the ANC and South Africa. In other words, how does Ramaphosa preside over policy populism based on the false narratives that the Zuma leadership prescribed to frame the ANC's strategic policy orientation?

In lies lie dishonesty and skullduggery. Lies never die. It takes time for history to lay bare their noxiousness for they continuously reincarnate themselves to assume new forms and shapes, co-opt new proxies, and coin new concepts to fudge the truth and peddle falsehood. Pottinger's "white monopoly capital" was intended to deflect attention from the looting of the state by Zuma's cronies. It was not a genuine narrative. Lining the pockets of those close to power with state resources is a typical African phenomenon, and manifests in kleptocracy. Said to have

amassed much wealth from the state, Mobutu Sese Seko, who ruled the Congo for 32 years, went down in the annals of history as the personification of African kleptocracy. Is Joseph Kabila any different? This question is asked because his term as president of the Congo has ended, but he is still clinging to power (*The Economist*, 2018).

Likewise, the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, in a televised interview said that the duties of a head of state can be a tall order for a person who is more than 75 years old. This was said to emphasise Uganda's constitution, which had set 75 as the age limit for the incumbent of the position of a president in that country. However, when the time arrived for him to step down because of his age, he went against his own word, and wanted to change the constitution to remain as president. What does this mean? Politicians cannot be taken at their word. They lie all the time and citizens always bear the brunt of their lies.

Congo is "heading back to hell" – "the great Congo war of 1998-2003", characterised as "the most lethal on any continent in most people's lifetimes" (*The Economist*, 2018:20-21). Kabila promised Congolese elections would take place in 2016. Instead of honouring his word, Kabila obfuscated to continue his stay in power. This exacerbated the Congo crisis of proxy wars and foreign interests in its minerals. In Zimbabwe, the military had to step in to remove Africa's oldest leader, Robert Mugabe – a nonagenarian who still wanted to lead. Once dubbed the bread basket of Africa, Zimbabwe is in ruins. Its economy's performance is woefully poor; unemployment soared to intractable proportions; and the public infrastructure

has collapsed. Will Emmerson Mnangagwa turn the tide to salvage Zimbabwe, which is increasingly becoming a failed state because of Mugabe's political lie? Only time will tell.

Grinding poverty drove many Zimbabweans to seek opportunities for survival elsewhere. Much of this is ascribed to ill-conceived populist policies that pandered to rhetoric, and were invoked to make up for the fading euphoria attached to the liberation struggle credentials of Mugabe as the reality of governing a post-colonial state started to hit home. That he was in power for many years, Mugabe could have better managed the Lancaster Agreement which framed the template to address the historical injustices of land dispossessions he agreed to with strategic political foresight and a sense of ingenuity for the interest of Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, he slumbered on the land question. For some time, he had been in dalliance with the courtesy of the colonial power, only to wake up when the people reminded him that freedom is land. His reaction on awakening from that slumber was to encourage land invasions of white farms – a disingenuous political response that failed dismally to disentangle the coloniality of land dispossession. And who now suffers from all this? The answer is simple: the ordinary citizens of Zimbabwe.

Is South Africa heading towards the same fate, as much of what the ANC is saying on the land question, prefaced with the mantra "radical", sounds like nothing more than political posturing rather than commitment to the decoloniality of land. It is naive to understand land reform and redistribution only as the function of possession and ownership. Its productive capacity and the

capability of the people to work the land in order to sustain livelihood and contribute to the economy is important. Beyond this, land is inextricably linked to people's origins, histories, cultures and traditions – their intersections give them identity and pride. Of course, land is also important for human settlement. But did post-colonial Africa deal with the morphology of the colonial settlement patterns, or even more broadly, the Bismarckian fragmentation of Africa? The human settlement patterns in many African countries continue to be defined by colonial templates. The sprawling settlements on the outskirts of centres of economic and industrial activities, largely in the urban areas, are a manifestation of this.

In South Africa, the Verwoerdian logic perfected this, where townships in South Africa were created for the convenience of the capital as the site of cheap labour. However, instead of now dealing with segregated human settlement patterns, it is said that townships need to be rejuvenated. Doesn't this perpetuate the very coloniality of human settlement? The human re-settlement approach in Zimbabwe was inhuman. Rather than addressing the colonial settlement patterns, Mugabe's regime unleashed violence on citizens through a programme dubbed Operation Murambatsvina, said to have displaced at least 700 000 people (United Nations, 2005). The Mugabe regime wanted to get rid of slums. But largely, the so-called slums are the consequences of the colonial settlement patterns, which the post-colonial African governments managed rather than dismantled.

Linked to the land question and human settlement is the question of boundaries and borders. This takes us back to the

Bismarckian fragmentation of Africa, which continued to determine how post-colonial Africa managed state relations. It continues to shape Africa's geography. But the German leader, Otto von Bismarck, did not have any clue about the sociology of Africa. So, on what basis did he facilitate the partition of Africa? But more disturbing is the question: why did post-colonial African leadership kowtow to his imagination, either wittingly or unwittingly? Africa, as it is now, reflects Bismarckian triumphalism, which is allowed to continue. Because of this, a question arises: Is Africa really independent? If so, why does it experience so many conflicts which are partly caused by Bismarckian borders? This question is formulated from one of the outstanding African scholar's Ali Al'amin Mazrui's preface to Adekeye Adebajo's book *The curse of Berlin* (2010:xii-xiii). At the more philosophical level, perhaps this question reflects the extent that decolonisation did not result in decoloniality.

Lurking in this is whether Africa, as the product of a lie, and managed by a lie that post-colonial African leadership failed to debunk in their institutional and policy interventions for her development, thus not complicit in perpetuating a lie? Beyond this, there is the Middle-East question, which came about because of a historical lie. Its origin implicated Europe and the United States (US); and the United Nations (UN) complicated it. The British Empire promised the Arab leaders an independent state in Palestine if they revolted against the Ottoman Empire. It did not honour this. In fact, it acted contrary to this in the Balfour Declaration, which supported a Jewish state in Palestine. Wasn't it here that the Middle-East crisis started? Britain and France ruthlessly divided

the Ottoman Empire, and created artificial borders. The UN failed to correct this in the partition of Palestine, which historically included Israel, Gaza and the West Bank, for all to co-exist harmoniously (Shah, 2006). The Middle-East crisis is a function of a lie

created by Euro-American machinations to dominate the world. What is the point about all these? Lies are increasingly becoming politics and politics are becoming lies. What this portends for the future of humanity is ghastly to contemplate. Lies, damn lies!

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NEIGHBOURHOOD REVITALISATION: AN ENABLING STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC LOW INCOME HOUSING QUALITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGENERATION IN LAGOS, NIGERIA

Abimbola O Omolabi and Pauline W Adebayo
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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on residential environments and examines the conditions of the public low income housing neighbourhood in Lagos, Nigeria. It uses the Anikantamon public low income housing estate as a case study. The article argues that Lagos, which represents the hope for city development in Nigeria, is experiencing a rapid growth rate that has culminated in a situation where demand for housing is outstripping supply. It posits that the ill consequences of the mismatch between supply and demand have created a serious residential neighbourhood environmental degeneration problem associated with slum features. Resulting from the analysis of data collected through the administration of 207 questionnaires, the article asserts that the housing and neighbourhood conditions in the estate have degenerated deplorably. It avers that living in slum conditions adversely affects residential satisfaction and the quality of life of the occupiers. Conclusively, the article argues that the reversal of neighbourhood quality decline through a revitalisation process, driven by

a public-private partnership arrangement with emphasis on community participation, is likely to produce a better result regarding the increased level of residential satisfaction.

Keywords: Environmental degeneration, housing quality, neighbourhood revitalisation, public low income housing, residential satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Housing has been universally acknowledged as one of the most essential necessities of human life and is a major economic asset in every nation. Adequate housing provides the foundation for stable communities and social inclusion (Oladapo, 2006). The multi-faceted nature of housing encapsulates the basic necessities in life that transcend shelter, good health, productivity, socio-economic development and social well-being. This is why Eldredge (in Amao, 2012) concludes that housing represents a bundle of goods and services that facilitate and enhance good living and is a key to neighbourhood quality and preservation. Furthermore, Gilbertson,

Gormandy & Thomson (2008) remark that a significant association exists between housing conditions and the physical and mental health of individuals. In the same vein, Berglund (2012) is more succinct, stating that access to adequate housing serves as a tool to fight poverty, particularly for the low income group.

Reinforcing the importance of housing for mankind, Osuide (2004) suggests that 'having a safe place to live is a fundamental element of human dignity and this enhances human development'. This implies that people's right to shelter is basic and the provision of decent housing to all requiring them ought to be the priority of every civilized society in gauging its development. To this end, the significance of adequate housing that meets the quality of government prescribed standards and user's needs, expectations and aspirations towards the social well-being of the people is fundamental to the development of society. However, UN-Habitat (2006) notes that despite the government's laudable efforts, public housing has failed to achieve this goal in Nigeria.

Previous attempts by all stakeholders, including government agencies, planners and developers, to provide a necessary recipe for solving the housing problem have yielded little or no success. Thus, for the past three decades, access to adequate housing has remained one of the most unattainable expectations of the majority of urban dwellers in Nigeria (Jiboye, 2010). This is more so for the occupiers of public low income residential estates in Lagos. Indeed, all of the public low income housing estates located in many sites across the city have suffered from neglect and have, over the years, degenerated with physical and social evidence of

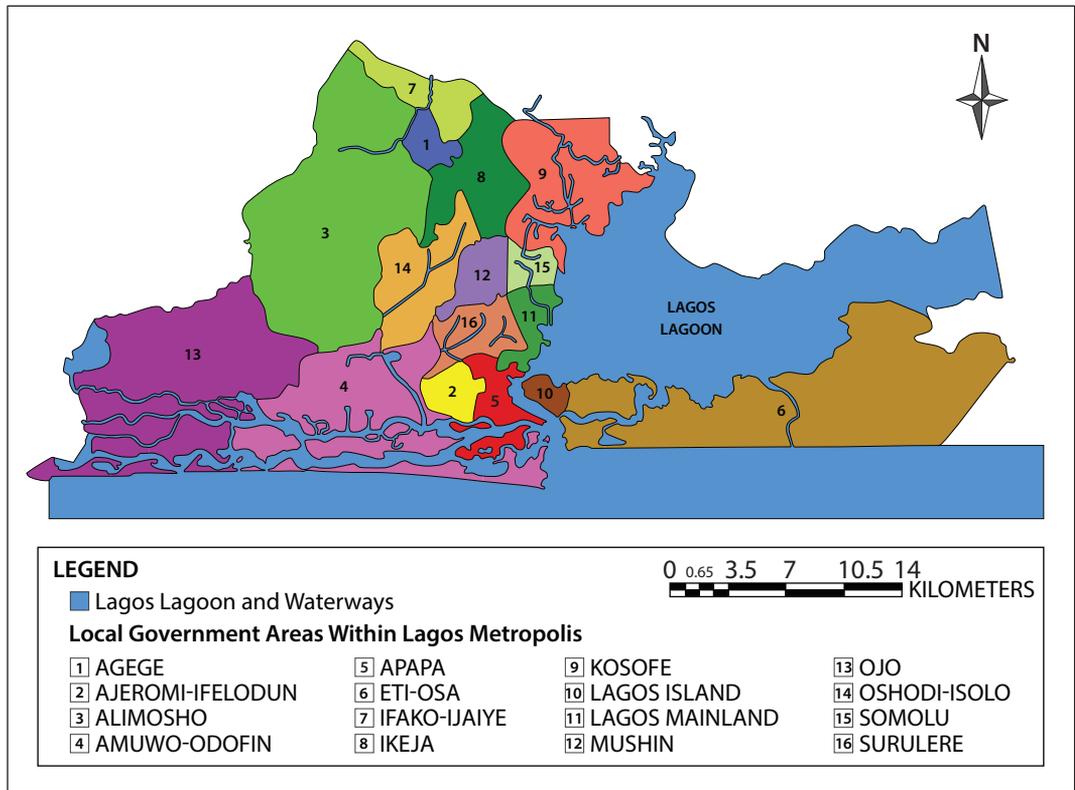
urban squalor and slum conditions (Lagos State Government, 2008; Anofojie, Adeleye & Kadiri (2014). The factors responsible for this degeneration can be attributed to rapid urbanisation, rural-urban migration, decades of steady economic downturn, inadequate supply and the decay of urban infrastructure (World Bank, 2005, cited in Ahianba, Dimuna, & Okogun, 2008).

This study, therefore, aims at increasing the residential satisfaction level of the occupiers of public low income housing estates through the strategy of neighbourhood revitalisation which is driven by a public-private partnership arrangement. The objectives towards achieving this goal are: analysing the socio-economic characteristics of the inhabitants, assessing the occupiers' residential satisfaction level with the housing conditions and neighbourhood facilities in the estate, as well as the management of the housing estate, evaluating the effects of the housing condition on the overall satisfaction level of the residents, and examining its implication for improving the housing quality through a revitalisation strategy.

PROFILE OF STUDY AREA

The Anikantamon public low income housing estate is located within the Lagos Island East Local Council Development Area, under Lagos Island Local Government Area in Lagos State. The Lagos Island government was created in November 1991. It is the principal and central local government in the Lagos metropolitan area in Lagos State. It is part of Lagos Division which is the oldest in terms of modern local administration in the state, with its administrative seat at the City Hall in the Epetedo area of the city. The

FIGURE 1: Lagos Metropolis



Source: Ministry of Physical Planning, 2012

local government occupies an area of about 8.7 km² of the Lagos Metropolis and its population, according to the 2006 census, is estimated at 209437. The local government is bounded in the south by the Atlantic Ocean, in the north by Lagos Lagoon and the mainland Local Government area, in the east by the Majidun Creek and in the west by Ojo local government area (see Figure 1).

Lagos Island is the commercial and business nerve centre of Nigeria. Its administrative role, at different periods, and its natural setting have provided impetus to its present level of economic and physical infrastructure and services for the population within and

far beyond. There are about 714 housing units within the estate with a total of 121 blocks of flats. The estate was zoned into four different phases. There are two management structures including the Lagos State Building Investment Company (LBIC), an agency established in 1981 by the Lagos State Government to manage the estate, and the Resident Association, which is concerned with the welfare of the people in the estate. Arrangements are made for the funding of the maintenance of the estate through an internally generated revenue mechanism put in place by the management. One of the major challenges in the estate is the problem of drainage channels for water.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Housing Quality

A normative definition of housing quality generally refers to the grade or level of acceptability of dwelling units and their associated and immediate residential environment. Lee *et al.* (2014) assert that adequate housing is a measure of housing quality level that transcends the design and functionality of housing structures, building materials used, the amount of internal and external space pertaining to the dwelling, housing utilities and basic service provision. Housing quality standards are often used as norms or measures that are applicable in legal cases where there are some questions as to the acceptability of construction relative to the prevailing laws or conventions that operate within the residential building industry. This means that quality housing must be designed within a minimum standard with the understanding that it is able to respond to a range of human needs such as shelter, aspirations, status, emotional importance and family stability in such a way that makes living in a particular area conducive (Lekwot *et al.*, 2012; Dwijendra, 2013).

Moreover, Gilbertson *et al.* (2008) have remarked that there is a significant correlation between housing quality and well-being; while Jiboye (2010) confirms that a significant correlation exists between people's quality of life and acceptable housing quality standards. Additionally, Adeleye *et al.* (2014) assert that standards in housing are a measure of acceptability at a given time and place, in a given set of cultural, technological and economic conditions. It accounts for both quantitative

and qualitative dimensions of residential units, their immediate surroundings and the needs of the occupants. The Scottish Housing Standard stipulates five major indices, which are adaptable, in providing a basis for evaluating housing quality. These include freedom from serious disrepair, energy efficiency, provision of modern facilities and services, and being healthy, safe and secure.

Quantitative factors that relate to housing quality are price, quantity, tenure and the housing impacts on the occupants. The qualitative dimension relates to values of factors such as the 'comfort' or 'quality of life' that are afforded by different dwelling types, lifestyles, and the preferences and expectations of the inhabitants. When these issues are considered, combined and analysed in housing quality studies that transcend residential built form, neighbourhoods and surroundings, then an advantage is offered to use the results of the analysis to serve as feedback to the planning of a new housing project, not least for the urban renewal of the existing buildings that are not satisfactory to the occupants (Leishman & Rowley, 2012; Blakstad *et al.*, 2010 cited in Aigbavboa & Thwala, 2013).

Environmental Degeneration

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* defines environment as the conditions and circumstances that affect people's lives. Urban practitioners have been concerned about the dynamic nature of the built environment in temporal and spatial intra-urban contexts. This arises from the large-scale environmental problems generated by rapid urbanisation (Ferguson & Maurer, 1996). Indeed, literature has revealed that urban environmental

degeneration manifests from the unwise use of the natural environment due to ignorance, poverty, overpopulation and urbanisation. Environmental degeneration occurs when land use development activities, that include shelter, recreation and infrastructural facilities to meet the insatiable wants and desires of people, result in negative impacts. These negative impacts are referred to as environmental degeneration, which implies the 'abuse of the environment' as depicted by poor environmental quality due to improper resource management (Amao, 2012).

The environmental quality concept offers a useful appraisal of the explanation of the spatial variation in the quality of urban life and household well-being (Omolabi, 2007). To this end, it is possible to define a nexus between the residential satisfaction of users and the neighbourhood environmental quality of public low income housing inhabited by residents. Ahianba *et al.* (2008) describe incidents of environmental degeneration that characterise the built environment in Nigeria that tend to agree with Anofjie *et al.* (2014) and Ojo and Oloruntoba (2012), who are of the opinion that the existing public low income housing estates exhibit such features as inadequate basic infrastructural amenities, sub-standard housing, overcrowding, poor ventilation in homes and non-compliance with building bye-laws and regulations. Thus, the extent to which these housing estates enhance users' residential satisfaction leaves much to be desired.

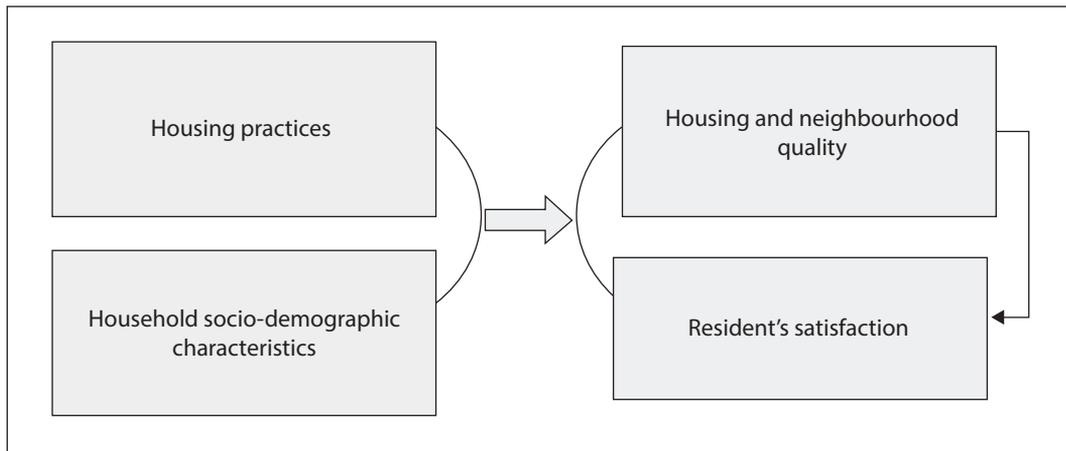
Residential Satisfaction

The residential satisfaction issue has been studied in various spectra. The concept relates to quality of life and it is considered as one

of the most studied topics in the field of the residential environment (Ge & Hokao, 2006). Residential satisfaction measures the extent of satisfaction with the housing situation. It indicates the feeling of contentment experienced when one has or achieves what one needs or desires in a house and its surroundings. It is a state in which a person's housing needs are met (Dekker *et al.*, 2011 cited in Alnsour & Hyasat, 2016). Thus, various experts including planners, architects, geographers and economists, among others, have addressed the concept diversely, based on its use as an important criterion in quality of life studies within the housing domain. It is, therefore, a useful tool to measure the success of housing development projects (Mandic & Cirman, 2012; Temelova & Dvorakora, 2012). Figure 2 indicates significant factors that influence empirical analysis that relates to the residential satisfaction studies which are considered in the study. These factors include housing conditions, neighbourhood features, and household characteristics, among others, which agree with the factors considered in the studies referred to earlier (Alison *et al.*, 2002, cited in Salleh & Badarulzaman, 2012; Ogundana & Adejuwon, 2014).

The evaluation of residential satisfaction measured in this study revolves around two dimensions: existing housing features and neighbourhood characteristics. The first dimension tends to take existing housing quality into account. This dimension presupposes that residents are satisfied with the housing quality when their needs are met. This is significant in terms of the dwellers' lifestyle as it influences the performance of the dwellers with their local environment. The second dimension represents satisfaction with the neighbourhood characteristics. In this

FIGURE 2: Conceptual evaluation model of residential satisfaction



Source: Adapted from Danquah and Afram (2014)

regard, Salleh (2008) notes that satisfaction with neighbourhood characteristics implies that the residents feel that the neighbourhood has good quality physical and social services.

This article considers the evaluation of residential satisfaction as a measure of housing quality by using housing unit features, services and facilities provided in the housing estates and the housing environment to determine the degree to which the residents are satisfied with the existing housing units. These are based on variables and attributes that include social, maintenance, physical and other elements that can benefit occupants (Lara & Bekker, 2012; Tech-Hong, 2012; Amerigo & Aragonés, 1990, cited in Ibem *et al.*, 2015; Alnsour & Hyasat, 2016).

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data used for this article is generated from the primary source that includes questionnaire administration, observation survey and the oral interview of some residents. A total number of 714 housing units built by the government

were identified in the estate, which constitute the sampling frame. Using the Morris Model (2007) formula, a sample size of 144 was derived and was increased to accommodate incomplete questionnaires and an uncooperative attitude (Salkind, 1997 cited in Hashim, 2010) in relation to the recommendation of the possibility of increasing sample size by 40% to 50% to accommodate such unforeseen circumstances. An expansion of 63 as sample size was taken, representing approximately a 44% increase, making a total sample of 207. Thus, 207 questionnaires were administered in the four zones using a multi-stage sampling method. The total number of questionnaires analysed was 178 (86%) as opposed to 207, due to the fact that out of the 207 houses sampled, 29 of them returned incomplete information.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Any attempt to evaluate residential satisfaction is expected to take into consideration socio-demographic variables in addition to the housing condition in the neighborhood (Mohit *et al.*, 2010).

Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1 presents a brief illustration of the respondents' characteristics in the study area. The table indicates the age profile of the household heads in the housing estates. This is important in order to give an understanding of the attitudinal display of the respondents. Rosenberg and Wilcox (2006) note that it is possible to relate the behavioural display of individuals to their age. The presentation in

the table illustrates that 54.5% are between 51 and 60 years old, which is the highest, distantly followed by 16.9% in the age bracket of 41 to 50 years, 15.2% accounts for 25 to 40 years, while 10.1% is associated with respondents under the age group of 61 to 70 years and 3.4% only accounts for respondents of 70 years and above. The age group above 50 years is more dominant in the estate.

72.5% of the respondents were male and 27.5% were female, 87.1% were married

TABLE 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Respondents' Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Respondents' Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age			Length of Stay		
25-40 years	27	15.2	Less than 5 years	6	3.4
41-50 years	30	16.9	6-10 years	12	12.0
51-60 years	97	54.5	11-15 years	14	7.9
61-70 years	18	10.1	16-20 years	55	30.9
Above 70 years	6	3.4	Above 20 years	91	51.1
Total	178	100	Total	178	100
Gender			Monthly Income		
Male	129	72.5	10,000-18,000 Naira	1	0.6
Female	49	27.5	19,000-50,000 Naira	110	61.8
Total	178	100	51,000-100,000 Naira	59	33.1
Household Size			101-200,000 Naira	7	3.9
1-2 persons	13	7.3	Above 200,000 Naira	1	0.6
3-4 persons	30	16.9	Total	178	100
5-6 persons	48	27.0	Ownership Status		
7-8 persons	78	43.8	Privately rented	24	13.5
Above 8 persons	9	5.0	Owner-occupier	142	79.8
Total	178	100	Inherited	12	6.7
Education			Total	178	100
Secondary Education	77	43.3			
Tertiary	93	52.2			
Total	178	100			

Source: Author's field work, 2016

and 6.7% were single, while 1.7% and 4.5% were divorced and widowed respectively. The table gives information about the household size. 43.8% of respondents' households are made up of a family size of between 7 and 8 persons, 27% comprise households of 5 to 6 persons, households of 3 to 4 persons recorded 16.9 %, while 7.3% and 5.0% consist of a family size of 1 to 2 persons and above 8 persons respectively. The majority of residents were well educated with 52.2% having a tertiary education, 43.3% a secondary education, while 3.4% and 1.1% respectively had a primary education and no formal education. The respondents' occupational status revealed that 61.8% were retirees, followed by 24.7% who claimed to be self-employed. The residents who were privately engaged account for 10.1%, while civil servants account for 3.4%.

One of the main factors that influence and determine the quality of life of a household is income. It is considered one of the criteria in this analysis. In this regard, Table 1 on the previous page reveals that 61.8% earn between 19 000 and 50 000 naira monthly, followed by 33.1% who earn between 51 000 and 101 000 naira monthly, while 3.9% of the respondents earn between 101 000 and 200 000 naira monthly. At the other end of the income distribution, 0.6% earn between 10 000 and 18 000 naira, which is considered to be the lowest level of income among the respondents. In the same vein, 0.6% earns above 200 000 naira, which is the highest. Analysis on ownership status is germane to this study, because housing is an important investment and the right of every individual. Table 1 also reveals that 79.8% of the respondents are house owners, followed by 13.5% who are

tenants and 6.7% who inherited the housing from parents or other family members. On the length of their stay in the estate, the table reveals that 51.1% have lived in the estate for over 20 years and 30.9% have lived in the housing neighbourhood for between 16 and 20 years. Additionally, 12.0% of the respondents have resided in the neighbourhood for between 6 and 10 years, while 7.9% of the respondents claimed they have resided in the area for between 11 and 15 years. Only 3.4% have resided in the estate for less than 5 years.

The Level of Residents' Satisfaction Assessment

As mentioned earlier, the aspects of the housing quality and the availability of services and facilities in the neighbourhood have been used in the evaluation of residents' satisfaction level. The housing condition variables included in the assessment are roofing, ventilation, walls, illumination, bathroom, painting, ceiling, water supply, indoor air quality and flooring. The neighbourhood services and facilities assessed include roads, parking space, waste disposal, drainage, sewerage, safety, landscape, recreation, street lights, accessibility to services, as well as social relations with neighbours. The residents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Very dissatisfied, 2 = Dissatisfied, 3 = Indifferent, 4 = Satisfied and 5 = Very satisfied. The group mean score analysis forms the basis of assessment.

Satisfaction with Housing Conditions

Housing conditions from a multi-cultural perspective promote a combination of several

TABLE 2: Satisfaction with housing condition

Housing Conditions	VD	D	I	S	VS	Mean Score
Variables	1	2	3	4	5	
Roofing	27	100	8	43	0	2.38
Ventilation	23	108	17	30	0	2.30
Walls	16	117	15	30	0	2.23
Illumination	15	110	14	49	0	2.66
Bathroom	17	115	8	38	0	2.37
Painting	10	145	8	15	0	2.15
Ceiling	13	111	4	50	0	2.51
Water supply	11	128	2	37	0	2.37
Indoor air quality	18	110	5	45	0	2.43
Flooring	18	112	2	46	0	2.16

Source: Author's field work, 2016

FIGURE 3: Uncollected waste dumped in the drains in the housing estate



Source: Author's field work, 2016

variables that include standards which relate to cultures and norms. It also reflects the laws, codes and regulations in existence at the local level. Furthermore, it is a reflection of the condition of the attributes of the housing, including physical condition of the housing environment and the availability of amenities (Zainal *et al.*, 2012), as shown in Table 2 above.

The lowest mean score of 2.15 was for the painting condition of the building,

while the highest mean score of 2.66 was for the illumination of the dwelling unit. Judging by the opinion of Ndubueze (in Ojo & Oloruntoba, 2012), for a service or a facility, and by implication a condition, to be identified as one of the most prominent sources of dissatisfaction within the framework of housing studies, its satisfaction factor must be lower than the group mean. The group mean analysed from the housing condition variables as shown in Table 2 is 2.40.

TABLE 3: Satisfaction with neighbourhood condition

Neighbourhood Condition	1	2	3	4	5	Group Mean
Road surface	8	154	10	6	0	2.07
Paving	14	152	4	8	0	2.03
Waste disposal	24	142	1	11	0	1.99
Drainage	15	151	5	7	0	2.02
Sewage	19	141	8	10	0	2.05
Safety	13	30	20	113	2	3.34
Landscape	15	142	16	5	0	2.06
Cleanliness of neighbourhood	0	175	3	0	0	2.00
Accessibility to services	18	112	2	46	0	2.43
Recreational facilities	0	174	4	0	0	2.02
Street lighting	0	170	7	0	1	2.06
Social relations	19	26	4	100	29	3.52

Source: Author's field work, 2016

Satisfaction with Neighbourhood Condition

One of the dimensions recognised in the evaluation of residential satisfaction is neighbourhood condition and characteristics (Alnsour & Hyasat, 2016). Analysis of the residential satisfaction as related to neighbourhood characteristics is indicated in Table 3 above. It reveals that the lowest mean score of 1.99 was for the waste disposal (see Figure 3 on the previous page) and the highest score of 3.52 was for social relations. The group's mean score for the neighbourhood conditions is 2.3.

Satisfaction with Residents' Estate Management and Maintenance

An important element that contributes to the level of satisfaction is the management procedure of the residents' housing estate (Paris & Kangari, 2006, cited in Amole, 2009). Table 4 on the following page indicates that the lowest score of 1.70 was for maintenance

and necessary repairs by the concerned agency. The highest score of 3.15 was for the mortgage paid or the amount paid by tenants. The group's mean score is 2.09.

Overall Satisfaction with House and Housing Environment

Residential satisfaction reflects the degree to which individuals' housing needs are fulfilled (Jahanshahloo & Daroudi, 2015). To this end, Mohit *et al.* (2010) remark that residential satisfaction is an important concept that functions as helpful tips for policymakers in formulating the implementation of housing guidelines. Table 5 on the next page indicates the evaluation of the overall residential satisfaction by the respondents.

Table 5 shows that 30.3% of the respondents were dissatisfied, while 25.3% were very dissatisfied. Furthermore, 21.3% and 11.2% claimed they were satisfied and very satisfied respectively, and only 11.8% were indifferent.

TABLE 4: Satisfaction with housing estate management

Management Variables	1	2	3	4	5	Group Mean
Rent paid by resident	20	45	2	111	0	3.15
Complaint by resident	88	70	10	10	0	1.67
Necessary repairs	93	65	0	20	0	1.70
Enforcement of rules and regulations	62	87	0	29	0	1.97
Official treatment of residents	91	42	10	34	1	1.94

Source: Author's field work, 2016

TABLE 5: Overall satisfaction with house and housing environment

Evaluation Scale	Frequency	Percentage
Very dissatisfied	45	25.3
Dissatisfied	54	30.3
Indifferent	21	11.8
Satisfied	38	21.3
Very satisfied	20	11.2
Total	178	100

Source: Author's field work, 2016

The next section highlights discussion and findings.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Adequate and affordable housing represents one of the most basic needs of every individual and has a profound impact on well-being and social attitudes (Anofojie *et al.*, 2014). There is a scarcity of global data on housing quality, but it is estimated that over a billion of the world's city dwellers reside in housing of insufficient quality, mostly in slums (UN-Habitat, 2006a). Nigeria is no exception as 69% of urban dwellers live in slums (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2012a). Housing represents a bundle of goods and services that facilitate and enhance good living. The Nigerian government, through the implementation

of various policies, embarked on housing programmes and the provision of suitable and adequate shelter for all citizens (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2012b). Unfortunately, as soon as these housing projects are put in place, evidence of a lack of maintenance of the infrastructure facility is seen everywhere in Nigeria (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2012a). This leads to the degeneration of the building, rapid aging and slum conditions, which result in low income housing degeneration in Lagos (Lagos State Government, 2008). The mere provision of housing does not lead to sustainable housing development if there is no effective maintenance, which is aggravated by the non-inclusion of relevant input from the occupiers of the residential development. To this end, the result of analysis towards addressing the aim of this article, which is to increase the level of residential satisfaction of the occupiers of public low income through neighbourhood revitalisation, is discussed below.

From the section of analysis reviewed in the tables above, it is possible to deduce that the socio-economic attributes of residents could influence the tenants' objective assessment of their housing quality, preferences, overall housing satisfaction, with potential implication for a revitalisation strategy. This

agrees with Statistics New Zealand, 2013 (cited in Opoko & Oluwatayo, 2014), which confirm that residents' assessment of their housing conditions is influenced by their socio-economic status, which includes age, tenure and household size. Similarly, Jaafar *et al.* (2006) found in their study in Penang Island, Malaysia, that length of residency is significant in the evaluation of residential satisfaction. The group mean value of the housing conditions generated from calculations in Table 2 on page 656 is 2.40. The housing condition variable falls below the group mean values that indicate dissatisfaction which include roofing, ventilation, walls, bathroom, painting, water supply and flooring. This result agrees with Zainal *et al.* (2012) who postulate that housing condition is a reflection of the nature and codes of regulations in existence at the local level in relation to the physical conditions of dwelling, housing environment and availability of amenities.

Neighborhood conditions are recognised as an important dimension that is taken into account while evaluating residential satisfaction (Alnsour & Hyasat, 2016). The study result in Table 3 on page 657 reveals that the lowest mean score of 1.99 was for waste disposal while social relations constitute the highest score of 3.52. This is in consonance with the result of the analysis of the questionnaire survey, where a simple majority of 56.2% of respondents claimed they are satisfied with the social relations of their neighbours. Out of the 12 variables identified for analysis, only two were above 2.75 group mean. These are safety and social relations. Eight variables that include road surface, parking space, waste disposal, drainage, sewage, accessibility to

services, cleanliness of the neighbourhood, landscape, recreational facilities and street lights are variables that the residents are dissatisfied with. The result agrees with findings that these neighbourhood characteristics are determinants of housing satisfaction (Tas *et al.*, cited in Opoko, 2014; Alnsour & Hyasat, 2016), while Blair and Larsen (2010) confirm that residents' satisfaction with their neighbours is an important determinant of property value that influences quality of life.

The effectiveness of housing estate management is observed to be an important element that contributes to the level of housing satisfaction in housing studies. An analysis of the residents' assessment of the management procedure of the estate indicates the lowest group mean score of 1.67, which is associated with the handling of complaints by residents. The highest score of 3.15 is accounted for by the rent or mortgage payment. The mean group score of 2.09 was generated from the analysis. While further analysis shows that the agency's official handling of complaints by the residents, the handling of necessary repairs and the enforcement of rules and regulations in the area of development control, as well as the official treatment of residents, were the elements of management procedure that fall below the mean group score. Hence, the assessment shows that the residents were satisfied with only the rent or mortgage being paid, as against other variables being assessed.

Although there is no consensus among authors regarding residents' level of satisfaction to public housing management procedure, Onibokun (in Ukoha & Beamish,

1997) confirm that there is a positive link between an increase in the relative satisfaction level of tenants in public housing with an effective government housing management procedure. Additionally, Anofojie *et al.* (2014) adduce factors responsible for the current deterioration of the public housing estate to a lack of maintenance and ineffective development control activities by the agencies charged with its management, resulting in blight conditions. This is equally supported by Jiboye's (2010) claim that negative management factors constitute a major source of dissatisfaction for residents of public housing in Nigeria.

In order to achieve the objective of this study regarding the relevance of the residential satisfaction index as input towards improving future residential development, it is important to ascertain the extent to which the performance of the public low income housing has affected the quality of life of the residents. In this regard, Kowaltoski (2006) opines that quality of life relating to housing characteristics is concerned with feelings of security, physical safety, street lighting and functional open space, among others. Furthermore, evidence from literature presupposes that the concept of residential satisfaction can be used as a key predictor of the individual's perception of quality of life (Campbell, 1976, cited in Djebarni & Al-Abed, 2000; Andrews & Whitney, 1976, cited in Ogu, 2002).

When the residents were asked about the overall assessment of their satisfaction with the housing condition and neighborhood quality, the result of the analysis reveals that 32.5% were satisfied with the overall house and housing environment,

while a relatively higher value of 55.6% were dissatisfied with the overall level of residential satisfaction. The result agrees with the findings of Anofojie *et al.* (2014) that the extent of degeneration of public low income housing estates into slums in Lagos, Nigeria, calls for an urban renewal exercise towards improving the quality of houses, infrastructural facilities, the general housing environment and the quality of life of the residents in the respective housing estates.

The next section makes a case for urban renewal, specifically neighbourhood revitalisation, towards improving the housing quality and environmental degeneration in the study area.

SHORT INSIGHT INTO NEIGHBOURHOOD REVITALISATION OF PUBLIC HOUSING QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Urban renewal has become a key concept among professionals in the built environment in developing countries including Nigeria. The need for a revitalisation process of the estate derives from the rapid population growth and ill-preparation of cities for the consequences of rapid urbanisation in Nigeria. This challenge has resulted in the decline, over time, of certain geographic urban spaces, including public low income housing estates, and the tendency for prices to rise should there be an urban renewal scheme that results in housing quality improvement derived as a result of slum clearance and complete redevelopment. This is corroborated by Vidgor (2010) who remarks that urban renewal does harm some existing

residents if it leads to price increases that exceed the resident's willingness to pay in a situation where a slum clearance and complete redevelopment process is utilised to improve the housing quality. Thus, in a broad sense, Osuide, (in Dimuna & Omatsome, 2010) and Njoku and Okoro (2014) describe urban renewal as a planned attempt to transform the urban environment through the large-scale control of existing urban areas so as to enhance both the present and future operations of the urban populace. It is worth noting that the essence of urban renewal is to retard urban obsolescence, prevent decay, clear areas that are bad and upgrade building facilities and environments in other areas that still have some useful life.

There are so many renewal approaches that do not only share a similar meaning in urban planning, but are synonymous and only influenced in terms of scale and city types. To this end, Longa (2011) and Franz (2015) confirm that current projects of urban transformation are often described by such terms as renewal, redevelopment, regeneration and revitalisation, among others. Since the essence of urban renewal, according to Cowmen (in Temelova, 2009), is to prevent further degeneration and to improve living conditions with minimum social and economic cost to the low income groups in residential neighbourhoods, it will not be out of place to consider the suitability of neighbourhood revitalisation as a tool for the renewal of the Anikantamo public low income housing estate. This is, moreover, when the experience of urban renewal over the years has been associated with a negative tendency that includes displacement without adequate compensation.

Towards achieving a sustainable urban development through the revitalisation approach, the declaration of a need to embrace a renewal strategy with a more human face is more germane to this study (Dimuna & Omatsone, 2010). Moreover, available evidence suggests that 'the low income households who are displaced during such redevelopment exercises could not return at the completion of the scheme'. Thus, a revitalisation process reinforced by a partnership arrangement is preferred to slum clearance and is recommended for the renewal of the estate. The reason for this is that it has the potential to renew existing 'aged' public low income housing with minimum social disruption through citizen participation and the involvement of stakeholders (Lagos State Government, 2008; Mansuri & Rao, 2013). The framework for the strategy is highlighted in the next section.

THE FRAMEWORK FOR A COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION APPROACH IN NEIGHBOURHOOD REVITALISATION

Hamdi (1995) describes community participation as 'the process by which professionals, families, community groups, government officials and others get together to work something out, preferably in a formal or informal partnership'. It is increasingly being recognised that the top-down approach to planning, which assumes that communities do not know their infrastructural needs, has been the reason for the failure of many urban renewal initiatives. The community participation approach believes that communities know their needs and should be consulted and carried along

in the decision-making process. Hence, the study used a neighbourhood concept from a purely ecological perspective of the understanding of it as a place with physical and symbolic boundaries. The conceptual framework being proposed is the Neighbourhood Integrated Plan (NIP).

The NIP entails concentration on the neighbourhood integrated intervention that harnesses the resources, projects and programmes of the government. The three main components of this model include; a physical component, with focus on fixing of mixed facilities and the upgrading of decayed facilities; the social component is based on the need for the community to participate in the community development projects that are in different stages of completion by gradual and aided self-help strategies and; the institutional component that coordinates the implementation of the social programme. The framework underlying this revitalisation strategy is informed by the realisation that the strategy is a complex, multi-faceted one that hinges on the community's assets and strengths with focus on the capacities of the community's residents, workforce, institutions, built environment and historic resources. The strategies identified in this intervention model seem to show faster, better and more visible results in the neighbourhood than spot clearance and can be replicated elsewhere.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This article observes that the poor housing and neighbourhood quality in public low income housing estates in Lagos derive from the problem of rapid urbanisation,

and the long neglect of public low income housing estates built to address the housing problem, the consequences of which have been a low level of residential satisfaction and poor quality of life, although efforts are on-going to have a spot clearance redevelopment of the estate under study. To this end, the article suggests that effective neighbourhood revitalisation should place emphasis on the upgrading of public low income housing estates rather than spot clearance and redevelopment. Government should encourage a participation approach to neighbourhood revitalisation by fully recognising and empowering the Community Development Association as the fourth tier of government. As a matter of policy, there should be a legislative framework that makes a comprehensive upgrading of the entire public low income housing estates in Lagos State mandatory every five years. This is in addition to the yearly maintenance activities.

Government's annual budget should include provision for the upgrading of public low income housing estates. In the present situation, it is recommended that the neighbourhood revitalisation process of the estates, spanning a period of 48 months, should involve the government, non-governmental organisations, community development associations and philanthropists with specific roles assigned to these partners. There should be a functional unit at each of the local government council areas charged with the proper coordination of the agencies concerned with specific duties towards the successful implementation of a revitalisation scheme and the unit should be headed by a qualified and experienced urban planner.

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GOVERNMENT SUBVENTION TO ESKOM: POLICY OR DISCRETION?

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ABSTRACT

In 2015, the South African Parliament voted for a support package worth more than R83 billion (approximately \$6,77 billion) to the electricity utility, Eskom, a State Owned Enterprise (SOE). Was this based on a general policy or on executive discretion? This article considers this question. It does this by discussing the literature dealing with the policy versus the discretion issue, within the context of its definition of *policy*. The methodological approach for this is content analysis. It analyses official documents and parliamentary proceedings, including National Treasury resources and other relevant official sources of information within the government system. The intention is to look for evidence, in the records of parliamentary proceedings, that government actually based the subvention decisions on pre-existing general policy. Its finding is that the decision on the subvention to Eskom was not based on general policy, but mainly on executive discretion.

Keywords: Policy, discretion, bailout, Eskom, National Treasury, State Owned Enterprises, budget.

INTRODUCTION

Eskom plays a crucial role in techno politics and the so-called minerals-energy complex in South Africa (Jaglin & Dubresson, 2016:47). It got adverse reference in the Public Protector's *State of Capture Report* of 14 October 2016 (Public Protector of South Africa, 2016), which was released following a court order on 2 November 2016. This is because attempts had been made to block the report's release by some who were implicated in its findings/ observations. The *Report* highlighted various challenges related to Eskom, including the phenomenon of neopatrimonialism which, according to Jaglin and Dubresson, involves the 'interpenetration and entanglement between public and private interest' (Jaglin & Dubresson, 2016:4).

The electricity outages and the financial meltdown, in October 2008, resulted in much speculation and accusations concerning the affairs of Eskom and its use of public funds. Against this background, this article asks the question: what policy, if any, grounded the decision by government to render additional financial assistance to Eskom during the 2016 financial year? In

other words, was the subvention decision based on policy or National Treasury discretion? The context for this is the following pronouncement by the Presidential Review Committee (PRC) on SOEs: 'Funding and financial resourcing of SOEs is not informed by a common point of departure (the process is currently performed at the discretion of the National Treasury)' (Presidential Review Committee on State Owned Enterprises, 2012:200). The Committee was not in favour of this state of affairs. Cabinet approved the Committee's Report in 2013. However, for all intents and purposes, the Report was shelved after completion. It did not feature in the Parliamentary debates on the Bills through which Eskom was subvented in 2015. The question arises as to whether the PRC's work was not just an exercise in intelligence gathering.

It is indicated in the National Budget Review that government's stance is that the SOEs should largely borrow on the strength of their balance sheet (National Treasury, 2010:95). This is important in order to reduce government exposure to debt and to prevent wasteful investment. The PRC reiterated this in its Report regarding SOEs. The SOEs are supposed to be financially independent and should finance themselves through their own revenue and borrowing. Accordingly, Schedule 2 of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) 1 of 1999, as amended by Act 29 of 1999, classifies Eskom as a major public entity. Eskom is, therefore, expected to operate as a fully functioning business, which finances its operations against its balance sheet.

Because of the large amounts involved, as well as the apparent deviation from the

original intention, the public was entitled to be given a proper explanation about the basis on which funding (subventions) have been made to the SOEs, as well as the rationale offered by the South African government at the time. It would be reassuring for the taxpayer, users of services, the business sector, as well as foreign investors and credit rating agencies, to know that such decisions were made on a rational policy basis that will prove to be sustainable in the future. As indicated above, this article seeks to determine whether the 2015 subventions were based on policy or discretion. If they were based on discretion, whose discretion was it, and was this problematic and potentially detrimental to the political economy of the country?

The current model of decision-making is problematic as it is considered to be lacking transparency. This lack of transparency was one of the main points of criticism voiced by at least four opposition parties during the debates on the two Bills under discussion in the National Assembly. In responding to this issue, the article analyses official documents and parliamentary proceedings. The National Treasury resources and other relevant official documents were used to collect information for the purpose of this research. It looked for evidence in the records of parliamentary proceedings that government actually based the subvention decisions on pre-existing general policy. A negative finding, in this regard, would mean that discretion, rather than policy, was the driver.

This article focuses on the public finance context of Eskom. The article starts by outlining recent financing up to the year 2016. This is followed by the attempt to explain the subvention of Eskom, in 2015, which

was affected by two pieces of legislation. Thereafter, the focus shifts to the discussion on the debate regarding policy versus discretion – from the early writing of Simons, in 1936, up to the later writing of Kydland and Prescott and other economists. In this, a general conceptual treatment of policy versus discretion is proposed. An analysis of parliamentary proceedings in connection with the two relevant pieces of legislation to determine whether policy or discretion was applied is made. Towards the end, the comments on the position of National Treasury in the South African public household in the light of histories are recounted.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE RECENT FUNDING OF ESKOM

When South Africa experienced major load shedding and electricity supply challenges in 2007/2008, government stepped in with a R60 billion loan to support the financing of Eskom's investment programme and to assist in meeting the cash flow requirements of Eskom's capital expansion programme (Sadiki, 2015:62). When this R60 billion loan from government proved to be far from sufficient, both government and Eskom were forced to look into diverse financial solutions. According to Sadiki (2015:73), the South African government made an additional financial intervention by providing guarantees. Accordingly, in February 2009, government approved guarantees valued at R176 billion to support Eskom with the construction of new power plants. In October 2010, this guarantee was increased by a further R174 billion to a total of R350 billion. They do have an impact on government's creditworthiness, which is reflected in the rates at which the country borrows money

(Sadiki, 2015:74) and, thus, indirectly on the fiscus. However, with guarantees, the impact largely depends on future events. Should Eskom honour the terms and conditions of the loans and guarantees it received from government and development finance institutions (DFIs), like the World Bank, there would be no negative impact on the fiscus (Sadiki, 2015:24).

As a result of the guarantees that government provided on Eskom's behalf, its balance sheet was strengthened, which subsequently opened up possibilities for accessing different sources of funding, both domestically and internationally, in order to sustain the generation capacity build programme. Nevertheless, to minimise the impact of loans and guarantees on the fiscus, it remains government's position (as pointed out before) that SOEs should largely borrow on the strength of their balance sheets, so as to reduce government's gross contingent liabilities in connection with the enterprises and to discourage wasteful investment.

Between 2008 and 2013, Eskom received major financial assistance. To raise the money it needed, Eskom had to tap into various sources of funding to fund its building programme for new coal-fired power stations. These funding sources are categorised as debt, equity, the capital market and tariffs (Sadiki, 2015:61).

Since 2008, Eskom has, thus, been tapping into a variety of funding sources for its capital expenditure projects. The discussion below covers the sources of funding, the amounts received by Eskom and the purported reasons for receiving such funds between 2008 and 2015.

Government Loan

In terms of the Eskom Subordinated Loan Special Appropriation Act (2008/09-2010/11 Financial Years) No. 41 of 2008, Parliament agreed to inject a R60 billion loan into Eskom over three financial years. The loan was to be paid back over 30 years with interest. The Act contains the following interesting provisions in the light of the subject of our article: a) the appropriation was subject to a loan agreement entered into between the Minister of Finance and Eskom (s1(2)); b) the loan had to take into account the medium-term impact of Eskom's capital investment plan on its balance sheet (s3(b)(ii)); c) the loan was subordinate to other loans of Eskom (s3(a)), meaning that other loans had to be paid back first in case of borrower default; and (d) the reporting obligations were to be determined by National Treasury and not Parliament (s3(c)).

Although it is Parliament which decided on the bail out of Eskom with this considerable amount of funds, on behalf of the people of South Africa, the executive in the person of the Minister of Finance was given wide latitude to determine the conditions of the loan. The only condition stipulated in subsection 3(b) of the Act, itself, was actually in favour of the borrower, as the loan was structured in such a way that Eskom was not obliged to pay back the money unless certain conditions were met on their side. For example, if they could not afford the repayments, the repayments were postponed indefinitely. Eskom has never paid a cent, probably as a result of the formulation of the conditions in the said provision, the exact contents of which were kept secret, even from Parliament (personal communication with a Member of

Parliament, 2017) – a sign of the hegemonic position of National Treasury. The conditions are disclosed as follows in the Eskom Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2012: 'Eskom is obliged to pay interest on the loan when Eskom is solvent and the debt leverage conditions per the agreement are satisfied. The interest on the subordinated loan is not cumulative' (Eskom, 2012:76). Again, the detailed terms of the loan have never been disclosed.

It is clear that there is a pernicious combination of indiscretion and a lack of transparency. Was it ever intended to be paid back? This should be considered a moot question since it was converted into a gift in 2015. In the National Assembly on 3 June 2015, in his speech introducing the Bill that forgave the loan, the Minister of Finance made an interesting remark, that it would reduce Eskom's debt by R24,4 billion, whilst simultaneously increasing the equity by the same amount (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2015a:104). The amount of R24,4 billion appears surreal. This is because the original amount was R60 billion, no interest was paid, and neither was any capital serviced. It, therefore, comes down to the way in which the subordinated loan was recorded in Eskom's financial statements.

National Treasury's justification for the Bill presented to the Portfolio Committee on Finance on 23 October 2008 contains the following words, which are significant in view of the question posed by this article: 'The bill would facilitate the transfer of funds to Eskom to give effect to statements made by the Minister of Finance during the tabling of the annual budget in February' (SabinetLaw, 2008:1) – in other words: to give effect to

a pronouncement, not a policy. In terms of the Eskom Subordinated Loan Special Appropriation Act (2008/09-2010/11 Financial Years), the funding for Eskom was provided in the following manner: R10 billion in 2008/09, R30 billion in 2009/10 and R20 billion in 2010/11. This is a further special feature of the Act which, thus, provided for a multi-year appropriation.

Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) and Others

Eskom also received funding from DFIs, namely, the World Bank, the European Investment Bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB), and Agence Française de Développement (AFD). In April 2009, the World Bank granted a US\$3,75 billion (approximately R28 billion) project loan to Eskom for the construction of the Medupi power station in Lephalale, Limpopo (Sadiki, 2015:63). In 2016, Eskom secured R20 billion in the form of a loan from AfDB, payable over 20 years with a grace period of two years (RSA, 2016:1). On 25 November 2009, the South African government welcomed the approval of a EUR1,86 billion (approximately R20,7 billion) loan from the AfDB, also for Eskom's construction of Medupi (Sadiki, 2015:63).

In November 2010, the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) became the first domestic DFI to approve a R15 billion loan facility to support Eskom's capacity expansion programme. The loan was intended to support the Medupi and Kusile coal-fired power stations, as well as the Ingula pump storage scheme and associated transmission (Sadiki, 2015:64). In August 2011, Eskom received a massive boost by

signing a EUR100 million (approximately R980 840 000) credit facility agreement from AFD. The loan facility of 20 years is for financing Eskom's 100 megawatt wind project in the Western Cape. This facility critically funded the two renewable energy projects, namely, wind and concentrated solar power. This was taken as a good sign that South Africa was making a commitment to reduce its carbon footprint and making the transition to a cleaner energy mix (Sadiki, 2015:66).

Eskom also received funding from three export credit agencies (ECAs). In September 2008, Eskom secured a EUR250 million (approximately R2,8 billion) loan from Germany's KfWIPLEX to fund part of its capital expenditure activities (Sadiki, 2015:66). The facility loan was intended to finance the six boilers that the Hitachi Power Consortium would supply for the construction of the Medupi coal-fired power station. The second ECA is Compagnie Française d'Assurance pour le Commerce Extérieur (Coface) which, on 28 December 2009, signed a loan agreement of R13 billion with Eskom. This loan is repayable over 12 years after the commissioning of the relevant units of the Medupi and Kusile power stations (Sadiki, 2015). The third ECA to fund Eskom is Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC). In July 2008, JBIC signed a substantial loan with Eskom for its Medupi project (Sadiki, 2015:66).

THE BAIL OUT OF 2015

In 2015, two important events took place in relation to government financial support for Eskom. Two Acts were approved by Parliament: one to provide for the allocation

of a R23 billion cash injection and the second to forgive the R60 billion loan provided to Eskom in 2008, as discussed earlier.

23 Billion Cash Injection (Eskom Special Appropriation Act No. 7 of 2015)

During his medium-term budget policy statement in 2014, the Minister of Finance referred to a possibility of at least¹ R20 billion in funding being raised through the sale of non-strategic assets to support Eskom (RSA, 2014:8). A R20 billion equity injection had been under discussion by National Treasury and Parliament since 2008. Finally, an amount of R23 billion was appropriated to Eskom via the Department of Public Enterprises in July 2015, an amount that was, thus, higher than that initially mentioned in October 2014 (RSA, 2015a:1). The President swiftly, if not hastily, assented to the Act on 3 July 2015.

The Eskom Special Appropriation Act provides for the R23 billion allocation to Eskom. In terms of section 1(1) of the Act, the source of the R23 billion was through the sale of non-strategic assets held by Government (RSA, 2015b). This was to ensure that there would be no impact on the budget deficit. The non-strategic assets were subsequently named as the 13,91% stake held by the state in Vodacom, a major African mobile communications company. The stake was sold to the Public Investment Corporation

(PIC), which was acting on behalf of the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF) (RSA, 2015d:1). The PIC's offer of R23 billion was in line with the pricing quoted by other institutions which were not disclosed (RSA, 2015d:1). The main reason for selling the 13.91% stake to PIC was not necessarily informed by pricing, but rather by keeping the shares within the broader family of public sector related institutions (RSA, 2015d:1)

R60 Billion Loan Converted to Equity (Eskom Subordinated Loan Special Appropriation Amendment Act [2008/09–2010/11 Financial Years] No. 6 of 2015)

In July 2015, the state made a dramatic volte-face by enacting the Eskom Subordinated Loan Special Appropriation Amendment Act (2008/09–2010/11 Financial Years) that gave effect to the conversion of the R60 billion-subordinated loan, previously provided to Eskom in 2008, into equity (RSA, 2015c:1). According to RSA (2015d:2), the measures taken by Parliament to convert the loan into equity would further strengthen Eskom's balance sheet. By this time, Eskom had already discounted the fact that at least some of the interest on the loan would never be paid.²

The discussion, above, covers both the way Eskom received its financial assistance and the passing of the crucial 2015 Acts by Parliament. In order to answer the question

¹"At least" can mean anything more than R20 billion. Although the figure indicated by the Minister was R20 billion, a cabinet memorandum that served before his pronouncement contained the real intended amount of R23 billion.

²The source we are referring to here is a media release issued on behalf of National Treasury on 1 July 2015. This was before the Act was assented to. It refers to the amount as 'the R23 billion allocation to Eskom'.

as to whether the 2015 subvention was a question of policy or discretion – or maybe a combination of the two – it will be of research benefit to discuss the theoretical background of policy versus discretion in relation to Eskom, as well as the powers and roles of National Treasury.

POLICY VERSUS DISCRETION

Almost all of the literature in the area of policy versus discretion is written from a monetary and fiscal policy point of view. The policy versus discretion literature, thus, comprises a monetary policy and fiscal economics discourse.

The Debate in the Literature on Policy Versus Discretion

The debate on policy versus discretion dates back to at least Henry Simons' writing in 1936. In his classical view on monetary policy, he advocates for the establishment of rules in contrast to authorities exercising discretion (Simons, 1936:1). According to Simons, in line with a classical view on monetary policy, the liberal ideology advocates for the organisation of economic life mostly through individual participation in a space with definite rules. It places upon the state the responsibility to provide a stable framework of rules within which enterprises and competition may effectively control and direct the production and distribution of goods.

According to Kydland and Prescott (1977: 474), relying on a policy of discretion – that is, allowing policy-makers wide discretion to take optimal decisions – will not result in the social objectives function being maximised.

Instead, time-consistent policy rules should be relied on to improve economic performance and maximise social objectives (Kydland & Prescott, 1977:474). As Buol and Vaughan (2003) explain the work of Kydland and Prescott, 'rules are supposed to constrain policy-makers' actions in advance'. This idea is important for this article, since it indirectly deals with the question of whether the South African National Treasury is a law unto itself, or not.

On writing more recently, Plosser reiterates the argument presented by Henry Simons in 1936 and again by Kydland and Prescott in 1977, by opposing discretion and being in favour of policy-makers being guided by policy rules when making decisions. According to Plosser (2016:252), discretion means that a policy-maker may find it preferable to change his or her mind and do something other than what was promised. Plosser advocates for governance which pre-commits policy-makers to behaving in a certain manner which involves defined rules. As a result, this way of governing is preferred over a government inclination that allows policy-makers pure discretion to make decisions independently at any point in time (Plosser, 2016:251).

The rules approach has received criticism from some monetary policy-makers who argue that a policy-maker can choose the same action under discretion as he/she could under pre-commitment rules (Plosser, 2016:252). In addition, they argue that discretion cannot be worse than rules (Plosser, 2016:252). The pro-discretion argument goes on to advocate for optionality in order to allow decisions to respond appropriately to current events. However, Plosser rejects

the above argument, by pro-discretion policy-makers, as flawed and agrees with arguments presented earlier by Kydland and Prescott and others who advocate for rules rather than discretion (Plosser, 2016:252). The flaw that Plosser refers to is the failure of those who advocate discretion to recognise the important role played by expectations of future policy in the economic decisions made today (Plosser, 2016:252).

The central point of this article is premised on policy versus treasury discretion with a specific reference to the case of subvention of Eskom during 2015. Some economists, who are involved in monetary policy, hold the view that rules and regulations can reduce policy mistakes, improve transparency and bring an end to political influence in policy-making (Van Lear, 2000:29). As for transparency, in a sitting of the National Assembly in June 2015, some opposition parties raised concerns on how the processes entailed in passing bills in Parliament were being handled. The Democratic Alliance (DA) raised issues related to transparency and the secrecy surrounding the sale of non-strategic assets. It stated that the public should know which processes were followed in identifying the non-strategic assets from which the R23 billion was to be raised. Another opposition party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), rejected both bills presented to Parliament on the basis of a lack of transparency and appropriate consultation (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2015b). Mzingisi Dlamini, of the EFF, expressed this concern: 'Eskom has failed to show Parliament any efforts in place to reduce wasteful expenditure'. His view was probably based on the suspicion that Eskom was providing information to the Executive that should also have been provided to the Legislature.

It is important to understand that discretion allows for freedom to act in accordance with one's own judgement, whereas a rule or policy involves the exercise of control over discretion in a way that puts restrictions or limitations on the objectives it pursues (Dwyer, 1993:4). Both policy and discretion, in their extreme form, come with their positives and negatives. The positives of policy are that it ensures fairness and predictability, while the negative entails the creation of rigidities (Mujumdar & Marcus, 2001:176). Mujumdar and Marcus hold the view that policy-makers can exercise choice within a situation of constraints and these can likely make the end results better.

The advantage of a balance between policy and discretion is that it encourages creativity and allows policy-makers to deal with different circumstances in implementing policy (Mujumdar & Marcus, 2001:176). They are of the opinion that too much law/policy is as problematic as too much discretion. Therefore, an appropriate balance between rules or policy and discretion is needed. The ultimate goal should be to create laws and rules that allow policy-makers to exercise discretion effectively within a system of constraints. There is consensus among some economists that discretionary monetary policy may lead to economic instability. This implies that rules that commit the monetary authority to non-discretionary policy contribute to a stable economy (Van Lear, 2000:30).

A Conceptual Treatment of Policy Versus Discretion

In the existing literature on public affairs, the definitions of *policy* abound. For the purpose of this article, public policy is considered

as a decision and assessment rule (or set of rules) to arrange all possible official action in a specific domain on a scale between obligatory (it must be done) and forbidden (it must not be done). The desirability of any conceivable action, then, is measured by policy. Conversely, if known potential actions in a domain cannot be evaluated, a policy vacuum exists.

Treatment of Public Policy Encompasses the Following

Policy can be applied before or after an action has been taken. Application before the fact is part of planning and selecting the best option or options (e.g. a Minister of Finance can set out fiscal policy in a medium-term budget policy statement which acts as a plan for the next few years). Application after the fact entails the assessment of actions that have been taken.

Assessment of an official action after the fact may also include the question of whether existing policies have been applied correctly, as well as whether the correct policies have been applied. Policy is general in that it takes the form of a rule that is applicable to a number of possibilities. A prescript that only covers a single, or even a few actions, can hardly be referred to as a policy (e.g. if a Minister of Finance were to announce a specific allocation to, say, Eskom in a medium-term budget policy statement, it would not count as policy).

The Official Nature of Public Policy has the Following Implications

Policy may be specific to an office, for example, the way in which a headmaster should manage a school or how a treasury should advise a legislature on allocations.

A policy is always part of a government system and, as such, forms part of a hierarchy. Therefore, there is a hierarchy of policies in a specific government system. This means that a specified action may be subject to various levels of policy. Thus, there may also be policies for generating policies and procedures: hence the expression "policy of discretion", as quoted above. A hierarchical policy system implies that there should be consistency between policies.

A Hierarchy of Policies May Imply Levels of Abstraction

A government organogram implies distinction between various fields as well as levels, thus policy may be specific to a function as well as a level. Every field will have its own terminology which enables translation between policies while maintaining logical consistency. So there could be a policy on the subvention of SOEs operating side by side with an energy policy, perhaps within the bounds of fiscal and economic policy. It is not possible for a policy to classify potential actions in a binary (all or nothing) manner, since that would preclude differentiating between actions that are desirable, but to different degrees. Two options may both be desirable in terms of a policy, but have different resource requirements. It may also be that choices are influenced by geography, cost and timing, which enables officials to rank possible actions.

In terms of the definition of policy just provided, discretion can be defined as the extent of the power of an official to select an option from among the possibilities of equal or similar desirability. The more discretion an official has, the greater his/her power to select possibilities and to influence the

course of government action. Below is an investigation of the parliamentary discussion on the two Acts of 2015 to look for evidence of policy adherence in the light of the conceptual analysis just given.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS

This part of the article looks at the discussion that took place in Parliament, the central point of the discussion being the two Bills to support Eskom financially or to put it in stronger terms – to bail them out. This part of the article also highlights the role of the National Treasury in the country's financial activities.

The first characteristic of the parliamentary process under discussion here was the speed with which the two Bills – which were dealt with as a unit – became law. The Minister of Finance introduced the Bills on 3 June 2015 and they were signed by the President on 3 July 2015. On 24 June 2015, the African National Congress (ANC) proposed that a rule of the National Assembly be suspended to speed up the legislative process, in response to which the Chief Whip of the opposition referred to "this ordinance [sic! Should read 'inordinate'] haste that these Bills have been ramrodded through Parliament" (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2015b:32). The explanation given for this, by the EFF in the debate, was that at the time the Deputy President (Cyril Ramaphosa) was involved in the Shanduka Group and was trying to reach a deal with Glencore to supply coal to Eskom. This gave rise to a considerable row in the National Assembly.

If the decision to subvent Eskom, to the degree that it happened, was based on policy, that

policy would have become apparent in the parliamentary processes that led up to the passing of the two Bills. The passing of the Bills into Acts of Parliament was preceded by various committee meetings and a thorough deliberation process. The Standing Committee on Appropriations met four times during June. The National Council of Provinces' (NCOP) Appropriation Committee also met on 23 June. These committees received submissions from various bodies, including National Treasury, the Department of Public Enterprises, the Parliamentary Budget Office and the Financial and Fiscal Commission, as well as from Eskom itself. The Bills were also discussed in the National Assembly on 3 June and 24 June. The most important pronouncements in Parliament on the subvention came earlier, namely, in the Medium Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) of the Minister of Finance during October 2014 and again during his 2015 budget speech. One of the interesting facts that came to light from the minutes of these Parliamentary committee meetings was that, according to the Department of Public Enterprises, Cabinet had already decided to give Eskom the exact amount of R23 billion before the sale of the stake in Vodacom.

The total subvention was the considerable nominal amount of R83 billion (this amount actually translates into far more, if various opportunity costs are taken into account). Nowhere in the discussions did the Government and the ruling party make a case for why this subvention should be exactly this amount. Even a deviation of half a percent of the amount should be considered a lot of money.

On 3 June, the Minister of Finance introduced the Bills in the National Assembly. In his presentation, he set out the contents of the

legislation and provided details on its context and history. No mention was made of any White Paper (in fact the only reference in parliamentary debates to White Papers was made by the EFF in the first reading debate in the National Assembly). The justification for the legislation appears to be obvious to the Minister and the main argument seems to be that government had decided to launch it. Later, in the first reading debate on the Bills, the Minister took the same line, saying that if the government had decided on something that was a justification for it (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2015b:87-88). However, the policy constraint that government set itself was that the funding allocation should not have an impact on the budget deficit. The Minister added: 'This principle applies to all allocations to fund SOEs' (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2015a:102-103).

The Minister also confirmed that, in connection with the conversion of the subordinated loan to an allocation, 'to date Eskom has not been required to make payments for interest or guarantee fees' (ibid:104). He followed up that sentence with a glaring non sequitur: 'The conversion, therefore, to equity of the subordinated loan was one of the interventions that Cabinet approved as part of the September 2014 support package to Eskom (ibid.) – how therefore?' The fact that Eskom had not paid anything was an argument against the conversion, not for it.

On 23 June, the day after they were dealt with by the Standing Committee on Appropriations, the Bills were discussed in a first reading

debate in the National Assembly. The debate was introduced by Mr P S Mashatile from the ANC with a well-prepared speech. He emphasised the crucial role of Eskom in the economy against the background of the current situation at Eskom and the urgency of the need to assist the SOE. The principles he was following were so general that they would not qualify as a policy, in the sense that it is used as a concept in this article. The decision to subvent Eskom was to be based on the requirements of the situation at the time. In the language of the monetary policy debate referred to earlier, this kind of approach needs to be considered as optimisation and not rules.

Political parties did not all reckon sufficiently with the amounts involved. One member stated: 'We have no choice in the matter, but to approve the Bill. It is either that we provide the R23 billion or Eskom will spiral further downwards into a greater liquidity crisis and ultimate bankruptcy' (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2015b:58). Within the context of these deliberations, Eskom is being considered too big and strategic to fail as a public entity (Parliamentary Budget Office, 2017:43). The problem is that the amount of R23 billion was not calculated on the basis of bankruptcy prevention, but on the basis of the availability of "nonstrategic" assets. That is besides the fact that it is a very large sum of money, which is illustrated by the fact that 1% of the sum is R230 million³.

The only references to the general guidelines at the various committee meetings, that preceded the debate, were that the

³See the comments on the related R60 billion loan by Mr A.R. Mcloughlin on p.77 of the quoted Hansard (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa 2015b).

amounts did not affect the budget deficit, which is incorrect as it did not take the opportunity costs, running into billions of rand, into account.⁴ The findings of the PRC on SOEs also received little or no attention. The powers that be were quite happy that the signalling of the subvention in the MTBPS and the budget speech was sufficient to justify the expenditure. Looking at the Estimates of National Expenditure, it is clear that departments have to justify the spending of amounts that are a small fraction of the money that Eskom received. In other words, the allocations to government departments are drawn in comparatively pencil-thin lines, whilst the allocation to the SOE was painted with a very broad brush. It is noticeable, proceeding with this line of thought, that the report on the financial position of Eskom by the Parliamentary Budget Office contains no detail on the administrative and other non-productive spending by Eskom (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2017).

The haste with which these Bills were driven through Parliament is also suspicious in the light of evidence from the report of the Public Protector on State Capture, published in November 2016. If National Treasury is to continue with the same model of decision-making based on discretion, it must at least adhere to and respect the available directives. For example, SOEs must be funded based on the strength of their balance sheet. Since directives are not respected and adhered to, a worked out policy on the funding of SOEs could be essential and is recommended.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

The topic of this article is important owing to the hegemonic position occupied by the South African National Treasury in the country. This position is made up of hard power situated in legislation as well as soft power (see Nye, 2011). It draws its strength from the dominance of the ideology of capitalism in the South African political household (see Pauw, 2011). Whether hard or soft, discretion is power. If one has discretion they would be more likely to enforce their personal will. The ability to exercise discretion may be the real attraction of power.

This article considers and accepts that the traditional treasury functions of controlling and managing public funds are essential and that National Treasury should have the powers to exercise these functions. This is ordained through Section 216 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*. However, National Treasury also has a *de facto* allocation role as, among other things, is signalled by the findings reported in this article, which could be regarded as excessive in the light of the fact that Section 213 of the *Constitution of the Republic* gives that role to Parliament. However, these powers of Parliament are obscure, at least in the perception of officials, politicians and the public. In South Africa, there is no doubt in popular thinking that the National Treasury is the chief allocator of public money – that it controls the purse strings⁵. However, that should not be the case in a democracy where the

⁴A Member of Parliament asked: "It is significant that government will potentially forego R86 billion in possible future interest as a result of the loan conversion to equity. Have we, as parliamentarians, fully understood the consequences of that decision?" (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2015b.)

⁵This idea was prevalent in the reactions to the sacking of Mr Pravin Gordhan in April 2017.

power of the purse is given to the Legislature (Parliament) (Wehner, 2002, 2006, 2010; Pauw, 2011; Fenno, 1966; Fölscher, 2006).

Up to 2009, the constitutional allocation duty of Parliament, in terms of Section 213 of the *Constitution*, was impossible to carry out as a result of the exclusivity of initiative of the Minister of Finance to introduce and prepare money bills (such as the ones we considered) in the South African Parliament. This is provided by Section 73(2) of the *Constitution*. The so-called "Money Bills Act" to enable Parliament to amend money bills was only passed in 2009 (Pauw, 2011). In fact, on 27 February 2011, a civil society formation, called Section27, expressed its ongoing concern about the delays in the proper implementation of the Money Bills Act (Section27, 2011:1). Arising from all of these, the question remains whether Treasury, in the form of the Minister of Finance, or Parliament did actually allocate the money to Eskom. The evidence from parliamentary proceedings does not indicate that Treasury (or the Executive collectively) were held accountable for their decision, measured against some general policy on allocations to SOEs, or a policy on bail outs.

It is natural, in the South African political household, to think that National Treasury holds the purse strings when it comes to providing money to Eskom and that they must make optimal decisions in this regard. But, how much latitude should they have?

CONCLUSION

This article has set out to determine whether the 2015 decision to subvent Eskom was based on policy or discretion. From the

research upon which this article is based, it is clear that the decisions were based on policy only in the most minimal sense. The government does not have a policy on SOE bailouts. The only general policy was that SOEs should be financed based on the health of their own balance sheet. However, in the case of Eskom, the opposite was done. The Executive found it easy to convince the Legislature to bail out Eskom, based on the parlous state of electricity provision at the time, making an optimal decision instead of following a rule. The issue is that it is necessary to know what to expect with the next bailout of SOEs – which was the point of departure for this article.

Allocation, expenditure control and oversight over state departments are conducted by Parliament. Money is voted to departments per programme by the Legislature. The analysis of parliamentary proceedings suggests that expenditure control and oversight over Eskom is conducted primarily by the Executive. If Eskom were a government department, Parliament would not look at its funding in billions, but rather in millions – a vast scale difference. The fact that National Treasury could convince Parliament, without grounding its recommendations systemically in any general policy, is more evidence for the hegemonic position of National Treasury in the South African state.

The recommendation of the article is that there must be a balance between policy and discretion, because if policy is rigid and exists in the absence of discretion it may lead to failure. As for Eskom, if it was too big to fail, perhaps it could be made smaller as a way of enhancing its strategic significance in the economy.

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ADVANCING EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE FOR IMPROVED PUBLIC SECTOR PERFORMANCE: LESSONS FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT TOOL IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Enhancing public sector performance is on the agenda of most governments. In South Africa, as the analysis of the literature indicates, there is a dearth on studies that systematically assess the implementation of public sector performance improvement tools. This article is based on the study that explores the implementation of the Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) within the South African public sector for the period 2011-2016. It borrows from implementation science and assesses the critical components in the implementation process. It utilises a secondary data review, experiential knowledge from action research and semi-structured interviews. The critical implementation components are outlined and lessons from the implementation process are drawn to inform future practice.

Keywords: Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT), Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME),

Public Sector, South Africa, Gross Domestic Product, Evidence-based practice.

INTRODUCTION

Since the late twentieth century, most governments have been faced with a multiple stakeholder conviction that public sectors are too large and inefficient (Capling *et al.*, 1998). In addition, the efficient utilisation of public resources, high quality policies for economic growth and the well-being of citizens are always priority developmental issues for governments (Afonso *et al.*, 2009). Public sector productivity accounts for a significant proportion of total economic production in most countries; for example, it is estimated that in the late 1990s, public sector activities contributed 40% of the total economic production in developed countries (Jackson, 1999). The contribution still remains significant for developing countries in the 21st century¹. The public sector performance-economic development discourse has been given considerable

¹For example, the contribution of government spending to national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in South Africa stood at 20.3% in 2015 (IDC, 2016).

attention (Agell *et al.*, 1997) and public sector institutions are continuously under scrutiny from a wide range of stakeholders including politicians, civil society, activists, academics, and regional and international institutions. Public sector reforms are on the development agenda of most governments. Within the South African context, it is argued that the pre-apartheid South African public sector was out of touch with contemporary public sector reforms (Thornhill, 2008, in Cameron, 2009). The post-apartheid public reform agenda, like that of many countries, has been driven by the New Public Management (NPM) paradigm² (Miller, 2005; Levin, 2004) which, among others, underscores the significance of public sector performance.

This has been so, particularly, in the last few decades, where there has been increased attention to measuring public sector service delivery and performance (Cameron, 2009; Figlio & Kenny, 2009; Boyne *et al.*, 2006; Jackson, 1999). Such a move has been in line with the recognition that government efficiency – the ability to transform revenues into public goods and services – is a function of public sector efficiency (Angelopoulos *et al.*, 2008). However, public sector performance is multi-dimensional and costly; hence, stakeholders rarely get information on the performance and quality of public sector performance. Public services are multiple (they must do justice to different values) and are rendered in co-production (in cooperation with third parties) (de Bruijn, 2002). There is limited evidence on an agreed framework for the determinants of performance in public organisations (Boyne, 2006). Additionally,

there is no conclusive evidence on the benefits and demerits of introducing performance measurement systems in both the public and private sectors (Micheli & Mari, 2014). Empirical studies on the measurement of public sector organisational performance are limited (Afonso *et al.*, 2009; Boyne *et al.*, 2006). Such scarcity may be attributed to the focus of public administration scholars on organisational processes as opposed to outputs and outcomes.

There have been wide ranging debates on appropriate tools for performance assessment (see, for example, Micheli & Mari, 2014; Boyne, 2002; Ostrom, 1973). Debates have also focused on the best sources of performance data as well as the relative validity of such data (Kelly & Swindell, 2002). A number of studies have been conducted on assessing the application of performance measurement systems in the public sector (see, for example, Spekle & Verbeeten, 2014; Padovani *et al.*, 2010; Figlio & Kenny, 2009; de Lancer Julnes, 2006; Gianakis, 2002; Kloot & Martin, 2000). However, the implementation process of applying performance assessment tools is not well documented, yet such studies are critical in informing implementation practice. In addition, it is asserted that many efforts to implement performance management tools that are designed to improve the quality and outcomes of human services have not reached their full potential due to a variety of challenges inherent in the implementation process (Aarons *et al.*, 2011).

This study reviewed the implementation of the Management Performance Assessment

²Some of the key elements of NPM include decentralisation, rightsizing, corporatisation and Senior Management Systems.

Tool (MPAT) within the South African public sector. In 2009, the government established the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) to strengthen the use of monitoring and evaluation to improve performance. A key activity by DPME has been the implementation of the Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) for monitoring the state of management practices in national and provincial departments. In South Africa, there have been no studies that assess the systematic process of the rolling out and implementation of the MPAT process by DPME. The study upon which this article is based aims to fill this gap. It does not evaluate how MPAT was rolled out by various national and provincial departments³, but focuses on how the DPME implemented MPAT at the national level. Borrowing from the theoretical constructs of implementation science, the study addressed the following question: What are the critical components and lessons in the implementation process of MPAT? The study explored the MPAT implementation process by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) between the periods 2011 and 2016. It is envisaged that the knowledge gained from this study may be adapted to inform MPAT implementation in countries where public sector performance management strategies are being strengthened.

EXPLORING THE KEY GUIDING CONCEPTS FOR PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND MANAGEMENT

The notion of performance is utilised in assessing individual and collective efforts

and encapsulates the unitary purpose of organisations (Micheli & Mari, 2014). In the literature, the word 'performance' is applied in many contexts, since it carries different meanings (Wholey, 1999). Schiavo-Campo and McFerson (2008) define performance in terms of resource utilisation, immediate results, ultimate results and the process followed *thus*, deriving meaning from the context of application or usage (i.e. national, sectoral, department or unit). Sicotte *et al.* (1998) argues that performance focuses on the attainment of goals within defined production systems, cultural values, and environmental adaptation. Within the public sector, performance entails more attention to cost, movement towards alternative strategies of service delivery, reduces duplication and redundancy in activities, and emphasises transparency in operations (Ingraham, 2007). Other dimensions of performance include, *inter alia*, focus on inputs cost, staff time, workloads, legal authority, political/bureaucratic support, on net impact, client/customer satisfaction, service quality and activities or processes that translate inputs into outputs and outcomes (Wholey, 1999).

The concept of performance measurability⁴ lacks a common conceptual understanding and is highly contested (Micheli & Mari, 2014). There have been debates around the key properties of measuring (objectivity, accuracy and precision) between qualitative and quantitative measures with regard to validity. Review of literature shows that it has been linked to a number of variables, including efficiency (cost-effectiveness of

³These are given in periodic reports by DPME on the state of management practices in the public sector.

⁴In this study, measurement and assessment are used interchangeably.

the public sector in reaching a range of objectives of government intervention), return on investment and meeting set targets. Angelopoulos *et al.*, (2008) and Boyne (2002) highlight some indices utilised for measuring public sector efficiency. Such indices cover dimensions such as measures of output quantity, output quality, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, equity, probity, democracy and impact. Other variables are innovation, leadership, managerial quality and strategy implementation. Performance measurement within public sector institutions improves transparency, accountability, innovation, and rewards performance, prevents bureaucracy and improves quality of policy and decision-making (de Bruijn, 2002). There is recognition for the need for understanding linkages in planning, decision-making, action and results in measuring performance. Such a realisation brings the need for public sector institutions to integrate measurement within every stage of planning, decision-making and implementation of programmes and projects.

Smith and Mayston (1986) highlight the issue of comparability when assessing public sector performance. Public sector institutions are normally assessed relative to other agencies offering the same services, yet there are contextual, mandatory and operational differences. Within the performance assessment discourse, some scholars have coined the concept of public capacity. It is defined as the ability of the permanent administrative machinery of government to implement policies, deliver services and provide policy advice to decision-makers (Polidano, 2000). The benefits of the utilisation of performance data has received scrutiny in recent years

and there are mixed views on its utility. For example, research has shown that public sector institutions utilise performance measurement data in both productive and unproductive ways. A study by Rouse *et al.* (2007), in the United Kingdom, shows that schools responded positively to performance measurement data by improving performance, but some also engaged in apparently strategic behaviour that made it difficult to determine the genuineness of accountability induced behaviour.

de Bruijn (2002) highlights some perverse impacts of performance measurement. These include: stimulation of strategic behaviour; blocking innovations and ambitions; veiling actual performance; killing professional attitude; increased bureaucracy and punishing performance. Strategic behaviour or 'gaming the numbers' is a scenario where there is performance on paper without social significance or benefits. Focusing on production processes may have huge financial benefits, but has been found to have negative implications for the promotion and adoption of innovations. It is argued that aggregation of public sector performance information at sectoral level may reduce relevance at the lower level where the information is generated. Consequently, insight into the connections that exist on the level of the primary process may be lost. Thus, decision-makers must deliberately design performance management assessment systems that generate relevant data at the operational level. The type of data generated by performance measurement tools is critical. For example, relying on quantitative indicators tends to canvass important qualitative data, giving a distorted image of performance. Efficiency improves

production at a lower budget. High performance ratings may lead to 'punishing performance' in the sense that management may assume the need for lower budgets for proceeding years due to improved efficiency. In this case, an affiliate organisation not investing in efficiency is rewarded with a budget that remains the same with performance remaining equal.

Management and measurements or assessments are inextricably inseparable. In fact, Lebas (1995) argues that management can hardly exist without measurement. The concept of performance management has diverse conceptual understandings in various disciplines (Lonsdale, 2009; Carroll, 2000; Otley, 1999). Within the public sector management literature, there is an array of concepts that encompass performance management. Such concepts include results-driven government, performance-based management, governing for results, performance-based budgeting, the new managerialism, reinventing government, the new public management, outcome-orientated management and marketisation (Behn, 2001; Kettle, 1997; Aucoin & Peters, 1995; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). It also includes concepts such as performance evaluation, performance monitoring, and performance reporting (de Bruijn, 2002; Pollitt, 2006; Halachmi, 2005; Wholey, 1999), performance measurement (Swindell & Kelly, 2000; Thompson, 2000), performance budgeting (Berry, Brower & Flowers, 2000; Hendrick, 2000), and performance contracting (Behn & Kant, 1999; Byrnes & Freeman, 1999; Clary, Ebersten & Harlor, 2000; Grote, 2000; Marshall, 1998). Irrespective of the orientation, all of the mentioned concepts are geared towards improving public sector

performance, enhancing results and creating value addition for citizens (Behn, 2001).

Performance management is also defined as an evaluative process of assessing and arriving at a judgement about performance against the achievement of specific goals and objectives within a specific context. It is a process designed to improve organisational, team, and individual performance, which is owned and driven by line managers (Armstrong, 2014; Rubienska & Bovaird, 1999). Carroll and Dewar (2002) assert that it is the collecting, reporting and using of information about government programmes to assess and improve the delivery of government services. Briscoe and Claus (2008) define performance management as a system through which organisations set work goals, determine performance standards, assign and evaluate work, provide performance feedback, determine training and development needs, and distribute rewards. However, there is a note of caution premised on the optimism and untested implicit assumption in the concepts, strategies and tactics of performance management that it actually does improve the organisation's performance and public accountability. This is not necessarily true, as the nature of organisational behaviour is such that some organisations are likely to perform better by implementing performance management measures while others, using the same tool, may perform below expectation (Behn, 2011). The factors contributing to the inability of managers to systematically apply performance management ideas to the challenges of effective and efficient performance may be due to political, cultural, rational, technocratic factors, public apathy, and leadership support (Ohemeng, 2009; de Lancer Julnes & Holzer, 2001).

MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND THEIR IRRATIONALE TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SECTOR

Management Performance Assessment Tools (MPATs) are based on managerial freedom or autonomy and managerial accountability. The managerial freedom school is premised on the belief that performance freedom from unnecessary bureaucratic constraints allows gathering and reporting on how a system operates *vis-a-vis* planning, organising, leading and controlling (Kettle, 1997; Thynne & Wettenhall, 2004). The accountability school holds the view that performance assessment focuses on enabling system improvement and ensuring accountability on the utilisation of public funds to citizens (Berman & Wang, 2000; Bouckaert & Halligan, 2008; Wholey, 1999). MPATs enhance achievement of better results at the individual, team and organisational levels through measuring performance within an agreed framework of goals, standards and competency requirements. The common feature cutting across all tools and approaches is the focus on enhancing organisational and/or individual performance.

The South African *Constitution* provides for a public service administration at the national, provincial and local spheres of government. The government's commitment to improving public services and to establishing the cooperation and coordination necessary to achieve meaningful outcomes for South African citizens formed the basis for the development of MPAT in 2011. The process is led by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) and the Offices of the Premier with

the support of the National and Provincial Treasury, Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), and other transversal departments. MPAT is a structured evidence-based approach to the assessment of management practices that aims to improve the performance and service delivery of national and provincial departments. The guiding assumption of MPAT is that improved management practices are a necessary condition to improving public service performance and service delivery. MPAT promotes good management practices within the public service through establishing benchmarks for performance. It establishes baseline performance, provides managers with useful information to improve performance and catalyses improvement in management. MPAT is based on the premise that effective service delivery is a function of four key performance areas: strategic management, governance and accountability, human resources management and financial management (see Figure 1, page 687). The MPAT assessment cycle is linked to the planning cycle and designed to acquire data from existing sources of information generated by constitutional institutions such as the Auditor-General (AG) and Public Service Commission (PSC) into a single database.

MPAT scores a department's management practices against four progressive levels of performance as shown in Table 1 on the next page. Level 3 represents full compliance with a particular policy or prescript, while Level 4 represents performance that goes beyond compliance. Within this scoring structure, MPAT seeks to encourage departments to be innovative in their management practices. For a practice to be assessed at a particular level, the department must meet

FIGURE 1: MPAT key performance areas



Source: Department of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation (2013)

TABLE 1: Levels of performance

Level	Description
Level 1	Department is non-compliant with legal/regulatory requirements
Level 2	Department is partially compliant with legal/regulatory requirements
Level 3	Department is fully compliant with legal/regulatory requirements
Level 4	Department is fully compliant with legal/regulatory requirements and is doing things smartly

Source: Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (2013)

all the requirements for that level. If the department, for example, only meets two out of the three requirements of Level 3, it will be scored at Level 2 (partial compliance).

At the operational level, the implementation of the MPAT is designed to follow a five stage process: preparation and launch; self-assessment and internal validation; external moderation; final scores and recording; and improvement planning. The preparation and

launch is conducted each year around July-August. DPME issues the MPAT standards for use in the forthcoming cycle of assessment. During this period there is training of moderators, and the opportunity for departments to acquaint themselves with the MPAT standards and required evidence documents. Once MPAT is launched, departments are given a month (usually September) to conduct their self-assessments and validate these internally prior to submission to DPME.

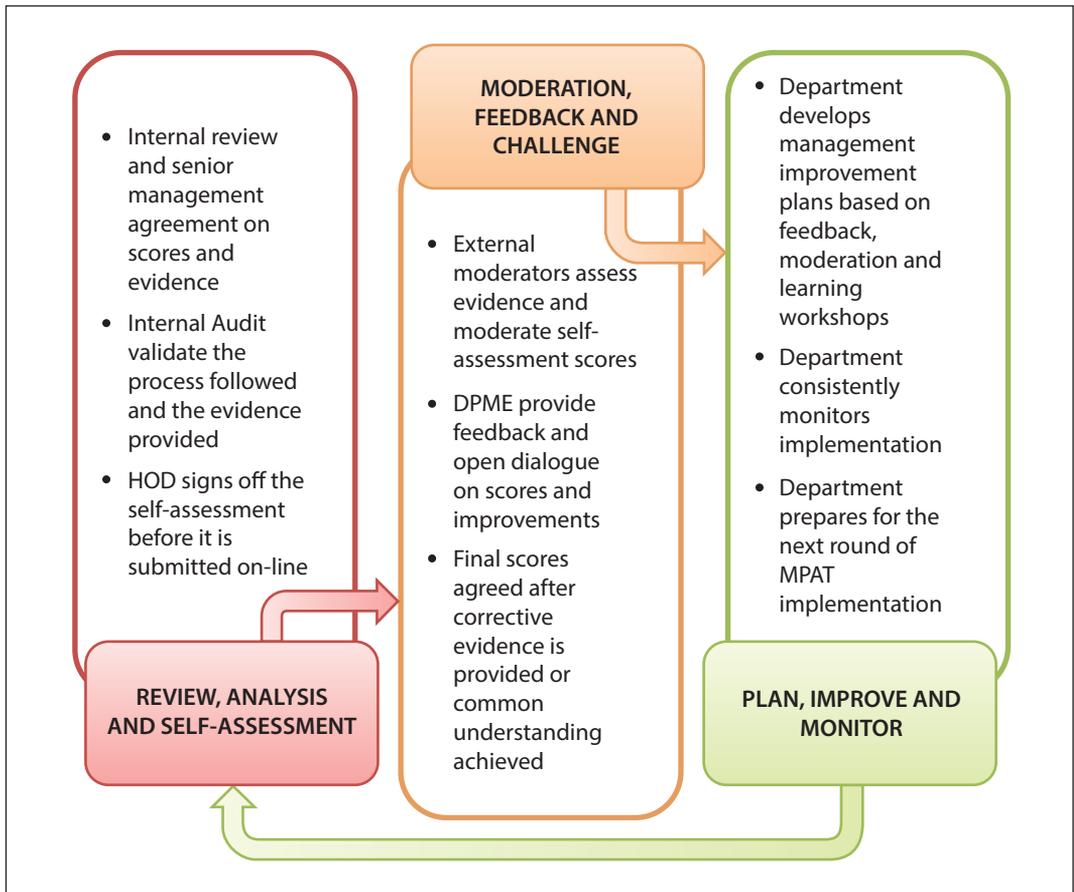
DPME and a team of external moderators moderate the self-assessments and provide feedback to the departments. Departments have the opportunity to ‘challenge’ the moderated scores by providing additional evidence. DPME finalises the MPAT scores, provides feedback to departments, and submits a consolidated report of MPAT results to Cabinet. The consolidated results and results of national departments are published on the DPME website. Departments are expected to develop plans for addressing gaps and weaknesses identified in the MPAT process. These plans

are not submitted to DPME and need not wait for the final MPAT results. In practice, departments start planning the improvements during the self-assessment phase when the gaps in their management practices become evident. Figure 2 below summarises the MPAT process.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION

The analytical framework for the assessment of the implementation of the MPAT borrows

FIGURE 2: MPAT implementation process



Source: Department of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation (2013)

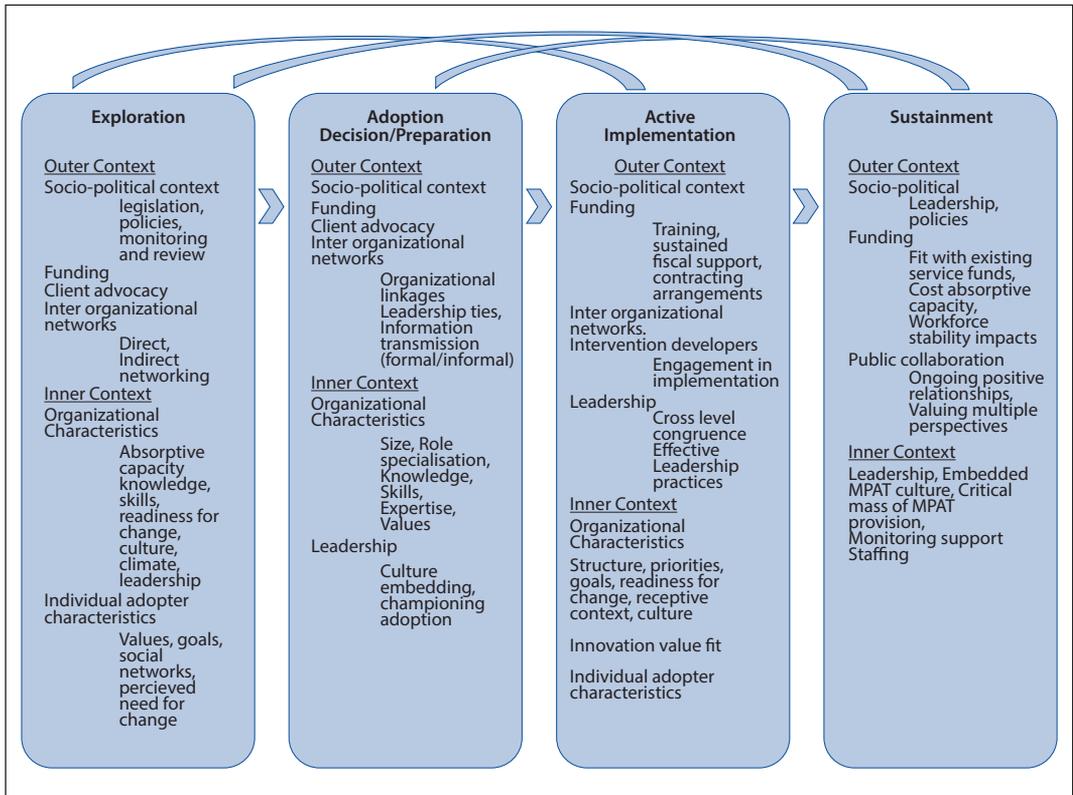
from the concept of implementation science. Implementation science studies the process of implementing programmes, practices and innovations that have some evidence from the research field to suggest that they are worth replicating (Metz *et al.*, 2015). The evidence base of the worthiness for studying the implementation of MPAT, within the implementation science framework, stems from its utilisation in development of selected assessment tools in the South African public sector. For example, DPME developed and piloted the Local Government Management Improvement Model (LGMIM), based on the same assumptions as MPAT, with the content and processes adapted for the local government context. The National Treasury developed the Infrastructure Capability Maturity Model (ICMM) to assess the management practices and performance of provinces in supporting the delivery of infrastructure.

Implementation science is evidence-based programming focusing on the active and planned effort to mainstream a new intervention within a practice organisation (Ogden *et al.*, 2012). The study upon which the article is based borrows from a multi-level, four-phase model of the implementation process to systematically assess MPAT implementation: exploration, adoption/preparation, implementation, and sustainment (Aarons *et al.*, 2011). It recognises that improving service delivery in the public sector is influenced as much by the process of implementing innovative practices as by the practices for implementation, as well as shifting the way business is conducted. It recognises the complexity of implementing human service innovations due to their reliance on the actions of individuals and organisations that exist within complex multi-layered

socio-economic, socio-cultural and political contexts (Fixsen *et al.*, 2009). Figure 3 on the next page shows elements of the four phase model utilised in the study, which allowed a systematic exploration of the MPAT implementation process in South Africa.

The exploration phase creates awareness of the MPAT. It is premised on the assumption that adoption in human services organisations is affected by the variability of values and beliefs by various stakeholders and the prevailing socio-political environment. It asserts that, in the public sector, stakeholders with a strong focus on development of new technologies and understanding of best practices are well placed to implement appropriate strategies (Aarons *et al.*, 2011). This phase analyses the potential match between the MPAT's key elements, activities, and theory of change with the organisation's absorptive capacity, culture and values and informs the organisation's decision to proceed or not to proceed with implementation of the tool (Bertram *et al.*, 2013). Potential barriers are identified during this phase, including funding streams, staffing patterns and organisational and systemic factors. The adoption phase defines key tasks to be accomplished before stakeholders experience a change in practice. There is a requirement for methodological examination of the MPAT with regards to implementation components, i.e. competency, organisation and leadership (Bertram *et al.*, 2013). Factors such as organisational fit of practice (roles, structure, values, etc.) may affect adoption of MPAT. Leadership is an important variable in creating both the organisational culture and climate conducive to the adoption of MPAT and in taking ownership of the implementation process.

FIGURE 3: Phases of the four stage model



Source: Adapted from Aarons *et al.* (2011)

Although implementation science is in its nascent phases, a number of studies have been conducted in areas of health-care, organisational development, and business and mental health. These studies have drawn variables that influence the implementation of evidence-based practice tools within social and organisational contexts. Such variables include ensuring alignment among stakeholders around the targeted approach (Glisson & Schoenwald, 2005) and strengthening existing partnerships to shape the implementation process and contextual fit (Horner, 2014). According to Odgen *et al.* (2012), implementation drivers include

recruitment, initial training, supervision/coaching, performance assessment, decision support data systems, facilitative administration, systems interventions and leadership. These components must operate in a holistic manner. They are supposed to be interactive, integrated and synergistic. Sustainability must be an integral part of the implementation process. According to Damschroder *et al.* (2009), there has been limited empirical work around the sustainability of implementing innovations within the public sector and there is no comprehensive model to guide the conceptual thinking on sustainability. In the study, these

components are not taken as a step-by-step template; they provide a framework for developing variables in line with the public sector performance management discourse. This recognises the contextual and discipline-specific nature of implementation science.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This study utilised qualitative data collection tools. These allowed the exploration and in-depth understanding of the MPAT implementation process. Additionally, qualitative and observational studies in implementation research are often valuable in identifying problems in creating change and generating hypotheses about the determinants of and the conditions for change (Palinkas *et al.*, 2011; Grol & Jones, 2000). The study drew on the large volume of material generated on MPAT implementation since 2011. These include:

- MPAT annual results reports presented to cabinet.
- Report on the implementation evaluation of MPAT.
- Case studies developed for each year (2011, 2012, 2013) documenting good practices.
- Presentations of DPME on MPAT.
- DPME annual performance planning documents.
- Audio and video materials on interviews with DPME officials and officials from government departments.

Semi-structured interviews were held with the MPAT team in DPME to obtain information about MPAT's implementation that was not necessarily contained in the formal documents. Interviewees were identified using snowball sampling. The study also utilised experiential knowledge from engagement in the MPAT implementation process by one of the researchers who was part of the MPAT development and went through three MPAT cycles with DPME.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: UNFOLDING IMPLEMENTATION OF MPAT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Exploration Phase

Socio-Political Environment

The implementation process for the MPAT is a change initiative precipitated by contextual events in the public sector environment coupled with the need for effective institutional support. Following the national and provincial elections, in 2009, the Zuma administration took office. Although of the same political party as its predecessor, the new administration sought to introduce major changes in the public sector in order to deliver on its election manifesto. These were system-wide policy shifts for the public sector and changes in the machinery of government. During the periods 1994 and 2009, the Government focused on dismantling the legacy of apartheid, integrating the disparate administrations, introducing new institutions as mandated by the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996, overhauling the legislative frameworks, and building a new civil service based on the democratic values and principles. There was recognition that, despite well-paid public

servants compared to their middle-income country counterparts and the availability of adequate financial resources to government departments, the quality of service delivery in many sectors fell below the expectations of citizens and the standards set in government policies.

Adoption Decision and Preparation

A New Policy Focusing on Improving Government Performance

In 2009, the Government introduced the 'outcomes approach' as captured in its policy document 'Improving Government Performance: Our Approach'.⁵ The new policy sought to focus the public sector on outcomes or results, and to instill a culture of performance. The government decided to focus on a few priority outcomes and introduced the concept of outcome delivery agreements entered into between a group of ministers to be held accountable for an outcome, and the President of the Republic. Priority sectors were identified, with a realisation that a capable public service was a necessary condition. The Forum of South African Directors-General (FOSAD) was established in 1999 to diagnose the causes of poor service delivery and it identified poor public sector management as a key factor. The weaknesses in management included poor application of performance management, weak accountability mechanisms for public servants, poor decision-making processes, and insufficient attention to implementation of policies and plans.⁶ It was within these perspectives that MPAT

became one of the initiatives for improving public sector performance.

Active Implementation

Establishing the Ministry of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

The 2009 policy reforms made provision for the establishment of the Ministry of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation within the Presidency. The Ministry was mandated to, *inter alia*, foster a results or outcomes orientation across the three spheres of government (national, provincial and local) and other public sector institutions. The Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) was established in 2010, with the expectation that it would focus on the following areas identified in the 2009 policy: support the establishing of systems and processes to manage the outcomes approach, including the delivery agreements; institutionalise the government-wide monitoring and evaluation system; and enhance public sector service delivery. There was, therefore, a clear mandate for DPME to support the improvement of government performance across the public sector. Results from semi-structured interviews with key informants from DPME indicated that the institutional location of DPME within the presidency sent a strong message of the importance of performance monitoring and evaluation.

Implementation Factors

Implementation literature highlights the importance of implementation factors that trigger change and the active

⁵The Presidency, Republic of South Africa, *Improving Government Performance: Our Approach*, 2009.

⁶Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, the Presidency, Republic of South Africa, *Mid-Term Review of the Priorities of Government*, March 2012.

implementation process (see for example Aarons *et al.*, 2011; Hurlburt & Knapp, 2003). Changes in the public sector often have an event precipitating the introduction of the change, or at least speeding up the implementation of the change. In the case of MPAT, results from this study indicate that the non-delivery or late delivery of school textbooks to schools in Limpopo Province sparked a major outcry from the national government, civil society and ordinary citizens. Evaluation of the 'text book crisis' involved the Forum of South African Directors-General (FOSAD), the National Department of Basic Education, National Treasury, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) and DPME in analysing the causes of the problem. The conclusion reached was that weak management practices were at the core of the failure to deliver textbooks on time. An identified feature of the textbook crisis was the perceived poor management and accountability at almost every stage of the service delivery process, and at every level in the Provincial Department of Basic Education.

The crisis triggered a set of interventions that are viewed as precursors for the implementation of MPAT. DPME, the DPSA and the National Treasury formed the nucleus of departments in the administrative centre of government, and were charged with the responsibility of coordinating and contributing to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the public service. DPME and the Technical Assistance Unit (TAU) of the National Treasury began exploring management and accountability frameworks of other countries. An initial visit by DPME and TAU to Canada to learn about the Management

Accountability Framework (MAF) of the Treasury Board Secretariat was followed by a longer visit by senior officials of DPME and the DPSA to understand the MAF in greater detail and to see how a similar tool could be developed for the South African public service. The DPSA, DPME and National Treasury formed the Technical Committee of officials that led the development of MPAT.

Organisational Culture of DPME

The role of organisational fits in effective implementation has been well documented (see for example, Kyung-Kwon & Young-Gul, 2002). Kotter (1996) proposes that effective structures for coordinating and driving change should have the following attributes: a mind-set focused on quality, an innovative, flat structure, flexible, networking, speed oriented, stakeholder focus and global focus. DPME was established in 2010 at the time when the government was seeking solutions to service delivery problems. The Department was small, and the team tasked with designing MPAT consisted of fewer than 10 officials. The structure of DPME and the MPAT team was flat, out of necessity, as it was a small organisation. According to research results, the benefit of this flat structure was that the MPAT team could engage directly with the Director-General (the most senior official of the Department) without having to traverse the many layers of bureaucracy that are a feature of public sector organisations. Decision-making was, therefore, speedy and officials had clarity on what the Director-General required. The MPAT team had a strong orientation towards speed, being flexible and taking risks. This is highlighted from the following quotation from a structured discussion with a senior DPME official:

...the message the Director-General communicated to the MPAT team was to design, test and implement MPAT in as short a time as possible, without compromising the quality of MPAT. The culture promoted by the Director-General was that of learning-by-doing...

The MPAT team was given the space to make mistakes and learn from the many mistakes they made. It had a strong stakeholder focus and, in order for MPAT to succeed, it recognised the need for support of officials in national and provincial departments. The team identified and cultivated MPAT champions in these departments. They were also aware of the necessity of collaborating with other departments and agencies that perceived DPME and MPAT as encroaching on their mandates. A technical team of senior officials from DPME, the DPSA and National Treasury was established to drive the development and implementation of MPAT. Other entities, for example, the office of the Public Service Commission, the then Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA – which is now the National School of Government) and the Auditor-General also participated in the design process, and were identified as important secondary sources of information for MPAT. DPME looked globally for existing models that it could learn from. In addition to the Management Accountability Framework (MAF) of Canada, DPME considered models from other countries including New Zealand, Kenya, India and Brazil. Although each of the models provided useful insights, DPME was cautious not to adopt these ideas uncritically. The MAF of Canada probably came closest to DPME's requirements and while some elements,

such as moderated self-assessments, were adopted, MPAT essentially was a home grown innovation.

Development Process and Content of MPAT

Although DPME led the design of MPAT, the tool is an outcome of a highly consultative process with other central policy departments at national level, provincial departments, and other government bodies. Following extensive research of international models and the various assessment systems already in place in the South African Public Service, the first version of MPAT, then known as the Performance Assessment Tool (PAT), began to take shape. PAT identified the four broad Key Performance Areas, which have remained constant, even though there have been minor modifications to their titles. MPAT formulation was based on existing regulations and policies. In developing the content of MPAT, DPME took the deliberate decision to base MPAT on existing policies and requirements. Research results indicate that such an approach was important for three reasons:

- (a) For MPAT to be credible, it had to be based on regulations and policies that were applicable to all government departments as they set out the minimum requirements.
- (b) There were already many policies and regulatory requirements in the Public Service. By annually monitoring the extent to which these were implemented or complied with, policy-makers would have the evidence to inform policy changes and any implementation support that departments might require.

(c) One of the expected benefits of MPAT was that it would provide a consolidated picture of management practices across the entire Public Service. At the time of MPAT's development, there were several reporting mechanisms in the Public Service with each one valid in its own right. However, heads of department/directors-general did not have a consolidated view of how their departments were performing in implementing the various public administration policies.

Institutional Arrangements and Influence of Policy Owners or Custodians

The design of MPAT was highly consultative with other government bodies that had been in existence for many years prior to the establishment of DPME. These bodies were the primary policy owners with deep knowledge of these policies. They also had staff capacity that was far greater than the capacity of the newly established DPME. It was, therefore, essential for DPME to secure the active participation and support of these institutions. These key institutions are the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) and the National Treasury. The DPSA is the custodian of the Public Service Act, and the Public Service Regulations that govern the administration of the Public Service. It is responsible for a wide range of public administration policies, including human resource management, ICT, occupational health and safety in the public service, labour relations, anti-corruption, and service delivery improvement. The DPSA's mandate covers the key performance area 3: Human Resource Management, as well as aspects of key performance area 2: Governance and Accountability, for example, service delivery improvement. The DPSA requires departments to prepare

human resource plans, service delivery improvement plans and other relevant plans, and to report on these to the DPSA. Given that DPSA's mandate covers significant parts of MPAT, it has a significant influence in shaping the content of MPAT. Each of the management performance (sub-KPAs) contained in MPAT (see Figure 1, page 687) had to be discussed with the policy expert in the DPSA. The DPSA policy experts also helped to formulate the standards for the management practices, the evidence requirements and the moderation criteria. The DPSA, by far, was the most involved and vocal of all the central administration departments in the development and implementation of MPAT.

The National Treasury is the custodian of the Public Finance Management Act and Treasury Regulations that govern financial management in the Public Service. The Treasury Regulations and associated instructions set out the prescripts for the many aspects of financial management, including supply chain management and expenditure management. The Office of the Accountant General in the National Treasury has its own Financial Management Capability Maturity Model (FMCMM). Departments use the FMCMM to assess their level of compliance with a comprehensive range of requirements for good financial management, including internal audit. As the FMCMM covered a broad spectrum of public financial management requirements, there was a great deal of concern from the National Treasury that MPAT would duplicate what was already collected through the FMCMM. Following several discussions, DPME decided to confine the key performance area 4: Financial Management, to supply chain management, as this was an area of major concern for FOSAD.

TABLE 2: Number of standards per key performance area

Key Performance Area	KPA 1: Strategic Management	KPA 2: Governance and Accountability	KPA 3: Human Resource Management	KPA 4: Financial Management
Number of standards	3	10	11	9

Source: Department of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation (2013)

Contributions of Other Government Institutions

Inter-organisational networks are a critical component of the implementation process (Aarons *et al.*, 2011). Within MPAT, the study identified key support institutions to include the Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Auditor-General (AG). The PSC is mandated by the *Constitution* to, *inter alia*, monitor and evaluate public administration against the principles and values of public administration, as set out in section 196 of the *Constitution*. It manages secondary data used by MPAT, including information on performance agreements of senior managers and the financial disclosures of senior managers. This information is used during the moderation of the self-assessments of departments. The AG is the supreme audit institution in South Africa. It conducts regular financial and performance audits of national and provincial departments, local municipalities, and other state entities. The audit outcomes published annually are an important source of secondary information for MPAT.

Shaping MPAT Standards, Evidence Requirements and Moderation Criteria

The MPAT design team endeavoured to keep the number of standards manageable. At the inception of MPAT, a mapping exercise of management standards found hundreds

of indicators. The team was selective and reduced the number of standards to 33. Research results highlighted concerns from departments regarding the distribution of standards across the four Key Performance Areas, as the standards and Key Performance Areas are weighted equally. As Table 2 above shows, Key Performance Area 1: Strategic Management has three standards and, therefore, the assessment of KPA 1 is less rigorous than the assessment of the other KPAs.

The standards in MPAT are largely a reflection of the central administration departments that participated actively in the design of MPAT, namely DPME, the DPSA and the National Treasury. MPAT does not cover all the key areas of management of a government department. For example, it does not cover asset maintenance and management⁷ that consumes large budgets and has been identified repeatedly by the Auditor-General as an area that requires improvement. The National Department of Public Works, the policy department for the management of immovable state assets, did not participate in the design of MPAT.

Determining the Requirements for MPAT Standards

There were debates on MPAT standard requirements among policy-makers and

⁷Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Implementation evaluation of the Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT), 24 March 2015.

practitioners. The requirements for Level 1 non-compliance were clear. But there were many debates about the fine line between Level 2 (partial compliance) and Level 3 (full compliance). There was a feeling among some that the requirements for Level 3 were too onerous and did not recognise that the Public Service in South Africa was still developing. They felt that MPAT should adopt a developmental approach, as it was intended as a tool for fostering progressive improvement in management practices. Another school of thought believed that Level 3 represented the minimum expected of departments, as these were activities that they were legally obliged to perform. This school of thought was concerned that if the requirements for Level 3 were set too low, it would serve to reinforce a culture of mediocrity in the Public Service. Another school of thought questioned the relevance of having four levels when MPAT essentially measured compliance with policies and regulations. The view held was that there should only be three levels: non-compliance, partial compliance and full compliance. Level 4 (doing things smartly) was considered vague and open to very subjective interpretation (see Table 1, page 687).

Ensuring Credible Evidence from MPAT

The issue of the validity of results from performance measurement tools is highly contested between the quantitative and qualitative research paradigms (Kelly & Swindell, 2002). In designing MPAT, the team carefully considered the evidence documents required for moderating each MPAT standard. It was discovered that, although the evidence requirements set out in the MPAT tool seemed straightforward, departments experienced difficulty in providing the evidence documents during the first

cycle of MPAT. This was, in part, due to the poor state of document management in several departments.

In reviewing MPAT after the first cycle, the MPAT design team streamlined the evidence document requirements, and where appropriate, departments were required to merely certify that particular documents existed and did not have to submit the actual documents. This approach was especially useful where documents were confidential. As far as possible, DPME and the moderators drew on secondary sources of information for moderation. Although evidence requirements have been streamlined over the four cycles of MPAT, there is a tendency by departments to submit irrelevant documents, in the belief that a larger volume of evidence documents will be more convincing. It may also be that they do not have confidence in the moderators' ability to fully understand the departments they are moderating, thus a need to provide as much evidence as possible to convince the moderators.

From the onset, it was clear that there had to be criteria for moderating the departmental self-assessments. The evaluation criteria had to be clear and relevant to the MPAT standard being moderated and had to be reliable. The pilot round of moderation revealed variable interpretations of the moderation criteria, and so the criteria were reviewed and refined. Other strategies to improve the consistency in the application of moderation criteria included the training of moderators and support from the Canadian Treasury Board Secretariat in quality assurance. DPME also introduced a 'challenge period' to give departments an opportunity to respond to the moderated scores and provide

further evidence where they disagreed with the moderated score. Although DPME has worked on improving the moderation of self-assessments, an independent evaluation identified moderation as the weakest aspect of MPAT's implementation. Departments have questioned the expertise of moderators, and also the role of moderators in relation to the role of internal audit units that are required to certify the evidence submitted for moderation.⁸ The volume of evidence documents that moderators have to read is overwhelming (DPME estimated over 70 000 evidence documents in the 2015 cycle), and some departments have expressed concern that moderators do not read all the evidence documents. The moderation process involves a large contingent of government officials (for example, 80 moderators in the 2015 cycle) in a 'lockdown' for a week. There are questions about the efficiency of the moderation process, and whether there are more efficient and effective ways of verifying the evidence submitted by government departments. Concerns on the validity of MPAT results are echoed in the following quotation from semi-structured interviews:

... MPAT has been a compliance matter, we hope MPAT 4 will have a change of approach... does what is evaluated in respect of self-evaluation or assessment represent itself in the same way when you report to the Portfolio Committee in terms of APP... does the Auditor-General find the same finding... M&E section together with strategic planning must make sure that the reports speak to one another...

Mandatory Versus Voluntary Participation

Although the decision of the Cabinet indicated that all national and provincial departments should be assessed, DPME did not coerce departments to participate in the first round of MPAT. DPME, through its road shows and consultations, encouraged departments to participate in MPAT and 65% of all national and provincial departments conducted self-assessments. Following the submission of the results of the first MPAT cycle to cabinet, the departments that did not participate were somewhat embarrassed, and in subsequent years, there has been a 100% participation rate from national and provincial departments. While it could be argued that the high participation rate in MPAT is due to its mandatory nature, the independent evaluation of MPAT⁸ found that 87% of surveyed heads of department described MPAT as a meaningful learning opportunity and 13% indicated that they participated to comply with performance agreements expectations of political principals.⁹

Institutionalisation of Improvement Plans

Participating departments were expected to develop plans or strategies to improve management practices. There was a great deal of discussion about improvement plans including the following issues: Should these be stand-alone plans or should they form part of existing organisational improvement plans? Should they be submitted to DPME in the case of national departments, or to the Office of the Premier in the case

⁸This was conducted by PDG Consulting.

⁹Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Implementation evaluation of the Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT), 24 March 2015.

of provincial departments? What would a good improvement plan look like? Are there guidelines for improvement plans? Will the implementation of these plans be monitored and who will monitor the plans? DPME adopted a pragmatic approach to the issue of improvement plans. In the first instance, it did not have the human capacity to monitor the implementation of improvement plans directly and used the annual MPAT scores to monitor improvements. It also encouraged departments to incorporate improvement plans into existing organisational improvement initiatives rather than develop stand-alone plans.

Participatory Annual Review of MPAT

At the end of each MPAT cycle, DPME reviews the MPAT tool as well as the implementation process. These reviews are participative, and include partner departments, MPAT coordinators and MPAT moderators. Importantly, DPME has been responsive to the criticisms and suggestions made to improve MPAT, and changes are reflected in the subsequent MPAT cycle. The independent evaluation of MPAT implementation noted DPME's responsiveness to suggestions for improving MPAT. This annual review is part of the DPME philosophy of learning and progressively improving MPAT.

Institutional Capacity for Implementation

DPME invested in developing its internal capacity as well as the capacity of departments that were required to use MPAT. There was an emphasis on 'learning-by-doing' and relatively new and junior staff participated in all phases of the MPAT cycle, and attended road shows and meetings with departments. This hands-on-experience and the trust placed in these officials helped to

build a confident MPAT team that was seen as credible and responsive. DPME invested in developing the capacities of MPAT coordinators and moderators through training workshops, guidelines and networking. From the onset, it was evident that moderators had to be selected carefully and trained in moderation. Monitoring and Evaluation Units in the Office of the Premier are the focal points and the coordinators of MPAT in their respective provinces. The capacity of these units varies across the different provinces, and in many instances this capacity is limited. Although DPME provides support to these units, especially during the self-assessment process, not all units have the capacity required to coordinate MPAT in their provinces, and this could affect how the province as a whole fares in MPAT. Information technology is an important enabler for the implementation of MPAT. In the first year of its operation, MPAT operated on a simple Excel system. The web-based system only became operational in the second round of MPAT (2012-2013). This gave DPME the opportunity to refine MPAT and its processes before finalising the web-based system. However, information technology without developing the capacity of users is not effective. DPME received technical and financial support for the development of MPAT from external development partners. The department, however, was clear that it would lead the process and the support from development partners was there to complement government efforts.

The Importance of Leadership

Leadership at the political level and the administrative levels is a key factor in organisational change in the public sector. Political leadership sets the broad direction for change or

reform, while administrative leadership gives content to the proposed reform. Importantly, these two levels of leadership need to work together to achieve the objectives of the proposed reforms. In the case of MPAT, there was a strong political commitment to MPAT by the then Minister of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, who sought the approval of cabinet for the design and implementation of MPAT, and reported the MPAT results annually to Cabinet. The then Director-General of DPME, who conceptualised and initiated MPAT, played a key role in leading the MPAT process from its inception. Some key informants commented on the good working relationship between the political leadership (Minister) and the administrative leadership (Director-General) as a critical success factor for MPAT. The Forum of South African Director-Generals (FOSAD) provided leadership to MPAT, as it was mandated by the President to find solutions to poor service delivery in the public service.

CONCLUSION AND LESSONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICE

The study upon which this article is based applied the Evidence-Based Practice Implementation Framework to explore the MPAT implementation process by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) between the periods 2011 and 2016 in South Africa. The results indicated that the critical implementation components are the exploration of the socio-political environment, appropriate legislative reforms, understanding implementation factors, organisational culture and organisational fit of the implementing institution, development process and content of MPAT, institutional arrangements and relationships between

policy-makers and custodians, stakeholder engagement, determining MPAT standards, ensuring validity of MPAT results, institutionalisation of improvement plans, and leadership capacity and continuous review of the MPAT implementation process. A number of key lessons were drawn from the study. Firstly, is the importance of the context within which MPAT is implemented. Systems of government and public administration vary from country to country; it is important that the particular country context is taken into consideration in the design and implementation of MPAT.

Secondly, MPAT should be located within broader reforms so that it enhances or enables reforms, rather than undermines the reforms. Thirdly, there is a need to clarify the service delivery problem under consideration. It is important that there is a clear theory of change articulated from the onset. The fourth lesson is determination of the need for a regulatory basis for MPAT to be sustained as a regular assessment process. The fifth lesson is the need to build and maintain partnerships from the onset: policy and oversight of management practices typically involve several central administration departments. The lead department should build partnerships and coalitions with these departments. The sixth lesson emphasises the need for keeping the MPAT tool simple. There is always a temptation to have the most comprehensive tool, but this creates complexity very early in the process. It is advisable to focus on a few priority issues (following a thorough mapping of what currently exists). Lesson seven entails keeping the implementation process light. There is always a risk for MPAT to consume an increasing amount of human and financial

resources with each successive cycle. It is important to keep the process as light as possible. This could be done, for example, by limiting the documentation that departments are required to provide. Lesson nine emphasises the need to communicate results constructively and transparently. While it is necessary to point out areas where management practices are weak, the intention should not be to make departments or individuals look bad. Feedback coupled with suggestions for improvement can go a long way. Depending on the country context, the results should be transparent and

accessible to other oversight institutions and civil society. The tenth lesson is the need to monitor the implementation and evaluate the outcomes. Lastly, there is a need to invest in developing capacities of officials involved in MPAT in areas such as facilitation, data analysis, public policy and management information systems.

Although this article tackled the MPAT implementation process, there is a need for further studies to assess the impacts of MPAT on performance of various public institutions in South Africa.

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SECI MODEL AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN A PUBLIC SERVICE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

How did the members of the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Provincial Human Resource Development Forum (PHRDF) experience knowledge sharing? This is the question that the study upon which this article is based. The Socialisation, Externalisation, Combination and Internalisation (SECI) model was used as a means of understanding knowledge sharing within a community of practice and as an instrument for giving direction when preparing interventions that can improve practice. The model has previously been used to describe knowledge sharing, but we could not find any studies in which it has been employed to analyse the existing levels of knowledge sharing, or as a starting point to enhance practice. It has also been used to describe knowledge conversion and creation in community of practices (CoPs), but not as a means of gauging the way it operates in a CoP within the public service in South Africa. In the study that this article is based on, the SECI model was applied for analytical purposes.

As indicated earlier, the contextual setting of the study is the KZN Provincial Administration Human Resource Development Forum

(PHRDF) as community of practice. Despite this, the analysis illustrates the potential for applying SECI principles when examining the efficacy of other CoPs both inside and outside the public sector. The main purpose of knowledge sharing is to retain and exploit the strategic knowledge on which an organisation relies in order to be efficient, productive and progressive. The public sector, in South Africa, is characterised by high staff turnover and poor service delivery and the alarm has been raised on the inadequate knowledge sharing in the South African government agencies. An effective knowledge management (KM) strategy or programme needs an element of knowledge sharing, hence the need for knowledge sharing improvement in government agencies, in particular. For its improvement we need to assess what kind of knowledge sharing is taking place and what aspects, in particular, need further special attention.

As indicated above, for a detailed focused analysis, a case study of a CoP within the KZN Provincial Administration, the PHRDF, was used. The research used a two-part method for data collection. Structured questionnaires, with requests for follow-up explanation when necessary, were distributed to 31 PHRDF members and 23 were returned. At the

same time, 10 out of 14 Human Resource Development (HRD) Senior Managers from 10 different KZN Provincial Departments were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule offering opportunities for comments and further explanations. The data analysis employed four components of Nonaka, Toyama and Konno's (2000) SECI model to gain insight into the way the PHRDF members experienced knowledge sharing within the CoP, and the way that HRD senior managers perceived knowledge sharing within their departments, and among their staff members, who had engaged with the PHRDF. Our assessment of knowledge sharing in relation to the PHRDF indicated evidence of SECI, but less so of Combination, which emerged as an area of weakness. On the basis of this finding, we could recommend a focus in this area of perceived weakness.

Keywords: SECI model, knowledge-sharing, community of practice, public service, information technology.

INTRODUCTION

Indications of limited knowledge sharing among South African government agencies have been observed in the literature (Mannie, Van Niekerk & Adendorff, 2013). Moreover, the South African public service is characterised by a low level of understanding regarding how to exploit knowledge management (KM) for service delivery, as well as the absence of a KM culture (Dikotla, Mahlatji & Makgahlela, 2014). Consequently, employees who retire, resign or die may leave without their valuable tacit knowledge captured or stored in any way and this loss of intellectual capital can affect the entire organisation (Averweg, 2008). For example,

in local government, it was found that the culture of knowledge sharing exists within individual municipalities, but not across all municipalities. This implies that work-related best practices may not be shared with struggling municipalities (Dikotla, Mahlatji & Makgahlela, 2014). The study upon which this article is based sought to use the analysis of the four modes of the SECI model to understand and enhance knowledge sharing in a CoP in the South African public service. The KZN Provincial Human Resource Forum (PHRDF) was chosen as a case study of a CoP.

Although research on knowledge sharing in the public sector is limited, there have been significant changes in the public sector since 1994, so much so that today's public sector organisations have become known as knowledge based organisations (Amayah, 2013) rather than being just data- or information-based. The implication is that knowledge has become as critical a resource in the public sector as it is in private sector firms, and it is by sharing that it can be retained or circulated within organisations. Among the means employed by organisations to achieve knowledge sharing is the use of CoPs. These are primarily made up of individuals who meet regularly, either physically or virtually, to share knowledge around a common interest. Several studies have been conducted to investigate knowledge sharing in government and in the private sector, but these have focused on motivational factors and barriers to knowledge sharing rather than on analysing its practice (Park, Saplan-Catchapero & Jaegal, 2012; Gambarotto & Cammozzo, 2010; Jeon, Young-Gul & Koh, 2011; Lam & Lambermont-Ford, 2010; Klein, Connel & Meyer, 2005). Although there are studies that have assessed knowledge management based

on the SECI model as a tool, their focus has been on knowledge creation and knowledge transfer (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000; Marley, 2012; Naicker, Govender & Naidoo, 2014). The SECI model has been used in knowledge sharing, but we could not find any studies in which it has been employed specifically to analyse or improve existing levels of this practice, or to use it as a means of gauging the way it operates in a CoP. Our case study attempted such an exercise using a CoP in the public service in South Africa.

As indicated already, the study upon which the article is based used a mixed methods design that has been employed elsewhere in the area of knowledge management. Quantitative data was collected by means of a questionnaire distributed to 31 members of the PHRDF of which 23 were completed and returned. Qualitative data was gathered from interviews with 10 senior managers in Human Resource Development (HRD) from the 14 provincial departments. The purpose of the interviews with senior managers, who had oversight over PHRDF members, was to gain insight into their own supervising knowledge sharing practices. Our findings from both groups indicated clear evidence of socialisation, externalisation and internalisation in HRD knowledge sharing, but less so of combination which emerged as an area of weakness and potentially worthy of attention. The contribution of this study is the use of the SECI model as a means of understanding knowledge sharing within a CoP, and of giving direction when preparing interventions that can improve practice. This study focused on a single instance, but illustrates the potential for applying SECI principles when examining the efficacy of other CoPs, both inside and outside the public sector.

METHODOLOGY

A case study approach was followed to analyse knowledge sharing in a CoP. Case studies offer a way of using and reporting research that investigates singular or small numbers of individual instances in order to examine a key issue of interest (Birley & Moreland, 1998). The PHRDF was selected as a CoP, consisting of individuals from different government departments performing the same function and providing human resource development services in the KZN public service.

This study, upon which this article is based, was conducted in 2015. It used a two-part mixed methods approach comprising of both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, coupled with insights from the review of literature. This approach is used frequently in knowledge management literature (Jones, 2007; Amayah, 2013; Khumalo, 2012; Jeon, Young-Gul & Koh, 2011).

Questionnaires were delivered in person to 31 PHRDF members at their work places and 23 were returned within the (extended) deadline of one month. Six questions, drawn from a larger survey questionnaire, consisted of closed- and open-ended questions structured in a manner that sought to elicit answers yielding information relating to the four modes of the SECI model (Socialisation, Externalisation, Combination and Internalisation). Follow-up explanations were requested for some of the closed-ended questions. The quantitative aspect consisted of questions about facts, opinions and attitudes, self-perceptions, standards of action and actual past and present behaviour relating to knowledge sharing in the CoP, as suggested by Powell and Connaway (2004).

The qualitative element was conducted, during the same period, using a semi-structured interview schedule generating follow-up questions probed during the interviews for further explanations. Since we wanted a deep understanding of the knowledge sharing practices in KZN HRD, we invited all 14 senior managers who were heads of HRD in the KZN Provincial Administration (PA) to participate. Interview appointments were made through the personal assistants of the senior managers. To allow time for the participants to prepare for the interviews, basic interview questions were sent to the senior managers at the time of making the appointment, as recommended, where there was no concern about being able to obtain frank spontaneous answers (Powell & Connaway, 2004). Ten of them responded and the interviews were conducted either face-to-face or telephonically, depending on their availability. The interview schedule contained six questions that were designed to elicit responses relating to the practice of knowledge sharing, for subsequent analysis on the four modes of the SECI model. The interviews were audio recorded verbatim, with the consent of the participants.

Data analysis involved extracting indications that the four modes of the SECI model applied, in our case to knowledge sharing, from the answers provided. The quantitative data were analysed using SPSS 18 software to obtain descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages. The qualitative data were coded by creating nodes using the NVivo software. Nodes generated themes established from the literature review and interview schedule, which enabled an efficient process of gathering them for analysis. All of these were intended to generate

data to answer the question about how the members of the KZN PHRDF experience knowledge sharing.

THE SECI MODEL

An important aspect of the SECI model is knowledge within organisations. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) classified organisational knowledge into tacit and explicit knowledge translated as 'know-how' held in human's heads, such as experience and expertise, and 'facts' from organisational rules, manuals, routines, software and procedures, respectively. All of these are important to optimise the efficiency of the organisation. They should be shared among members of the organisation. Knowledge sharing is the process by which explicit and tacit knowledge is communicated to individuals (Salleh *et al.*, 2013). While knowledge is shared through face-to-face interactions, it can also be shared through such channels as telephones or e-mails (Truran, 1998; Dikotla, Mahlatji & Makgahlela, 2014) and also through technological media such as podcasts, intranets, social networks as well as chat technology on mobile cellular phones (Jain, 2009). Employees often share knowledge unconsciously through informal interactions. This implies that knowledge can be shared without specific intention to do so (Amayah, 2013).

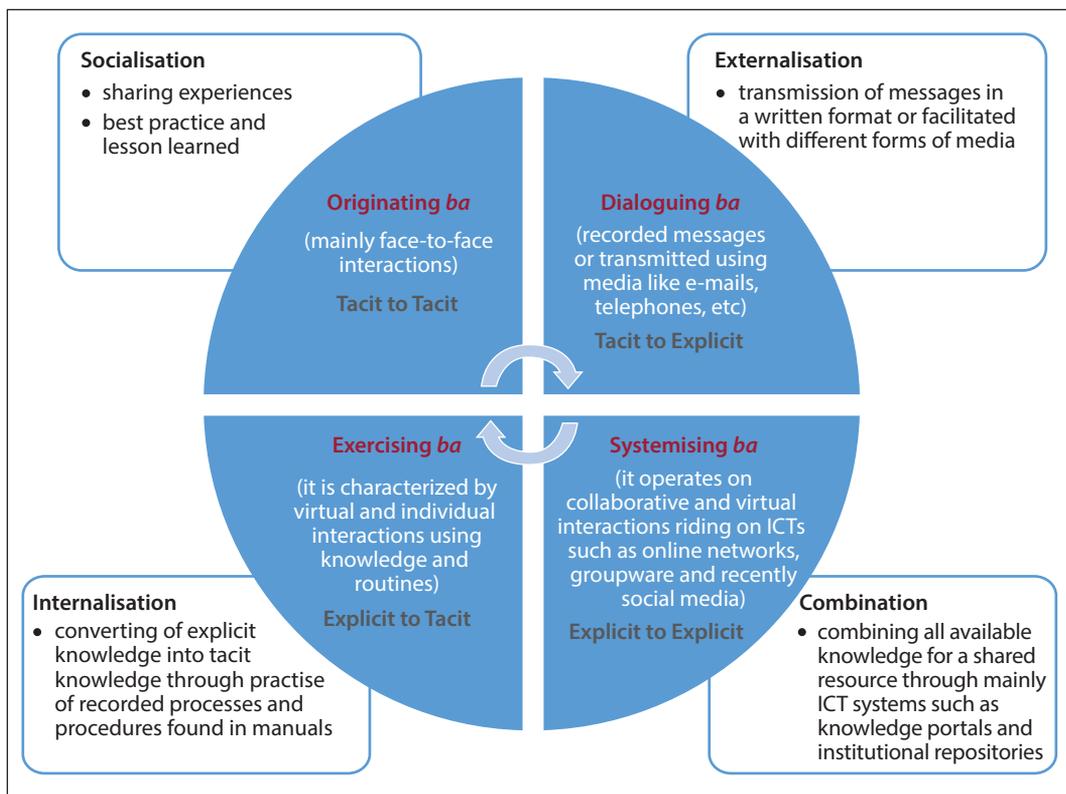
The SECI model proposed that knowledge creation and sharing occurs when tacit and explicit knowledge interact by spiraling through four phases of knowledge conversion, namely, socialisation, externalisation, combination and internalisation. Nonaka, Toyama and Konno (2000) propose the use of a notion called *ba*, a context deemed necessary for successful knowledge creation.

Each of the four modes of the SECI model contains a corresponding *ba*, namely, originating *ba*, interacting *ba*, cybar *ba* and exercising *ba*. According to Dewah (2015), conversion of knowledge from one form to another produces some learning, creation, expansion and retention of knowledge in the organisational system. This is useful for the sharing of knowledge and experiences by the experienced with the new entrants because as the retirees leave, their knowledge would be retained by the new and young employees who remain behind (Dewah, 2015).

Socialisation new tacit knowledge is converted through shared experiences (Nonaka,

Toyama & Konno, 2000), while individuals spend time together or interacting in the same environment (Dewah, 2015). Socialisation is time and space specific, highlighting the importance of *ba*, a shared context in which knowledge is shared, created and utilised and which provides the energy, quality and place to perform the individual conversions and to move along the spiral (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000). Originating *ba* is defined by individual and face-to-face interactions and is viewed as an existential place where an individual transcends the boundary between self and others through sympathising and empathising with others (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000; Rice & Rice, 2005).

FIGURE 1: SECI model incorporating the corresponding *ba*



Source: Adapted from Nonaka, Toyama and Konno (2000)

Externalisation is the process of articulating tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge that can be transmitted by means that do not require face-to-face contact, but utilise the dialoguing *ba* for transferring documented or recorded tacit knowledge to explicit form (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000). Although the transmission mechanism for knowledge transfer or sharing are not prescribed, creation of procedures, e-mails and other forms of media fall under the externalisation process (Dewah, 2015). Dialoguing *ba* is the creative development of systems to facilitate the transfer of the newly categorised knowledge into a form that will be of use to others, whether it is best practice or operating procedures (Rice & Rice, 2005).

Combination entails converting explicit knowledge into more complex and systematic sets of explicit knowledge (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000) and its value lies in its creation, taking into account the knowledge of all participants and making it available as a shared resource (Rice & Rice, 2005). The Combination mode's corresponding *ba* is the systemising *ba* which emphasises collaborative efforts to develop and share the newly aggregated learning across an organisational setting (Rice & Rice, 2005) through collective and virtual interaction. It thrives on information technology (IT) such as online networks, groupware, documentation and databanks (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000). In this era of advanced IT, social media, institutional repositories and other knowledge management systems would be effective in systemising *ba*.

Internalisation is the process of embodying explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge, which entails converting explicit knowledge

created and shared in the organisation into tacit knowledge by individuals (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000). It is similar to learning by doing (Dewah, 2015). During internalisation, the exercising *ba* focuses on the transfer and internalisation of the shared organisational knowledge back to individual workers knowledge and routines (Rice & Rice, 2005). According to Dewah (2015), documentation helps individuals internalise their experiences, resulting in richer individual tacit knowledge while manuals and standard operating procedures facilitate the transfer of explicit knowledge to others, thus helping them to indirectly experience others' experiences.

The four modes of the SECI model show that knowledge can be transferred from one employee to another through face-to-face interactions, documentation, information and knowledge systems provided the context of time and space is conducive for such activities (Rice & Rice, 2005; Dewah, 2015).

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

A CoP can be defined as a group of people in an organisation who interact with each other across organisational units or organisational boundaries due to a common field of application, in order to learn and support one another, create, spread, retain and use knowledge relevant to the organisation (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). Realising the value of a CoP, many organisations have adopted it as a tool for successful knowledge management (Lee, Suh & Lee, 2014). A CoP is formed to share what is known about some aspects of the work and to learn from each other (Van den Berg & Snyman, 2003). Basically, CoPs perform the

function of keeping knowledge within the organisation by ensuring that it is shared among practitioners who perform the same functions. In doing so, the risk of knowledge drain is reduced when people leave the organisation. CoPs are also viewed as a means of creating a knowledge sharing culture since the relationships formed along a period of time make it a safe environment for social interactions (Mannie, Van Niekerk & Adendorff, 2013). KM practitioners favour the establishment of CoPs as a means to capture contextualised knowledge since they offer an environment where individuals with potential resources can be identified and reached in order to seek out these resources (Steyn & Kahn, 2008).

According to Mkhize (2015), all participants should understand that they are responsible for the creation and dissemination of knowledge to the entire CoP. Often, in the South African public sector, CoPs come in the form of forums. The study upon which this article is based was concerned with one of them: the KZN PHRDF. Its target audience was HRD practitioners in the KZN Provincial Administration. Members of the PHRDF are nominated by their HRD units to represent the various departments at the PHRDF. Members of the PHRDF range from senior managers to junior members, therefore, knowledge sharing occurs across a range of positions during their meetings. This contributes to the reduction of time required to train new employees (Lee, Suh & Lee, 2014).

Although the PHRDF is diverse in terms of positions held, collective tacit knowledge accumulated over time during group interactions may be lost if efforts to capture it

are not made (Martins & Martins, 2011). This type of knowledge could also be lost when one or more people in a community leave the organisation, or when a specific problem solving task requires the knowledge and experience of individual experts who might have left the organisation (Martins & Martins, 2011).

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results and findings of the study based on the application of the SECI model in the PHRDF are presented, focusing specifically on the application of socialisation, externalisation, combination and internalisation mode. Towards the conclusion of the article, an analysis is offered. This is intended to make sense of the results and findings of the study and to add profundity to the discourse on the notion of community of practice in the public service.

APPLICATION OF SOCIALISATION

The findings of the study revealed that 52.2% of respondents rated the level of knowledge sharing as high, because the task-related information (also known as tacit knowledge) that is shared enabled them to perform their work better. The 43.5% of respondents who rated the level of knowledge sharing as moderate, highlighted their inability to translate what was shared from a national perspective to a provincial level, which made it difficult for them to simplify strategic issues into technical issues. Furthermore, the infrequency of meetings deprived them of networking with their peers and keeping up-to-date with HRD developments nationally. Socialisation found its most active expression when experts were invited to share how HRD related policies,

made nationally, could be adapted for provincial or departmental use, entrenching the existence of the originality *ba*.

Members would be provided with opportunities for workshopping these policies or engage the experts to obtain best practice and other critical guidelines. These findings indicate that the socialisation phase of the SECI model was fundamental in transferring tacit knowledge to tacit knowledge. A majority of respondents (82.6%) confirmed the importance of face-to-face meetings as a conduit for acquiring technical knowledge. This supports the assertion that CoPs are a medium for exchanging best practice (Draai, 2010). The PHRDF meetings provided the originality *ba*, which allowed the space for members to meet face-to-face, to express empathy for those who were struggling and to organise further individual interactions through networks formed.

Qualitative data obtained from the interviews with the HRD senior managers revealed that 90% regarded internal meetings with their staff as a hub of knowledge sharing, because of the knowledge obtained from the PHRDF meetings. The socialisation process was further entrenched away from the PHRDF as the sharing of experiences, mental and technical skills continued at the departmental level (Dewah, 2015). In terms of the importance of the PHRDF meetings, 80% of the senior managers interviewed supported the PHRDF as a platform that accentuates their staff's knowledge pertaining to HRD matters as the results were always visible from their staff's increased performance. This was in line with Mkhize's (2015) observation that CoP participants make a contribution towards a solution to a problem or to a subject of

concern among the members of the community. The socialisation phase indicated by face-to-face interactions occurred in the PHRDF through the sharing of best practices (tacit to tacit knowledge) on technical issues raised during meetings (Lee, Suh & Lee, 2014). The findings confirmed that socialisation applied during the PHRDF meetings.

APPLICATION OF EXTERNALISATION

Here, the intention was to deliberate whether the externalisation mode, together with the dialoguing *ba*, was applicable during knowledge sharing in the PHRDF. The Internet (16.1%) and HRD policy documents (14.3%) were rated by the respondents as the best places to find explicit knowledge in line with the SECI model's assertion that shared knowledge is often expressed when recorded during the explicit phase (Dewah, 2015). Externalisation consists of converting tacit knowledge received into explicit knowledge and it aids in the knowledge capturing process during knowledge sharing (Karim, Razi & Mohamed, 2012). Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the respondents agreed that they recorded knowledge shared at the PHRDF meetings for later use and reference in line with the externalisation process. Members would take down notes and engage in discussions afterwards via e-mails and over the telephone, demonstrating that the dialoguing *ba* extended outside the PHRDF to the departments. In the qualitative survey, 50% of the senior managers used meetings such as MANCO, departmental meetings, information seminars, report-back from training, staff meetings and executive meetings to create an environment for knowledge sharing about PHRDF meetings. Consequently, the

sharing of tacit knowledge, and its conversion to explicit knowledge upon recording of this knowledge, constituted the externalisation phase, and the dialogues among the respondents constituted the dialoguing *ba*. Therefore, externalisation with its corresponding dialoguing *ba* applied during knowledge sharing in the PHRDF.

APPLICATION OF THE COMBINATION MODE

This section discusses the applicability of the combination mode with its associated systemising *ba*. In terms of combination, recorded explicit knowledge is converted into new explicit knowledge through systematic exchange mechanisms such as communication networks and large-scale databases (Karim, Razi & Mohamed, 2012). The PHRDF captured the explicit knowledge shared regarding the provincial departments represented, and converted it into new explicit knowledge that is uploaded on the internet and on HRD databases in the form of spreadsheets containing statistics and other information. The results were confirmed by respondents (16.1%) who consulted the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) website for provincial and national annual training reports (ATR), as well as respondents (14.3%) who retrieved HRD workplace skills plans from the internet. However, the study did not find any evidence of communication networks or large-scale databases that are necessary for the combination phase to take effect. Instead, the respondents mentioned the existence of HRD websites, either nationally or provincially, where they can access policies and guidelines in the form of templates for performing routine tasks. Since

the corresponding *ba* for the combination mode is the systemising *ba*, which utilises information technology (IT) to facilitate the recombination of existing explicit knowledge to form new explicit knowledge, the study found the use of IT-related tools limited to e-mails and telephone calls for knowledge sharing. Although 91.3% of the respondents agreed that IT facilitated knowledge sharing, only 21.7% of the respondents participated in online virtual communities, while 86.7% of the respondents recommended a knowledge repository for knowledge sharing. Although 30% of the senior managers mentioned that they were aware of what an institutional repository is, they acknowledged that websites and databases sufficed for knowledge sharing in the absence of a real knowledge repository.

When asked about the use of social media, 30% of the senior managers admitted that they have not encouraged its use, citing personal inhibitions. However, 40% of them mentioned that it should be embraced, while 70% acknowledged it as a modern knowledge sharing tool. Most government departments have social media presence such as twitter and Facebook. The study found that the combination mode was limited in terms of the existence of a dialoguing *ba*, which facilitates the combination of explicit knowledge with new explicit knowledge through analogue and digital signals (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000). However, according to Tihane (2010), its aim of keeping the organisational knowledge, rules and objectives updated with real work processes and developing new norms and visions for the organisation was fulfilled during the combination of old explicit HRD policies and new HRD developments shared at the PHRDF meetings. The process of

compiling workplace skills plans (WSPs), and ATRs gathered at PHRDF meetings, circumvented the lack of use of analogue and digital signals in that the respondents utilised the knowledge of compiling these reports into a provincial database, which informed the direction of HRD at both provincial and national level.

APPLICATION OF THE INTERNALISATION MODE

This section determines whether the internalisation mode, with its associated exercising *ba*, was applicable for knowledge sharing in the PHRDF. The results of internalisation can only be confirmed through witnessing the achievements of individuals from embodying explicit knowledge that was shared and converting it into tacit knowledge. Most PHRDF members (82.6%) relied on shared knowledge (explicit) from the PHRDF when faced with a lack of know-how in carrying out certain tasks. The explicit knowledge shared at the meetings, together with guidelines found on the DPSA, were utilised (internalised) to achieve their goals. The study found that most HRD documents were uploaded on the internet through websites that facilitated access for the respondents, the individuals, in turn, internalised the explicit knowledge by reading the guidelines and policies associated with their functions while simultaneously implementing them. As they consult documents and manuals about their tasks and reflect on them, they internalise the explicit knowledge written in order to enrich their tacit knowledge (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000). Exercising *ba* enhances this process by transferring and internalising the shared organisational knowledge back to the individual's knowledge and routines (Rice &

Rice, 2005). Mentoring is an important and valuable exercising *ba* during internalisation as it promotes learning by doing. All of the senior managers interviewed mentioned a type of mentoring they were involved in, such as forming departmental teams, allowing feedback from training or conferences, and one-to-one visits. They cited reasons such as succession planning, building institutional memory, service delivery and promoting a knowledgeable workforce among the reasons for mentoring their staff.

Consistent with the notion of *ba*, which supports the existence of a context for knowledge creation and sharing, the PHRDF provided a *ba* where information is interpreted to become knowledge (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000). In the PHRDF, the different positions and ranks shared knowledge in spite of the hierarchical status usually observed in public service, thereby promoting the engagement of junior staff members with senior members in discussions. *ba* mainly emphasises interaction that transcends both time and space, as participants in a CoP shared time and space with open boundaries (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000) and, in this case, boundaries that cannot be constrained by status. This is because *ba* does not need to be a physical space; it can be a mental or virtual place as well (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000). In turn, experts obtained information and knowledge from novices that could be used to inform the implementation and review of HRD policy thereby gathering knowledge from all HRD practitioners. Therefore, the internalisation phase, together with the exercising *ba*, applied in the PHRDF during the actual implementation of the policies. These findings clearly suggested that when

members of a CoP regularly meet to share their knowledge, whether tacit or explicit, the entire SECI model is activated albeit in different degrees.

SECI MODEL IN A CoP

The quantitative results revealed that the SECI process of knowledge conversion and knowledge sharing yielded successful results in a CoP where the interaction was mainly face-to-face. Therefore there is evidence that the PHRDF was a critical avenue for breaking down silos among the departments as well as interdepartmentally. It also provided a *ba* where hierarchies that could hinder dialogue among the PHRDF members were ignored so much that knowledge flowed from novice to expert and vice versa. The results suggested that a CoP is better equipped to prevent barriers to sharing knowledge, bearing in mind that the sharing of knowledge is voluntary. Comments from respondents supported this assertion, thus:

- Most members are in HRD for years and have vast experience in this field. They are able to assist me if I don't understand.
- Rank is not the issue, but knowledge sharing is in question, hence we can learn from any level/rank within the public service.
- We all, at all levels, should have the same understanding of HRD matters and, in fact, the PHRDF should comprise of members of all levels from HRD.

Findings from the quantitative study showed that there was a preference for the sharing of tacit knowledge from experts that

were often invited by the PHRDF from the national departments for capacitating purposes. These findings indicated that, from time to time, a CoP needs an injection of new explicit knowledge that could be combined with current tacit knowledge in order to form new strategies and enhance further development in members' performances as the internalisation phase suggests. The comments from the results indicated that most PHRDF members anticipate the meetings for their capacitating value and when they were not held, the respondents felt deprived of valuable knowledge. One of the comments was as follows:

HRD is a complicated area and with various fields of specialisation. Therefore, PHRDF is the correct platform for sharing information to ensure skills development is approached almost in a similar way considering uniqueness of each Department.

These findings supported the idea that public service often relied more on people-based approaches to share knowledge, such as forums and networks, than private enterprises where preservation of time spent on meetings is paramount. Quantitative results also revealed that respondents were open to formalising PHRDF, not only as an information sharing avenue overloaded with agenda items, but also as an official knowledge sharing CoP, in order to increase time spent on capacitating others by developing a knowledge sharing guiding policy. This view was pointed out by the respondents, who indicated that the irregularity of PHRDF meetings, which assisted them with knowledge in order to meet the deadlines for submissions of WSPs and ATRs, disadvantaged them. This was exacerbated by the absence of

an institutional repository to preserve best practice and critical know-how shared at the PHRDF meetings. Since the results showed how the entire knowledge conversion from tacit to explicit knowledge contributed to the capacitation of the respondents, this study revealed that there is a potential for using CoPs as a deliberate strategy for promoting knowledge sharing in an organisation. The implications, therefore, would be to use a CoP in public service to initiate a knowledge sharing policy when none exists.

Qualitative results of the study revealed that meetings at the PHRDF, and intra-departmentally, are the major form of knowledge sharing although, on closer probing of senior managers, it was found that these interactions were mostly report-backs on trainings and other meetings attended. Senior managers admitted to the need for a formal institutional repository and a proper knowledge management strategy that would guide knowledge sharing. Despite the lack of a knowledge sharing policy, the senior managers regarded the PHRDF as a relevant platform for knowledge sharing of HRD matters, and that when meetings were irregular they were not impressed. One manager commented that when PHRDF meetings are not held, they rely on their peers from other provinces for updates on new developments from the national department. This reinforces the notion of a CoP as both a knowledge sharing platform and as a hierarchy-breaking space for incorporating new knowledge with current knowledge.

Findings from the qualitative results also promoted the role of the PHRDF as a space where novices are capacitated, as some of the senior managers commented on how they noticed marked improvement

in their staff performance after they had attended meetings. From the findings it can be deduced that a CoP is a less threatening space for both novices and experts, juniors and seniors, to occupy the same space and share knowledge, resulting in learning and better performance as relationships are formed that break formal hierarchies. The SECI model of knowledge conversion from tacit to tacit knowledge during face-to-face interaction, tacit to explicit during presentation by experts to novices, explicit combined with explicit during manual and guidelines development and, finally, from new explicit to new tacit during implementation in workstations is initiated at the PHRDF meetings. Therefore, there is evidence of knowledge creation and sharing, as demonstrated by the SECI model in the PHRDF, that can be replicated in other CoPs and this approach has the potential of being a formal means of retaining knowledge within an organisation if applied throughout the public service.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This study utilised the SECI model to analyse knowledge sharing in the PHRDF in order to ascertain whether it can be formalised as an instrument to prepare interventions that can improve knowledge sharing. The PHRDF is a community of practice formation which functions as a conduit for information and explicit knowledge between the DPSA HRD and the KZN provincial HRD and, therefore, tacit knowledge occurs by default. Based on the findings, tacit knowledge sharing occurred during the attendance of meetings and through the dialoguing that happened when deliberating on complex HRD issues after the meetings. The face-to-face meetings

and networking sessions enhanced the socialisation process, resulting in members perceiving the meetings as a valuable knowledge sharing platform, hence the complaints regarding the infrequency of meetings.

Recorded and distributed minutes, self-note taking, dialoguing with other members after the meetings and consulting of websites demonstrated the externalisation process of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. It was deduced that it is during this stage that practices, processes and procedure are formulated from the articulated explicit knowledge. Externalisation facilitated group dissemination and the reception of knowledge since the members were able to report back to their departments what they had learned from the PHRDF meetings. Findings revealed that explicit knowledge from the PHRDF was also shared intra-departmentally and inter-departmentally, where it was combined with the knowledge that was already in documents and manuals, in order to form new knowledge relevant to emerging HRD issues. The permanent availability of shared knowledge from the PHRDF to other HRD staff members relied on the existence of a platform that would preserve the explicit knowledge and, at the same time, enable access to it. The lack of a computerised communication network or a large-scale database for preserving standard and latest procedures was found to be a weakness of the PHRDF. The combination phase required the existence of a platform that keeps organisational memory. Intranets and websites that were available did not specifically focus on the 'know-how', but inclined mainly on storing information. PHRDF expressed the need for a portal dedicated to discussions that occur at the PHRDF meetings as a 'go to'

for HRD employees who were new or were unable to attend the meetings.

The internalisation process was inevitable as revealed by the findings where the senior managers confirmed the improvements they observed from their staff members after attending the PHRDF meetings. In addition, members themselves alluded to the vacuum in operational knowledge that they experienced when meetings were postponed. Findings revealed that they had access to the latest policy developments through the DPSA websites and through interacting with their counterparts. However, the internalisation process only intensified when they performed their duties.

CONCLUSION

The SECI model was useful for assessing knowledge sharing, within the PHRDF, as most studies do not focus on using it for understanding knowledge sharing within a CoP. Although all of the SECI processes under investigation were applicable, the combination phase was found to be a weakness. This could be attributed to the PHRDF not having set itself out as a CoP, therefore, not having had to put in place all of the strategies necessary to ensure knowledge sharing. It became a CoP by this study's standards since it met the characteristics of a CoP. It must be noted that although there was a weakness found in the combination phase, the PHRDF members found alternative methods to ensure that the explicit knowledge they gained from the PHRDF was combined with the knowledge that was on other mediums, such as their own HRD portals and other external websites. However, the absence of an institutional repository can lead to the loss of

organisational memory, the retaining of which was the purpose of knowledge sharing and this would result in the positive gains obtained from the knowledge sharing initiative.

The study has some significant implications. Firstly, the fact that although it was not formally constituted as a CoP, but managed to apply the SECI model in sharing knowledge implies the adaptability of the model to any group performing the same tasks in an inter-departmental setting. Therefore, the South African public service could use the principles applied in the SECI model for preparing interventions for knowledge sharing in CoPs. Secondly, CoPs can be used for mitigating against the loss of

knowledge when employees exit the public service, because they have been proved to promote a knowledge sharing culture for the organisation. This implies that senior managers can strategically develop CoPs around tasks that are complex and those that are seen as needing rare skills in the public service. Thirdly, the application of a SECI model for knowledge sharing should be a deliberate and planned exercise to ensure that all its principles are applicable, since the findings reveal that there was no platform for accessing the shared knowledge from the PHRDF, and some of the meetings were postponed which deprived members of the knowledge sharing promoted by the interaction.

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E-GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL MODERNISATION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY BASED ON EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA FROM 2003 TO 2014

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ABSTRACT

To what extent does e-governance matter for political modernisation in East and Southeast Asia? What is its impact on political modernisation? The literature shows that there are three elements of e-governance: "open data", "online service" and "e-participation". Political modernisation is divided into three elements: government's transparency, offline political participation and the level of liberty. Using second hand data from the United Nations (UN) database, TI (Transparency International) and V-Dem, the study makes these hypotheses: the development of e-governance will lead to the improvement of political modernisation in East and Southeast Asia; specifically, open data has a positive impact on the government's transparency and; E-participation has a positive impact on offline political participation and the level of liberty. However, it is difficult to confirm the element that has the most important influence on political modernisation, because these three elements have an impact on the different aspects of political modernisation. Overall, this article demonstrates that e-governance has a positive effect on political

modernisation in East and Southeast Asia, and confirms the importance of e-participation. With the continuous improvement of e-participation in this region, ordinary people are increasingly becoming aware of the importance of political participation and regard this as their basic political right.

Keywords: E-governance, political modernisation, East and Southeast Asia, Transparency International, political participation.

INTRODUCTION

An attempt to build an efficient, reliable, transparent and democratic government is a continuous effort. Some scholars agitate for a paradigm shift from old public administration to new public management (NPM) (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Kaboolian, 1998), while some promote the New Public Service (NPS); a movement built on democratic citizenship, community and civil society, organisational humanism and discourse theory (see Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000). Both the NPM and NPS are different from traditional public administration. They can be seen as an innovative way in which

governance could be modeled. While the NPM and NPS frame the thinking about innovative governance or reform of government, information and communication technologies (ICTs) create an opportunity to optimise their practical applications. Arising from this, the question this article asks is: to what extent does e-governance matter for political modernisation in East and Southeast Asia? Coupled to this is its impact on political modernisation.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND GOVERNANCE

Studies show that information and communication technologies (ICTs) have a positive impact on political development. In other words, governance challenges are solved efficiently by using ICTs. Their use for this purpose is called e-governance. This means e-governance is a function of the technologies' innovation. Its influence today has already spread to every aspect of social life. E-governance has experienced prosperous and rapid development around the world in the past two decades. The United Nations (UN) has conducted nine surveys around the world, since 2001, about e-governance development. The results from this study indicate that western countries appear remarkably ahead of many in e-governance construction. This is as a result of their advanced internet technologies and institutional advantages. The top 10 countries surveyed are all western countries, which exclude South Korea and Singapore. E-governance systems in non-Western countries, especially in East and Southeast Asia, have also experienced rapid development. South Korea and Singapore are typical representatives ranking 3rd and

4th in the UN survey of 2016 (United Nation E-government Survey, 2016). Other non-Western countries such as Japan, China and Malaysia also showed a good performance in the survey.

E-governance is a global phenomenon. Its impact is felt around the world, not only in Western or East and Southeast Asian countries. According to Torres *et al.* (2005), the relation between citizens and local governments in the European Union (EU) was narrowed by e-governance. It is said that e-governance promoted the EU local governments' transparency and efficiency. In their study, Parent *et al.* (2005) found that using the internet to transact with the government had a significant positive impact on citizens' trust in the Canadian government and citizens' external political efficacy. E-governance's development in metropolises in the United States (US) is making a significant contribution to government's effectiveness and efficiency. Municipal government websites in the US reduce the cost of information for citizens and allow interested citizens to review the sources of revenue and expenditures for the city government (Scott, 2006). All of these are important inducements for public involvement in the administration of state affairs (Bimber, 2000). However, what are the political implications of all this? In other words, to what extent does e-governance matter for political modernisation?

As in Western countries, the political influence of e-governance in East and Southeast Asia is widely witnessed. Iqbal and Seo (2008) point out that e-governance was a good way of promoting anti-corruption in South Korea. Kudo (2010) holds the view that

e-governance played a role in the public sector's reform of Japan, especially in relation to public accountability. As some scholars point out, the advanced e-government system in Singapore increased public trust in the government (Tan, Pan & Lim, 2005). E-governance's development in China is also very eye-catching. The Chinese government, at either central or local level, used ICTs to improve government efficiency and transparency.¹ Meanwhile, so as to adapt to social reality, the government started setting up official accounts in Weibo, Wechat and other types of social media (Zheng & Zheng, 2014).² By the end of June 2016, there were more than 170 million net users with official accounts in social media (China Internet Network Information Center, 2016a).

E-governance's functions around the world can be roughly divided into two aspects. One is so-called "open government", which means the government opens official data and offers online services for citizens; the other is "e-participation", which means that the government sets up various approaches for citizens to participate in public discussions and the process of policy-making (Tolbert & Mossberger, 2006). In the past decade, many scholars concentrated on open government, one aspect of e-governance, to analyse whether the system can improve

government's working efficiency and to what extent this influence exists. As indicated above, e-governance had a positive impact on government's efficiency (Torres *et al.*, 2006). However, there are fewer studies that attempt to analyse the aspect of e-participation and political influence. This article attends to this paucity.

E-GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL MODERNISATION

To what extent does governance matter for political modernisation in East and Southeast Asia? This article answers this question by analysing global data on e-governance and political modernisation. As indicated above, e-governance can be divided into different aspects or functions. The aspects or functions that have the most important influence on political modernisation, including government transparency, the level of political participation and liberty, are analysed. Political modernisation is a relatively complex concept. After World War II, or even since the period of Enlightenment, many countries began to study their own approaches to reach political modernisation. Largely because of this, political modernisation is regarded as the development of politics in many aspects, which include democratic consolidation (Gould, 1990).

¹For example, Beijing's open government data contains more than 400 datasets, including tourism, education, transportation, land use zoning and medical treatment. People living in Beijing can access the government's website and gain information freely. In spite of the "open data", people today can also use E-government to participate in public affairs. On the Chinese government's Ministry of Environment Protection website, people can provide their opinions on government document drafts, which might be received by government (UN E-government Survey, 2016).

²The development of the internet and social media in China is significant. By the end of June 2016, the total number of Chinese net users had reached 710 million, and the number of social media users reached more than 550 million (China Internet Network Information Center, 2016a). So the Chinese government has to emphasise the importance of social media, and set up official social media accounts to serve people and offer official data and materials to interested citizens.

As Warren (1996) explains, deliberative democracy is a good way to handle authority and to make political decisions. Estlund (2009) is of the view that one of the key indicators to evaluate authority's legitimacy is how political decisions are made. As he elaborates further, democracy is a way of giving every (adult) person an equal chance to influence the outcome of the political decision, even though democracy has no particular tendency to produce good decisions (Estlund, 2009). An important aspect of political modernisation is democracy. This means the structure of authority has changed significantly, indicating the development of rationalisation and legitimacy of authority. Political modernisation, in Max Weber's logic, can also mean the source of authority changing from tradition and charisma to legitimacy.³

In pre-modern society, authority had two main sources: tradition and charisma. The traditional source of authority is about political leaders inheriting authority through ties of blood, while charisma as a source of authority means political leaders gain authority through their glamour, talent or other characteristics. In general, these types of authority lead to centralism. However, in western countries, because of the Enlightenment and political reforms and revolutions, the source of authority has changed fundamentally. Citizens' votes are the essential resource of political leaders' authority. In other words, rationalisation or legitimacy of authority exists widely in western countries. However, in other places, such as East and Southeast

Asia, the development of political modernisation is relatively slow. In general, political modernisation is lagging behind the process of economic and social modernisation in non-Western nations. In some nations of East and Southeast Asia (South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan), political development occurred because of rapid economic growth. However, the progress in the economy and society might also lead to several problems in developing countries, especially corruption. As Huntington (2002) states:

Impressionistic evidence suggests that its (corruption's) extent correlates reasonably well with rapid social and economic modernization [...] The differences in the level of corruption which may exist between modernized and politically developed societies of the Atlantic world and those of Latin American, Africa and Asia, in large part, reflect their differences in political modernization and political development. (Huntington, 2002)

In order to deal with corruption, citizens' participation seems very important and useful (Huntington, 2002) as it could assist in exposing corruption and influence officers to abstain from economic crime. Of course, the movement of anti-corruption, in turn, can foster national political development and modernisation (Huntington, 2002). Therefore, people's participation and the movement of anti-corruption or the so-called transparency of government are important elements that accelerate the progress of political modernisation. Meanwhile, the liberal political

³The change of authority from tradition and charisma to legitimacy means that government is the product of man, not of nature or of God, and that a modern society must have a determinate human source of final authority, obedience to whose positive law takes precedence over other obligations (Huntington, 1966).

environment is also irreplaceable for political modernisation. In a realist context, if the national political environment is not liberal or is very autocratic, both citizens' participation and transparent government would not appear. In other words, the high level of freedom in a national context is the fundamental element that leads to the development of political modernisation. From the discussion above, political modernisation involves three aspects or elements, namely, the situation of liberty, government transparency and political participation or so-called civic engagement.

THEORY OF LIBERTY

Liberty is a widely discussed concept. But it is still difficult to illustrate this concept clearly and accurately. Because of the limitation of the focus of this article, a comprehensive introduction to the theory of liberty is not given. Suffice it to only explain that the theory of liberty can be divided into two types: negative and positive liberty (Bakhtin, 2010; MacCallum, 1967). Negative liberty means that citizens can avoid doing those things that they do not want to do (MacCallum, 1967). This type of liberty is easily acquired. It is everyone's natural right to avoid doing those things that cause damage to others' interests or are contrary to people's willingness or wishes. However, this right is not absolute. It may, in the public interest, be interfered with by the state. For instance, people may be forced to be vaccinated in order to prevent a pandemic.

Secondly, positive liberty means citizens can do whatever they want to do unless those things will hurt others (MacCallum, 1967). This type of liberty was strongly respected

by Mill. In his book, *On Liberty*, Mill points out that the only situation where human beings are allowed to interfere with others' liberal actions is when engaged in acts of self-defense. However, in reality, people cannot do everything that they want to do. Because of this, one may argue that, to a very great extent, positive liberty only exists in theoretical terms. In a democracy, rights are not absolute. People's liberty in different countries is being limited, in one way or another. As Berlin points out, people's liberty in Western countries is limited despite their being characterised as politically developed countries (Bakhtin, 2010). Berlin's point is that individuals may receive many benefits from a paternalistic government without having the opportunity to act in accordance with their own needs and desires. In other words, as Berlin explains, "men ought to choose and be self-directing, even though paternalistic governments might bring benefits to citizens to some degree. But these benefits are not worth enough to be exchanged by freedom" (MacCallum, 1967).

According to Berlin, comparing whether there is freedom or not, the differences between positive liberty and negative liberty are not significant. In other words, in struggling for the different types of freedom, there are more meaningful questions, including how to estimate whether there is freedom or not. To what extent is there freedom? And what is the element or factor that can improve the level of freedom in different countries? Compared to politically developed countries, the level of liberty in many nations in East and South Asia is not very high. And there are many scholars who think that e-governance may bring changes to this situation. Can it? This is the question that this article asks.

GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY

Government transparency is also a key element in political modernisation. Building a transparent government is one of the key aims of the theory of Public Administration, and in some scholars' opinion, the increasing level of government transparency will lead to the development of political modernisation (Relly & Sabharwal, 2009). In the past, because of the low level of government transparency, ordinary people had no access to official information. This led to serious corruption, especially in those undemocratic or semi-democratic nations with a rapidly developing economy (Sung, 2004). Corruption and abuse of power erode the process of political modernisation. Building a transparent government is a very important pursuit of democracy. It is about opening up all of the processes of governance, from policy-making to policy implementation, where ordinary people in one way or another remain engaged. Even though improving the level of government transparency is widely accepted by almost every country, there is still much corruption and black-box operations in countries around the world, particularly in some places of East and South Asia. How to strengthen government's transparency is a hotly discussed topic, especially by scholars in the field of Political Science, Public Administration and Economics.

Some scholars think that technology might be a useful tool or approach to accelerate the progress of government transparency. Bertot *et al.* (2010) are of the view that using the latest ICTs and internet technologies can improve the level of "open government". This may lead to a situation where corruption can be ameliorated and the relationship

between governments and the governed can be improved. In fact, various research studies authenticate this. With e-governance systems and social media, ordinary people have access to government data. State officials attune their behaviour to the virtue of the public office as they know that they now are monitored by hundreds and thousands of citizens (Relly & Sabharwal, 2009).

However, in East and Southeast Asia, transparency is at a low level. From the early 1990s, the viability of authoritarian regimes and the effectiveness of the curbs on expression and information flowing in East and Southeast Asia were increasingly questioned. Many theorists believed that the earlier collapse of authoritarian regimes would eventually be replicated across the region (Rodan, 2004). They thought that the emergence of powerful social groups would lead to the governments in East and Southeast Asia releasing power, and the power structure and its operational mode would change significantly. In other words, a more transparent government could be expected. However, as time went by, these theorists' predictions did not materialise.

In East and Southeast Asia, the collapse of authoritarian regimes or the so-called third wave of democratisation had not widely appeared. As a result, government transparency in the region is still at a relatively low level. However, as Heidegger (1978) points out, technology's function and influence is obvious. E-governance's development in East and Southeast Asia is remarkable, and many scholars have pointed out its political influence, including accelerating the development of government transparency. This, as they argue, could be witnessed in many

nations among the region (Zheng & Zheng, 2014; Kudo, 2010; Iqbal, 2008; Tan, Pan & Lim, 2005). However, these studies on the influence of e-governance on government transparency in East and Southeast Asia did not try to figure out the whole situation in the region through collecting and analysing cross-national data. This article attends to this paucity to answer the question: To what extent does e-governance matter for political modernisation in East and Southeast Asia? Coupled to this is the question of what its implication for political modernisation is.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The political participation of ordinary people is a key factor in political modernisation. In the past, because of the lack of suitable approaches and the drawbacks of authority's structure, ordinary people could participate in nothing, but voting, when it came to politics. But with the innovation of technology and the change of authority's structure, the contents and depth of political participation are enriched. In other words, people today can participate in public affairs and public discussions, apart from only voting; and this is also the so-called democratic process or citizen politics. As Dalton (2013) phrases it:

One aspect of the new citizen politics is political engagement. Expanding political skills and resources should increase the cognitive sophistication of the citizenry. In addition, many people are placing greater emphasis on participating in political and economic decision-making [...] direct forms of action are increasing. People are less likely to be passive subjects and more likely to demand a say in the decisions affecting their lives. (Dalton, 2013)

Many scholars point out that civic or political participation was affected by several factors such as social structure, national history and tradition (Nie, Powell & Prewitt, 1969; Verba, Nie & Kim, 1978; Pye & Pye, 2009). Thus, in some political developing countries and regions, including East and Southeast Asia, political engagement is slowly increasing. This is in spite of the observation of some scholars that civic society was strengthening during the past two or three decades. They cite many cases to demonstrate their observations, including the 1986 mass protest for President Marco's ouster in the Philippines and the highly mobilised civil society in South Korea, which compelled President Chun Doo Hwan to accept the demands of the opposition in 1987 (Alagappa, 2004). But, in spite of these countries becoming democratic nations after civic movement and political reform, the civic engagement in many other nations in the region is still at a low level.

In recent decades, the rapid development and diffusion of the internet and other information tools, however, seem to have accelerated political development or civic engagement in those politically developing countries in East and Southeast Asia (Dalton, 2013). For example, in mainland China, the influence of e-governance could also be widely witnessed. In the past, people had no suitable and useful ways to participate in political and public affairs, but with the diffusion of social media and the development of e-government, people today have their own way to participate in public affairs publicly and liberally (Zhang, 2006; Zhang & Chan, 2013; Zheng & Zheng, 2014). There are many similar cases in East and Southeast Asia. Overall, it is obvious that political modernisation is widely discussed by scholars, and summing

up their opinions, one can say that political modernisation includes three main aspects or factors: liberty, government transparency and political participation. These three factors constitute the operational definition of political modernisation, and this article will choose suitable data from V-Dem and TI to measure all three aspects. There will be more in-depth description below.

E-GOVERNANCE AND ITS FUNCTIONS

As mentioned in the beginning of this article, how to build an efficient, transparent and democratic government is an enduring and difficult question. As time goes by, the level of people's trust in government is falling, both in democratic and undemocratic countries, and many governments around the world have to find a way to improve the efficiency and transparency of their public sectors. The e-government system that benefits from the diffusion of the internet and ICTs is slowly appearing in such situations. According to the United Nations (UN) and the American Society for Public Administration's (ASPA) definition, e-government is about utilising the internet to deliver government information and services to citizens (Torres *et al.*, 2005). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said that using ICTs, particularly the internet, as a tool to achieve better government is what makes for e-governance (Torres *et al.*, 2005).

The essential purpose of building an e-governance system, in the beginning, was to improve the efficiency of government through opening and offering official information and data to ordinary people (Janssen & Estevez, 2013; Torres *et al.*, 2005; Chadwick & May, 2003).

According to empirical studies, the function and influence of e-government seemed very significant. Shim and Eom (2008) found that e-governance had a positive impact on anti-corruption. In the past, people did not have enough access to official data and information, including financial budgets and the process of policy-making. This situation meant that government officers escaped monitoring, to some extent. The development of e-governance created a new way to connect with citizens who could then receive the relevant information and materials about budgets and policy-making. Causally, this appears to be linked to the falling of corrupt behaviours in government employees.

As time passed, the concept of governance that took the place of traditional concepts such as government and administration had spread to every field of political and public administration and even to international political theory. Many scholars and institutions point out different definitions and illustrations of governance. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defined governance as "structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation" (UNESCO, 2016). Rhodes (1996) defines governance as self-organising, inter-organisational networks that complement markets and hierarchies as governing structures for authoritatively allocating resources and exercising control and coordination. There are still many different definitions of governance raised by different scholars or institutions. Summing up these ideas, we can find a common ground which is that government is no longer the only

decision-maker, and corporations, citizens and non-government organisations (NGOs) play an irreplaceable role in political and public affairs.

Against this background, the concept of e-governance was put forward by many scholars. Traditional e-government's systems could not fulfill the requirements of governance, even though citizens could get official data and receive online services through online systems. Specifically, the traditional online system lacked a participatory function so that ordinary people could not take part in political affairs online, including giving their opinion about public policy and discussing public affairs. The functions of e-governance were enriched and the meaning of e-governance was also deepened. So many scholars pointed out that e-governance was much more correct and accurate than e-government. Just as Torres *et al.* pointed out, "e-governance includes e-government plus key issues of governance such as online engagement of stakeholders in the process of shaping, debating and implementing public policies" (Torres *et al.*, 2005).

The function of e-governance expanded on the basis of e-government. At the beginning, the main function of e-government was offering online data and government materials, so that ordinary people could become more knowledgeable about the government and public affairs. In the past, many people had no access to the official data and information, which meant that the government and those officers could escape from being monitored. As the saying goes, "absolute power results in absolute corruption" and power, without monitoring, will also result in serious corruption. The development of e-government

systems allow citizens access to official data and improves the level of transparency of the government. Many online services aimed at facilitating people's lives have today been supplied by government. With the help of the e-government system, people can accomplish many things, such as applying for documents, which had to be done offline in the past. These functions have much common ground, and improve the efficiency and transparency of government; according to some scholars, these functions can be regarded as open government (Tolbert & Mossberger, 2006).

People's participation was the new functional development of e-governance. Online participation or e-participation means that citizens can express their own opinions, take part in discussions about public issues and supervise government work through e-government platforms. In the past, these political rights were difficult to realise, since a suitable approach was lacking. E-governance offers citizens a suitable and relatively workable means to achieve their own rights. Thus, this function is also called e-democracy (Tolbert & Mossberger, 2006). Overall, the functions of e-governance can be divided into two main aspects, which are open government and e-participation.

POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF E-GOVERNANCE IN EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

As many studies on governance found, e-governance had a distinct impact on political development (Ciborra, 2005). It enshrined some important norms and practices of e-democracy. However, the potential for linking e-democracy in civil society with e-government at the level of local and

national state was far from straightforward (Chadwick & May, 2003). Many scholars point out that e-governance's influence could be witnessed in East and Southeast Asia, for example, the Chinese government paid attention to the transparency of the government and has gained significant results in recent years. To some degree, the rapid development of e-governance, especially the aspect of open government, is one of the most important elements that accelerated the process of the Chinese government's transparency (Jun, Wang & Wang, 2014). Specifically, e-governance's influence on political modernisation, according to past studies, could be divided into three main aspects, government transparency, political participation and the field of liberty.

E-Governance's Influence on Government Transparency

As mentioned above, government offers important official data and materials through the e-government system, and as time passes, citizens who recognised the function of e-government will also require the government to send data through an online platform. This situation will help ordinary people grasp important information about the government and monitor the government and officials, to some extent. As a result, the level of government transparency will improve significantly. According to many empirical studies, this hypothesis is true. Some scholars point out that government transparency occurred through one of four primary channels, namely, proactive dissemination by the government; releasing of requested materials by the government; public meetings; and leaking from whistle-blowers (Piotrowski & Van Ryzin, 2007). The e-government system

built by governments can replace these four channels. Firstly, people can receive relevant data and materials from the online system, and if data is lacking, citizens can request it through the online platform. Secondly, with the development of the internet and ICT, online meetings between citizens and government are appearing world-wide, even though this situation is a rare occurrence to some degree. Thus, Bertot *et al.* (2010) point out after an empirical study, that e-government, in particular, has been used in many prominent, comprehensive transparency efforts in a number of nations. The EU is an example that enjoys the advantages brought by an advanced e-government system and the idea of e-governance. As Torres, Pina and Acerete (2006) point out, the internet aids good governance by increasing transparency and customer-oriented service delivery. They indicate that there were opportunities for ICTs to enhance governance in local government, especially in the areas of management and the delivery of services, although the internet was not yet running as an effective medium facilitating democratic input into the policy-making process (Torres *et al.*, 2005).

Apart from the EU, e-governance's influence on government transparency in East and Southeast Asia seems obvious. For example, e-governance in South Korea plays an important role in anti-corruption and improving government transparency. Corruption can be widely found in both democratic and undemocratic, developed and developing countries; the only difference lies in the degree. South Korea, a relatively developed state in Asia, experienced a rapid economic growth, but had been encountering serious corruption. How to solve this situation is one of the main tasks faced by the government and every

citizen in South Korea. Some scholars claim that anti-corruption movements can make a big difference through e-governance. Some online systems, in South Korea, have an impact on anti-corruption, such as the Online Procedure Enhancement (OPEN) system for civil applications of the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG), and the Government e-Procurement System (GePS) will be analysed and generate policy implications for reducing corruption (Iqbal & Seo, 2008).

In short, e-governance's development offers ways to enhance transparency in the process of administrative services. Singapore is another typical representative. As some scholars point out, the advanced e-government system in Singapore shows its function and meaning, which is the obvious increase of public trust in the government (Tan, Pan & Lim, 2005). The reason why citizens in Singapore could show a higher level of trust in the government is that they can access more information from government through the e-government system. In other words, the level of the Singapore government's transparency has improved significantly with the help of e-governance, so that citizens are prone to take a positive attitude towards the government. The question is whether this phenomenon exists widely in East and Southeast Asia. And will the development of e-governance improve the level of transparency in this region? This paper aims to answer these questions with the help of statistical data.

E-Governance's Influence on Political Participation

The extent of people's political participation is one of the most important indicators

for evaluating the level of democracy of a country. In the past, people's participation was not very easy, since there were no suitable means. Thus, a so-called democratic regime or institution almost means only voting, while an e-government system offers a new approach for citizens to take part in public and political issues. In an online platform, citizens can express their opinions about public affairs and monitor the process of policy-making. In reality, there are many scholars concentrating on e-governance's effect on political participation, even though some find that e-governance's influence on civic engagement or political participation is complex. For instance, taking the 100 largest cities in America as an example, Scott (2006) observed their official websites and analysed if the cities' official websites could improve civic engagement and political participation. Scott found some cities' websites were useful and could improve citizens' involvement, while in other cities, it was hard to find the same effect; in other words, the official websites of these cities had no or very little effect on civic engagement and political participation. As time went by, especially with the development of the internet (e.g. Web 2.0), the political effect of e-governance seemed more and more significant. For example, some scholars focused on biodiversity governance, and analysed 2000 networks in Finland, Greece, Poland and the UK, finding citizens in those countries widely engaged in policy-making processes that relate to the environment (Paloniemi *et al.*, 2015).

In the last decade, governments in East and Southeast Asia emphasised the importance of building an outstanding e-government system. The Chinese government, for example, aims to improve their efficiency and transparency

through the e-government system. With the development of the e-government system, other aspects of political affairs are also affected, including civic engagement and political participation. For example, "citizens' political participation, under the development of e-governance, may generate unintended consequences of incremental reform of China's local governance and political institutions" as Jiang and Xu (2009) point out, "even though e-governance in China only leads to limited improvement in administrative efficiency and transparency". He *et al.* (2016), taking the environmental policy-making process, for example, found that today more and more ordinary Chinese people take part in this process, and express their own opinions within the e-government system. Meanwhile, according to a UN e-government survey, the Chinese can provide their opinions on government document drafts, which might be received by the government, on the Chinese government's Ministry of Environment Protection website (UN E-government survey, 2016). So we find that the development of e-governance, especially the development of e-participation, offers ordinary people a chance to take part in political affairs and the process of policy-making.

E-Governance's Influence on Liberty

There is not much research focused on e-governance's influence on the level of liberty, but the impact of e-governance on citizens' liberty seems obvious. Firstly, citizens have more liberty to gain official data and materials since the e-government system was built. In the past, this type of liberty was not held by citizens. Secondly, citizens have more liberty to choose and enjoy government services, since they can choose online

services supplied by e-government's system or choose offline services. Before the development of e-governance, this situation did not exist in reality. In other words, citizens had to choose offline services; they had no liberty in this respect. Thirdly, citizens today have the liberty to participate in the online political discussions or express their opinion through the online platform, something that could not be imagined two or three decades ago. Overall, the development of e-governance brings a higher level of liberty to citizens. As Relly and Sabharwal (2009) emphasise, one of the key elements that e-governance brings to our societies is a more liberal lifestyle, and this lifestyle can also promote so-called "good governance". This paper also aims to test if the development of e-governance will lead to a higher level of liberty in East and Southeast Asia, by analysing collected data.

Methodology

Hypotheses and Research Framework

Hypotheses of this paper

According to the literature review and the main research questions of this article, the hypotheses of this article can be put as follows:

H1a: the development of open data will lead to a higher level of government transparency.

H1b: the development of online service will lead to a higher level of government transparency.

H1c: the development of e-participation will lead to a higher level of government transparency.

H2a: the development of open data will lead to a higher level of offline political participation.

H2b: the development of online service will lead to a higher level of offline political participation.

H2c: the development of e-participation will lead to a higher level of offline political participation.

H3a: the development of open data will lead to a higher level of liberty.

H3b: the development of online services will lead to higher level of liberty.

H3c: the development of e-participation will lead to a higher level of liberty.

Research framework

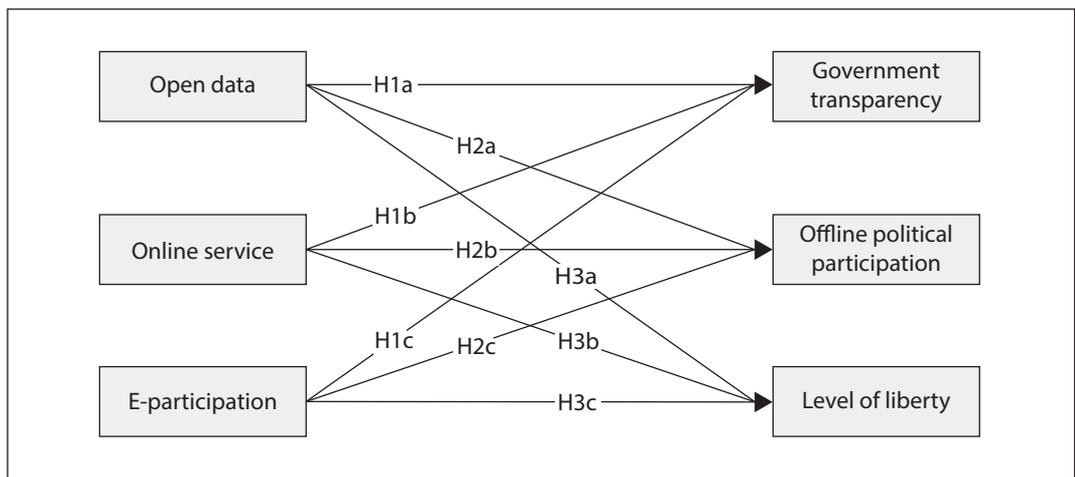
Firstly, the independent variables contain three variables: open data, online service and e-participation. Secondly, the dependent variables contain three variables, namely,

government transparency, political participation, and national liberty. The relationship of these different variables or the so-called framework of this paper can be seen as follows in Figure 1 below:

Data source

There are three main databases used by this study: the UN database, TI and V-Dem. The relative data of independent variables are from the UN database. Firstly, open data, online service and e-participation are sourced from a UN e-government survey. Secondly, data of government transparency are sourced from TI where studies for the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) have been made since 1995. The score of CPI can be regarded as the level of different governments' transparency. Thirdly, relative data of political participation and level of liberty can be found from V-Dem database. There are three things that should be illustrated. First, the UN e-governance survey began in 2001 and there have been nine surveys held so far. However, relative data

FIGURE 1: The research framework of this paper



Source: Author

about e-participation was lacking in the first survey and there was no useful data in the V-Dem database about 2016, and as a result, there are seven surveys that can be used in this study, those of 2003, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014. This study collected the relative data from the three databases about these years. Second, in order to confirm that all of the relevant data mentioned above exists, which is an essential condition for the former research, this study removes those countries that lack the whole, or part, of the relative data in East and Southeast Asia. There are, therefore, 13 countries in this study, namely, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Lao, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam. This study is based on the relative data resourced from these countries in East and Southeast Asia from 2003 to 2014. Third, both independent variables and dependent variables are standardised by this study, for statistical and operational convenience. Specifically, the range of the data is from 0 (the worst) to 1 (the best).

Variables' operation

Open data: Based on the UN e-government survey, there is an index that can represent this element. To be more specific, this index is called Telecommunication Infrastructure Index (TII), which evaluates the status of the development of telecommunication infrastructure that is the essential basis for the improvement of open data. In other words, if the telecommunication infrastructure is not developed very well, people cannot obtain the information or data from the online platform. As a result, the level of open data available is not very high. On the contrary, if the TII index of a country is very high,

which means the telecommunication basis in this nation is good and open, data will be developed.

Online service: Based on the UN e-government survey, there is an index that can be regarded as the situation of online services called Online Service Index (OSI). This index can evaluate the level of online service around the world. If a nation gains a high OSI score, it means the level of online service in this country is relatively high. If the score of a nation is low, it means a high level online service is lacking. The OSI score can represent the element of online service.

E-participation: E-participation aims to evaluate the situation of citizens taking part in online political issues, which is also one of the key elements in the UN e-government survey. In this survey report, the E-Participation Index (EPI) is raised to represent the situation of people's online political participation, thus the EPI data can be used in this research.

Government transparency: Government transparency represents the level of transparency in different countries. The TI database evaluated this situation by setting up a Corruption Perception Index (CPI) in 1995. There is an annual report about CPI in the TI database. Thus, this paper regards the score of CPI as the situation of government transparency.

Offline political participation: The factor of offline political participation aims to test what the situation of ordinary people's public and political engagement in reality is. There is suitable data that can be regarded as the situation of offline political modernisation in East and Southeast Asia, namely, the civil

society participation index (CSPI) from the V-Dem database. This index aims to provide a measure of a robust civil society, understood as one that enjoys autonomy from the state and in which citizens freely and actively pursue their political and civic goals. The questions used to measure CSPI do not conclude something about the internet or e-participation, so these two indexes, EPI and CSPI, are independent of each other. To sum up, the score of CSPI can represent offline political participation in this study.

The level of liberty: According to the literature review, liberty is a complex concept and difficult to illustrate and measure. However, the level of liberty can be roughly divided into two aspects, civil liberty and political liberty, and there are two indexes that can represent these two aspects in the V-Dem database. The first one is the Civil Liberty Index (CLI), which is measured by questions related to the level of absence of physical violence committed by government agents and the level of absence of constraints of private liberties and political liberties. The second one is the Political Liberty Index (PLI). Among the set of civil liberties, these liberal rights are the most relevant for political competition and accountability. The index is based on indicators that reflect government

repression and do not directly refer to elections. The level of liberty can, therefore, be regarded as CLI plus PLI.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 reflects the situation of E-governance and its political influence in East and Southeast Asia. According to the score of Std, we find that these countries have the least difference on the aspect of online service, in other words, the gap of online business-solving and other relative services is relatively small in East and Southeast Asia. The biggest gap in these countries is that of e-participation. To be more specific, the level and quality of citizens' online political participation is very different from country to country in this region. When considering the situation of political modernisation, we find countries have the smallest gap in the score of CPI. In other words, the degree or level of government transparency in East and Southeast Asia is relatively small, and according to the specific score, it is easy to draw the conclusion that the level of government transparency in this region is not very high. There is a big gap between the minimum and maximum score of liberty in East and Southeast Asia, which means that citizens living in different countries in this region enjoy unequal liberty.

TABLE 1: Data description

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std
Open data (TII)	13	0.004	0.730	0.213	0.228
Online service (OSI)	13	0.030	0.425	0.192	0.119
E-participation (EPI)	13	0.023	0.872	0.296	0.239
Government transparency (CPI)	13	0.150	0.733	0.322	0.172
Offline political participation (CSPI)	13	0.170	0.899	0.620	0.229
The level of liberty (CLI + PLI)	13	0.171	1.876	1.179	0.586

Source: Author

TABLE 2: Government's transparency determinants model

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	
	Beta	S.E.	Beta	t
Open data	.685	.095	.909*	7.217
Adj. R ² = .810 P = .000 N = 13 * means P < .001				

Source: Author

TABLE 3: Offline Political Participation Determinants Model

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	
	Beta	S.E.	Beta	t
E-participation	.605	.224	.632*	2.708
Adj. R ² = .345 P = .020 N = 13 * means P < .05				

Source: Author

TABLE 4: Liberty Determinants Model

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	
	Beta	S.E.	Beta	t
E-participation	.628	.577	.624*	2.647
Adj. R ² = .345 P = .023 N = 13 * means P < .05				

Source: Author

Apart from data description, the more important and meaningful aim of this paper is figuring out the determinant model of political modernisation, which has three aspects. First, using the stepwise regression, (see the model in Table 2 above), the score of Adj. R² is 0.810, which means the element of open data can illustrate more than 80% change of government transparency in the statistical context. And the score of Beta is 0.909 (P < .001), which means if the level of open data grows 1 unit, the development's level of government transparency in East and Southeast Asia will grow 0.909 in a theoretical context. There is no doubt that open data plays an important role in improving government transparency in East and Southeast Asia. So H1a as set by this study can be accepted, while H1b and H1c are invalid.

There are many possible reasons that the development of open data can lead to a higher level of government transparency in East and Southeast Asia. The most important and explainable one is that ordinary people can get more information and material from the government, and they can also supervise the department of government and its officials to some degree when the functioning of open data in e-government's system experiences rapid growth. For example, Beijing's open government data contains more than 400 datasets, including tourism, education, transportation, land use zoning and medical treatment. People living in Beijing can access the government's website and gain information freely (UN E-government Survey, 2016). This is a microcosm of China as the development of e-governance, especially the growth

of open data in China, which is remarkable. Many scholars also came to the same conclusion that open data has a significant positive role in the Chinese government's transparency (e.g. Lollar, 2006). Apart from China, the level of transparency in South Korea also experienced an obvious growth. The many online systems in South Korea such as the Online Procedure Enhancement (OPEN), the Government e-Procurement System (GePS), and so on, have an impact on anti-corruption. All of these online systems aim to offer official information to ordinary people and allows them to supervise government and its officials (Iqbal, 2008). To some degree, these online platforms can be regarded as the components of open data. As such, people have more access to official data and can force the government to be more transparent.

Second, using stepwise regression, both open data and online service have been excluded, only e-participation is included in the model in Table 3 on the previous page. The Beta score is 0.632 ($P < .05$), which means if the level of e-participation grows 1 unit, the level of offline political participation will theoretically grow 0.632 units in East and Southeast Asia. To be more specific, e-participation has a significant positive impact on the improvement of the offline political participation in East and Southeast Asia. With such a background, we can accept H2c, while we cannot accept H2a and H2b.

There are two main influential aspects or reasons that can be used to illustrate the impact of e-participation on offline political participation. The first is that the growth of e-participation means that the government liberalises the restrictions on citizen's political participation so that ordinary people have

more opportunity to take part in political affairs. In Sweden, people are calling for participating in political affairs, such as online voting, online discussions, through online platforms (Phang & Kankanhalli, 2008). The percentage of people's political participation has improved since the time and cost of online political participation is low. Besides Sweden and other Western countries, many countries in East and Southeast also try to build completed online platforms so that citizens living in these countries can take part in online discussions and other political issues freely and conveniently. Countries in East and Southeast Asia gained a good performance in e-participation, which can be seen from UN e-government surveys. The fact that the government encourages ordinary people to take part in political affairs through online platforms and other internet tools is an indication that the government in East and Southeast Asia hopes ordinary people can play a more important role in public affairs and political issues. As time goes by, citizens will show more interest and be willing to take part in many types of offline political affairs. The second one is that ordinary people are showing more interest in political participation since the development of e-participation. Because of the convenient process and cost saving, citizens are more willing to take part in public affairs online than offline. When citizens participate in public affairs frequently and regularly, they will cultivate the habit of political participation and their sense of political efficiency will also improve. All of these create the necessary conditions that encourage and push people to take part in political issues offline.

Third, according to Table 4 (page 735), we can understand the liberty determinant

model. Both open data and online service has been excluded, which means only e-participation can be seen as the explanatory variable for the development of liberty. To be more specific, according to the score of Adj. R^2 , this model illustrates a change of liberty of 33.4%, theoretically. Specifically, the Beta score of e-participation is 0.624 ($P < .05$), which means if the level of e-participation grows 1 unit, the level of liberty will increase 0.624 units in statistical context. Based on the illustration, we can accept H3c as set by this study and abandon H3a and H3b.

It is not difficult to understand the influence of e-participation on the level of liberty. On the whole, the level of liberty in countries in East and Southeast Asia is not very high, especially compared to Europe and North America. The two most important reasons that limit the level of liberty in this region are that citizens cannot enjoy political rights such as freedom of speech, and ordinary people have no or little access to political issues, therefore, they cannot play a role in the country's political life, while with the help of e-governance people can extend their political rights in many respects. For example, people can enjoy a higher level of freedom of speech through the online platform, and China is a typical case. Although citizens still cannot express all of their opinions, especially negative discourses about the central government and political highest-level persons, ordinary people today can express their feelings and advise departments and specific officials through online platforms set up by the government, and a considerable number of opinions and much advice will be fed back (Yang, 2009). In addition, the improvement of e-participation means that people have more useful and workable

approaches to use in order to take part in political issues, which is a big change for many countries in East and Southeast Asia, as people living in these countries previously had no or very little chance to participate in public discussions, let alone make their opinions and advice known in the past (Chen *et al.*, 2006). Nowadays, changes exist in this region since the improvement of e-governance, especially the growth of e-participation. The level of liberty in East and Southeast Asia is also increasing.

CONCLUSION

First, according to the statistical results, we can draw the conclusion that e-governance has a positive impact on political modernisation in East and Southeast Asia. Specifically, the improvement of open data can promote the growth of government transparency, while two other elements, online service and e-participation, have no significant effect on government transparency. This finding is the same as that of many other empirical studies. For example, Relly and Sabharwal (2009) point out that telecommunication infrastructure (TI), which is described as open data in this study, influences the perceptions of government transparency in a positive and significant way. In addition, e-participation can be regarded as the variable that explains the improvement of offline political participation and the level of liberty. In contrast, online service and open data cannot affect these two dependent variables in statistical context. This finding is very different to that of some former empirical studies. Based on statistical results, many scholars evaluated e-participation as not very high, regarding this function of e-governance as something dispensable and useless (Saglie & Vabo, 2009;

Goldfinch, Gauld & Herbison, 2009). However, according to the regression results obtained by this study, e-participation has a positive impact on offline political participation and the level of liberty in East and Southeast Asia.

Second, it is difficult to confirm what the element is that has the most important influence on political modernisation, because these three elements have an impact on the different aspects of political modernisation. As a result, when comparing the element that can affect political modernisation in East and Southeast Asia to the largest degree, it is better to discuss this agent separately. Specifically, if we consider the aspect of government transparency, there is no doubt that open data needs to be emphasised first. While offline political participation and the level of liberty are considered, the importance of e-participation is higher than these two elements.

Third, we can illustrate the influence of e-governance on political modernisation in three aspects. The first one is that ordinary people can access more information and materials from the government, and they can also supervise the department of government and its officials, to some degree, when the function of open data in e-government's system experiences rapid growth, which

can help increase the level of government transparency. Just as Bertot *et al.* (2010) point out, the combination of e-government, Web-enabled technologies, transparency policy initiatives and citizen's desire for open and transparent government are formenting a new age of opportunity that has the potential to build a more transparent and reliable government. The second one is that the growth of e-participation means that the government liberalises the restrictions on citizen's political participation and ordinary people will show more interest in political participation, which are the useful conditions that promote the development of the offline political participation. The third one is that the improvement of e-participation will create an approach for the public to enjoy a higher level of political rights and take part in political issues. Both of them are favourable factors for promoting the level of liberty. The influence of e-governance on political modernisation in East and Southeast Asia seems to have been proved. What should be pointed out here is that the overall situation about e-governance still needs to be enhanced and improved, according to the collected data. If the level of e-governance in East and Southeast Asia always lies at a relatively low level, political modernisation in this region will also stagnate.

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RESPONSES OF PRECARIOUS WORKERS TO THEIR CONDITIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA'S PUBLIC SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

This article contends that because of austerity measures and the pressure to limit its wage bill, the public sector is a major user of precarious workers. The jobs these workers fill are low-paying, with no benefits. They represent an attempt by the state to deal with structural unemployment and poverty in a situation where the economy is not absorbing the working population. There has been research on the various forms of precarious work in the public sector; the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is an outcome of this. Based on in-depth interviews, internet sources, documents and newspapers, this article makes an original contribution to the study of the role of precarious workers at all levels of government and at universities and state-owned companies. It examines how precarious workers, who are not usually heard in the public discourse, respond to their working conditions in the public sector. The study contributes to a redefinition of public administration to include precarious workers as one of its constituencies.

Keywords: Precarious workers, public sector, state, wages, working conditions.

INTRODUCTION

Economic globalisation increases the integration of national economies, the decline of some of them, the widespread privatisation of social services and a reduction in the role of the state in providing social services such as education, transport and health. Austerity measures have had far-reaching implications for state administration and the public. In South Africa, there has been a growing area of scholarship on how the state, which includes government, universities and state-owned companies, has increasingly used labour-brokers, casual labour, temporary workers and contract workers in the provision of public services (Miraftab, 2004; Samson, 2007). Based on interviews, newspaper articles and internet sources, this article argues that, during the post-apartheid period, South Africa's public administration has grappled with complex industrial relations characterised by precarious work, or employment relations that involve more pronounced labour insecurity.

The first part of this article provides an overview of the literature on precarious work and argues that scholarship can help to inform public administrators of its implications, since

these forms of work are becoming prevalent. It is also argued that South African literature on precarious work, in the public sector, has not fully recognised the views and voices of the precarious workers it employs. The second aspect of the article reports on the methodological approach used to collect data. Thirdly, the article presents research findings that point to the conclusion that precarious work has fundamentally reconfigured industrial relations in the public sector by creating a two-tier labour market system comprising relatively stable and unionised public sector workers on the one hand, and an insecure and unstable workforce on the other.

PRECARIOUS WORKERS

A review of the literature on precarious work, in South Africa, revealed that scholarship in this area has tended to focus on sub-sectors of the public service. For example, Samson (2007), Hemson (2015) and Theron (2014) concentrate on the EPWP, in which vulnerable workers are employed on a short-term basis in road construction and the cleaning of towns and cities. Other scholars have focused on precarious work at public universities (Bardill, 2008; Lockett & Mzobe, 2016). While these contributions help us to understand the conditions of "precarity" in the public sector, this article seeks to provide an overall description of precarious work in various sub-sectors of the public sector. It also gives an account of how precarious workers in the different sub-sectors respond to their vulnerable condition. This kind of focus is currently missing from the literature on public administration and precarious work. In reviewing the literature and developing an understanding of the phenomenon, the article borrows from sociologists who

have grappled with the meaning of work in the context of the general lowering of labour standards, austerity measures and a declining welfare state.

According to Kalleberg (2009), precarious work has, historically, accompanied wage labour; it is as old as paid work itself. However, since the 1970s, precarious work has become a generalised phenomenon, affecting almost all spheres of paid work. Kalleberg (2009:2) comments: "by 'precarious work', I mean employment that is uncertain, unpredictable and risky from the point of view of the worker. Resulting distress, obvious in a variety of forms, reminds us daily of such precarity". Unlike permanent workers with predictable incomes, benefits and job security, precarious workers' employment conditions are unstable, fragile and flexible, which is why precarious work tends to be associated with stress and anxiety.

The concept of precarious work can be traced to the work of Bourdieu. In the 1960s, he viewed precariousness as a modern subjugation of workers that led to a permanent state of insecurity, low wages and poor working conditions (Bourdieu, 1963). In Algeria in the 1950s, Bourdieu (1963) described a stratum of black workers who did not enjoy the same social and economic protection as their white counterparts. He referred to these precarious workers as the "precariat". In his examination of precarious work, Standing (2011) concluded that "this book presents the Precariat – an emerging class, comprising the rapidly growing number of people facing lives of insecurity, moving in and out of jobs that give little meaning to their lives". Standing (2011:7) saw the precariat as a new class that was distinct from the "salarariat": those earning

salaries and working for the public sector and private corporations, highly skilled consultants and technicians earning huge amounts of money from piecework, and permanent workers or members of the working class, most of whom belonged to trade unions, earned better wages and had job security.

There was a generally downward variation in labour standards, and strata that were considered to be middle-class or professional in the 1960s and 1970s were organised into trade unions or interest groups involved in strikes and mobilisation. This was confirmed by one commentator:

Public sector workers have moved to the core of the organised working class in recent decades – with teachers, lecturers, civil service workers, council workers and health workers among those set to take part in the momentous strikes planned for 30 November 2011 (Choonara, 2011).

For example, some scholars argued that teachers, nurses and other professionals within the public sector were confronted by "proletarianisation" as a result of the increased intensity of work caused by staff shortages and loss of professional control over the work (Hlatshwayo, 2015; Filson, 1988). Filson makes this point: "similarly, the state can also threaten each profession's collegial control by breaking its monopoly over important aspects of the reproduction of labour power. In this case proletarianisation is the consequence of this loss of state-legitimated professional control" (Filson, 1988).

Commenting on the global overview of precarious work in the public sector, Rosa Pavanelli, the General Secretary of the Public

Service International (PSI), an international federation of public servants, commented:

For the past 40 years, liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation have undermined wages, secure employment and reduced the quality of and access to public services. The financial crisis only intensified these trends. Today's globalised world produces precarious work, rising unemployment and increasing inequality which disproportionately affect young people (Pavanelli, as cited in the Public Service International, 2016).

Vaughan-Whitehead (2014) states: "similarly, in the United Kingdom, the shift of many public sector employees from full-time to involuntary part-time has led to an increased proportion of low-paid workers among public sector employees". Austerity measures and financial crises in Greece, Cyprus, Spain and Italy intensified conditions of precarity among public sector workers, with the reduction of benefits for public sector workers, retrenchments and the increased use of vulnerable workers in the public sector (Vaughan-Whitehead, 2014).

While developed nations view precarious work in the public sector as a new phenomenon, it can be argued that in Africa's public sectors, precarious work is generalised. Abiodun-Badru (2015) argued:

Precarious work conditions are not the same the world over. Therefore, there is a need to identify peculiar issues on precarious work that are most critical to the African region and how these issues should be addressed. In Africa, precarious work is the 'norm' and has been for a long time. (Abiodun-Badru, 2015)

There has been a proliferation of literature examining various forms of precarious work in the context of South Africa's public administration. Looking at the EPWP of the South African government, some authors have argued that this form of temporary work in road construction, waste-picking and cleaning has enabled some of the unemployed to earn a wage that alleviated their poverty and allowed them to support their families in the short term (Hemson, 2008; Maharaj-Sampson & Ferreira, 2015). However, because EPWP projects were short-term, they did not have a sustained effect on poverty alleviation. Satumba (2016) concludes "... (t)he duration of the project is determined and the results indicate that most projects were short-lived and did not ensure a consistent provision of income for the participants". Other scholars contend that the use of EPWP in the public sector has created a two-tier labour market in which vulnerable workers do not enjoy labour rights, decent wages or benefits, unlike the core of permanent public sector workers with better wages and benefits (Samson, 2007; Jacobs 2015).

Cuts in state funding for universities have resulted in the escalation of outsourcing in South African public universities (Bardill, 2008; Grossman, 2009). According to Lucket and Mzobe (2016), "the University of Cape Town (UCT) engaged in extensive retrenchments and outsourcing of all 'support services', such as cleaning, catering and maintenance". UCT pioneered outsourcing in South African higher education institutions; the University of the Witwatersrand and others soon followed. This was part of a global trend in the context of neo-liberalism. Largely comprising women working as cleaners, outsourced workers earn extremely low

wages and continue to subsidise universities through a cheap labour system in the context of declining state subsidies and support for public universities (Bardill, 2008).

Because of the prevalence of HIV and Aids and staff shortages in the public health sector (Jili & Nkosi, 2015), home-based care by volunteers and community healthcare workers, supplied by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), continue to be part of South Africa's public healthcare system (Schneider *et al.*, 2008; Haines *et al.*, 2007). Commenting on the conditions of vulnerable workers in the home-based care system, Akintola (2006) says:

Home-based care, by creating a disproportionate burden on women, is exacerbating existing gender inequities. It is argued that a thorough understanding of how home-based care undermines the physical health and psychological wellbeing of already vulnerable women is crucial for informing policies on home-based care (Akintola, 2006).

Community and adult education was also affected by precarious forms of work. Adult education had always faced chronic shortages of funding by the state. The White Paper of the Department of Post-School Education argues:

Given the context of under-investment in adult education, the introduction of community colleges will require significant investment efforts. Institutional development, including infrastructure and staffing, represent key expenditure areas (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013).

Commenting on the closure of some public adult learning centres, the precarious working conditions of adult educators and the need to improve them, Hlatshwayo (2015) concludes, "adult educators have to be recognised as public sector workers providing a crucial service to working-class people". Literature on precarious work in the public sector has tended to adopt a sub-sectoral approach. While this has helped other scholars to grapple with the phenomenon of precarious work within sub-sectors of the public sector, such as universities, state companies and various tiers of government, this article provides an overview of precarious work at various levels of government and at state-owned and state-funded institutions. It emphasises the voices of precarious workers in the public sector, revealing their less-written-about social agency.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article is based on qualitative research conducted, in 2016, in eight metropolitan councils in South Africa: Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, East London, Durban, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Bloemfontein. These cities were chosen for their high concentration of industries and economic activities. Forty workers were interviewed, including cleaners and security guards employed at universities; community health-care workers (CHWs) in clinics; numeracy and literacy workers servicing learners in public schools; adult educators employed by the Department of Higher Education and Training; and EPWP workers employed on municipal projects.

An in-depth interview is an important tool for developing an intensive, nuanced

understanding of views, thoughts and perceptions of particular issues (Boyce & Neale, 2006). The interviews conducted for this study were significant because the views and perceptions of precarious workers rarely feature in discussions about public administration, although, as this article will show, these workers have become part of the public sector's delivery of critical services. The themes discussed with interviewees included their biographical details, employment relationships, the nature of their work, wages, benefits and collective and individual responses to conditions of precariousness in the workplace. All the interviews were face-to-face, allowing for an interaction and proper follow-up to questions. Pseudonyms were used to hide the identities of interviewees.

While the interviews provided invaluable information on how the precarious workers experienced working for the state and the challenges they face in the workplace, it must be noted that interviews alone can contain biases and gaps, as people sometimes forget the minute details of events (Wyse, 2015). Interviews were, therefore, supplemented by analysis of newspaper articles and other documentary sources from the internet. According to Earl *et al.* (2004), "the 'hard news' of an event tends to be relatively accurate. However, a newspaper's decision to cover an event at all is influenced by the type of event, the news agency and the issue involved".

The newspaper reports covered protests and strikes by precarious workers in the public sector. Although news reporting is not free of bias, it can provide accurate information on an event, as well as on issues and responses

from those involved. The internet has made digital sources available, such as newspaper articles, documents and academic publications (Hine, 2015). The sources consulted for this article covered precarious workers in the public sector and a government policy document intended as a response to the conditions of vulnerable workers.

To code or classify data, a manual method was used. It entailed reading transcribed interviews, newspapers and internet sources and identifying details relating to these research questions: What are the forms of precarious work in the public sector? How do precarious workers in the public sector respond to their condition of precariousness?

The coding, as part of data analysis, was guided by an inductive approach, privileging the identification of words and phrases in the data sources. The data was not examined through a predetermined theoretical lens that confirmed or contested existing constructs (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

FINDINGS

Manual Work and Precarious Work

Interviewees were involved in manual work that tended to be tedious, such as cleaning, gardening and security services. This work was previously permanent, with decent wages and benefits. Women, who were single parents with family responsibilities, such as caring for children and the sick, comprised cohorts of these workers. Their level of formal education was below matriculation, meaning that their upward social mobility and career advancement in the public sector was unlikely. However, some of those with

matriculation, who had not been absorbed by the post-school education system, also join the precariat of the public sector.

Mora Mohabi is a worker with a matriculation qualification; her first job was with a catering company that paid R500 per week. She then worked for the City of Ekurhuleni's "Clean City" community works programme and lived in a shack. According to Mohabi:

The working conditions are bad. We have to clean the streets & other parts of the city... The uniform is not enough. Safety measures are poor. We also do not have enough tools. (interview, Mohabi, 20 September 2016, Germiston South).

Jabulani Mpitsi, who lived in Bloemfontein, had not completed his high school education due to financial pressure. He worked as a supervisor in the EPWP of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. He started working as a cleaner, sweeping and cleaning the streets of Rocklands Township near Bloemfontein. Cleaning the streets used to be done by full-time, permanent employees of a municipality. Mpitsi explained:

We clean the streets. We work four days in a week. This is an EPWP project. It is about poverty alleviation. I was unemployed before and started working in this project on the 31st of March 2016. The money is not enough and the project will come to an end in August 2016, before the local government elections. I took the job because it puts bread on the table (Interview, Mpitsi, 4 June 2016, Bloemfontein).

In 2013, cleaners employed by an outsourcing company and working at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) complained that

they kept the university toilets clean, but the University did not want to recognise them financially. There were also concerns about harassment of protesting workers by the outsourcing company (Sithole, South African Broadcasting Corporation, 14 November 2013).

A Tendency Towards "Proletarianisation"?

The rise of precarious work was accompanied by a tendency towards "proletarianisation", or a lowering of labour standards, especially among public sector workers regarded as middle-class professionals. This trend has led to an increase in the unionisation of professionals who have been "proletarianised". According to Hlatshwayo (2015), "proletarianisation", in the context of adult educators, is:

... a process of adult educators which, among other things, is a concept that seeks to explain the often generalised lowering of working and living standards of professionals like teachers and nurses, in a context of neoliberal austerity. One aspect of the "proletarianisation" is the process of downward social mobility, and further exposure to vulnerability, low wages, irregular incomes and poor working conditions (Hlatshwayo, 2015).

In this instance, proletarianisation means that teachers of adult learners, with formal qualifications, are driven into the ranks of the proletariat, who earn low wages as manual workers. These teachers used to work in public adult learning centres and earned a regular income from the state. However, austerity measures and changes

in government departments lowered their labour standards and precariousness became entrenched, so that many of them were unable to purchase food or service their bonds.

Malusi Vavi holds a teaching diploma and had enrolled in a Master's programme at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. He coordinates adult education programmes in the Port Elizabeth area. Vavi described the poor working conditions of adult educators:

At the centre [adult education centre] the issue that normally creeps in is [takes deep breath] not having enough, err, let's say issues of stationery, learning and teaching support materials for the centre. Also, the facilities that we use – we depend on day schools if I may say. Most of the time, we operate at the main centre in the afternoons. You will find that we are allocated classes that don't have electricity. You have people like the elderly who are coming here to the centre. At some stage you are given classes that are not at the ground floor, you have to use staircases and all that, which is a little bit dangerous in a dark place for them (Interview, Vavi, 19 May 2016, Port Elizabeth).

Vavi also commented on the conditions of adult educators:

... Again, you are working with people who are demotivated because of the conditions of service... That is what we encounter each and every day, because it is like when you are in adult education simply because people are not employed on a permanent basis[, there] is a waiting room. (Interview, Vavi 19 May 2016, Port Elizabeth).

Vavi's testimony was corroborated by John (2015), who stated that when the adult education section of the Department of Education moved to the newly-established Department of Higher Education and Training in 2014, the payment of adult educators stopped. One of the educators hinted that the problem was not just about a transition, but had to do with chronic under-funding of adult education in South Africa, exacerbated by the transfer to a new department. This increased the vulnerability of adult educators, as many of them defaulted on their housing bonds. Some were evicted and there were reports of adult educators soliciting donations from learners so that they could travel to teaching venues. Some adult educators were helped by their families and friends to buy food and electricity. John commented:

Several adult education centres in other parts of the country are facing the same fate. And hundreds of teachers at centres like these are wrestling with growing debt and eviction from their homes, because they have not received their salaries (John, *Mail & Guardian*, 26 June 2015).

Another emerging form of proletarianisation related to community educators supporting school learners from poor communities. Township and rural schools faced challenges, such as overcrowding, poor infrastructure and a shortage of books and learning resources. In addition, parents and guardians of learners tended to have little formal education and were, therefore, unable to help learners with their work. There were a number of local initiatives to support learners from poor areas and these provided a crucial public service that tended to be ignored when interventions in schooling

were discussed. Supporting learners involved helping them with homework and convening reading, writing and numeracy classes on weekends.

Pelly Kimalo holds a matriculation certificate and had attended a number of training sessions on numeracy and literacy teaching. Kimalo was involved in homework and literacy support in Freedom Park, a poor area south of Johannesburg. Kimalo said:

Well, after doing my matric a friend of mine introduced me to CLING. We help kids with homework. We also play games with them. I started in 2014. CLING operates in containers in Freedom Park. The working conditions are bad. We have no resources. We do not have electricity. I am a volunteer. We are not getting paid. We are doing very important work (Interview, Kimalo, 3 October 2016, Johannesburg).

Despite these difficulties, Kimalo said, "I won't leave CLING. I'll work until Jesus comes back, because it is nice working with kids. As CLING facilitators we also discuss our problems and advise each other" (interview, Kimalo, 3 October 2016, Johannesburg). This indicates that, despite the poor working conditions and the proletarianisation process, these precarious workers enjoy serving their communities.

There were attempts to recognise CLING facilitators by the Department of Education between 2012 and 2014. According to Baatjies:

The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), through an Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) centre in the

community, made available stipends for CLING facilitators. However, the stipends lasted for a period of time only and were then stopped because they were 'for adult literacy only' The facilitators became unpaid volunteers, once again. (Baatjes, 2016).

Halting the payment of stipends for CLING facilitators was the result of two factors. First, the government split the Department of Education (DOE) into the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE). The adult education section of the DOE was taken over by the newly-established DHET. This change occurred in the context of a general decline in funding for adult and community education and related to the crisis faced by the adult learning centres in 2015 (Hukwe, 2015), which was mentioned earlier.

Wages

With regard to remuneration, there were two wage regimes governing precarious workers. First, those regarded as volunteers earned absolutely nothing. Second, there were those who earned low wages.

Phumla Mashuma, a facilitator in a CLING project in Freedom Park, talked about how government support in the form of stipends declined:

Impressed by the project, in 2012, the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) made available stipends to support CLING facilitators in Freedom Park. The stipends provided the CLING project with much-needed stability and support for community facilitators who did not just support school children, but were also beginning

to develop their own skills as community educators. However, the restructuring of the Department of Education and breaking it up into Basic Education and Higher Education and Training impacted negatively on CLING in Freedom Park. The end of funding of stipends, in 2014, saw the number of facilitators decrease from fifteen to nine (Interview, Mashuma, 3 May 2016, Johannesburg).

According to the policy brief calling for the recognition of CLING facilitators as employees of the Department of Higher Education:

The educators have always been volunteers and they continue to work as such. For a period of time, the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), through an Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) centre... made available stipends for CLING educators. However, the stipends were stopped, because they were 'for adult literacy only' and CLING fell outside of this stipulation (Baatjes, 2017).

CLING facilitators in Gauteng earned nothing because they were regarded as volunteers, although they provided a service by providing poor, working-class learners with homework support and tuition in literacy and numeracy.

Another category of precarious workers serving the state were EPWP workers and university-based workers. They earned low wages and received no benefits. For example, in 2015, it was reported that EPWP workers in a poor area called Shalcross, near Durban, earned R2 000 per month. To add insult to injury, Rondganger (*Daily News*, 23 April 2015) reported that "[EPWP workers] were

forced to pay half of their meagre salaries, received as part of a government jobs programme, to a ward committee member for apparently organising their employment".

Government's proposal of a R3 500 per month minimum wage did not cover EPWP workers; the argument was that EPWP workers worked only three days a week. Reflecting on debates around minimum wages and the EPWPs, Mayobongwe Maqhina (2017) commented: "according to the agreement, the minimum wage, which provides for R20 per hour, will be overseen by a seven member commission [of the National Economic Development and Labour Council] (Maqhina, Business Report, 12 February 2017).

Aaron Mokoena, who works for an outsourced company, cleaning at a university, commented:

... in 2013, [we were] getting paid R1600, which was still not enough". The annual wage of Mokoena was R19 200. Mokoena was asked, "Was UIF [Unemployment Insurance Fund] deducted [from your wage]? The response was, "Yes. UIF was deducted but we just didn't have provident fund" (Interview, Mokoena, 27 January 2017, Johannesburg).

Without comparing the salaries of cleaners and vice-chancellors, there have been serious concerns about wage gaps at universities. In fact, some vice-chancellors earn more than the President of South Africa. In 2012, Professor Malegapuru Makgoba of the University of KwaZulu-Natal was "the highest-paid serving vice-chancellor in the country, with a salary of more than R3.4 million a year" (City Press reporter, 21 January 2012, City Press).

Precarious Workers Respond to Their Wages and Conditions of Work

There were three types of responses to wages and conditions of precarious workers employed by the state or working on state projects. First, the participants appreciated the support of the state, which enabled them to earn a salary and helped them survive in a context of unemployment, poverty and inequality. The second group had lobbied for earning decent income and were employed as permanent workers. The third response involved strike action or work stoppages over wages and conditions of work.

First, in 2015, Kgomotso Mathuloe, of the Department of Public Works, reported that "about 40 000 EPWP participants are employed in the Zibambele Road Maintenance Programme, which is a labour intensive programme implemented by the Department of Transport in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN)" (Mathuloe, 2015). One of the female EPWP workers reflected on the contribution of the programme to her livelihood:

I am a widow and have a responsibility, as a mother, to uphold the dignity of my family through the provision of basic needs, and before I was given an opportunity to participate on Zibambele Road Maintenance programme, I could not sustain my family. Thank you, government, for providing us with such good opportunities to sustain our families (in Mathuloe, 2015).

Members of the project work for 60 hours or less a month, enabling them to look after their families and get involved in other economic and social activities (Government Innovators Network, 2015). However, some participants

wanted their working days extended so that they could earn more money. This indicated that wages were one of the major concerns of all the precarious workers employed by the state (Ngobese, 2015).

Second, CLING facilitators in Gauteng had rendered homework assistance, numeracy and literacy classes in Freedom Park, Evaton and Sebokeng since 2007. Their work was to support learners who attended public schools in working-class areas. The parents of these learners tended to be functionally illiterate and some of them worked long hours and had no time to assist their children with homework. CLING facilitators wanted to be recognised as state employees providing an essential service. With the support of the University of Johannesburg's Centre for Education Rights and Transformation and the CLING groups in Gauteng, they recently approached the DHET to recognise them as community educators and part of the Department's post-school education sector. A policy brief calling for the recognition of facilitators as government employees has been drafted and will be submitted to the DHET. CLING is asking the government to pay monthly salaries, as it does with other government workers. The policy brief argues:

... it is clear that acknowledgement and recognition is given to initiatives or entities like CLING, yet, to date, the educators and the important work they do has gone largely unrecognised by government. The educators have always been volunteers and they continue to work as such. For a period of time, the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), through an Adult Basic Education and Training

(ABET) centre in the community, made available stipends for CLING educators (Baatjes, 2017).

Third, strikes and protest action have been initiated by precarious workers employed by the state. In 2013, Thamela (2013) reported: "Recently, community health workers picketed outside the Gauteng Department of Health, demanding that the Department employ them directly." The "externalisation" or outsourcing of health services by the state to NGOs has complicated matters (Theron, 2014), especially for home-based care workers who look after bedridden patients. Some of them work free of charge for an NGO, but they normally receive salaries after a three-month period. Government funds NGOs that have to pay stipends to home-based care workers. A similar strike was organised by lay counsellors serving HIV-positive patients in 2010 (Thamela, 2013).

A campaign labelled "outsourcing must fall" was waged by university workers and students who demanded an end to outsourcing and permanent employment of workers who did cleaning and other outsourced services. A number of unprotected strikes hit universities in 2016; they were preceded by student protests demanding "free, quality higher education". Luzy Malunga, a cleaner at the University of the Witwatersrand, acknowledged the role played by students in making sure outsourced workers were "insourced" by the university; these workers were also able to get a wage increase of nearly 100% after an unprotected strike. Malunga said:

... [S]ince 2000 we were earning R2 700. It's only now we are getting R5 700. The task

team [comprised of worker representatives and university administration] gave us feedback. They promised us that the University will be insourcing all the contracts next year in March, and then on top of that there will be a top up at the end of January (Interview, Malunga, 14 December, 2016, Johannesburg).

The Casual Workers Advice Office (CWAO), an NGO supporting precarious workers, reported:

On Friday 19 April [2013], the South African Post Office agreed to employ over 200 casual workers on a permanent basis. The workers, from the Witpos Depot in Johannesburg, went on strike on Tuesday 16 April, 2013, with the single demand that they be made permanent by SAPO. By Friday [19 April 2013], SAPO caved in to the workers' demand (Casual Workers Advice Office, 2013:1).

The South African Post Office is a state company providing postal, courier and banking services to South Africans. Workers employed through labour-brokers formed a committee called the Casual Leadership Committee, which led an unprotected strike and rejected the leadership of the Communication Workers' Union, a Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) affiliate.

Fourth, trade unions such as the National Health Education and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) tend to recruit and organise permanent employees of the state, leaving precarious workers with no voice in labour relations. In December 2016, Mgudlwa announced:

A new trade union has been born in South Africa. The National Union of Care Workers of South Africa (NUCWOSA) comes into being at a time when the national minimum wage of R3 500 (\$242) is making its way in the country. From 23 to 25 November, eighty care workers from all nine provinces (drawn from both the health and social development sectors) gathered in Johannesburg to form the new national union (Financial Health for Non-Profit 2016).

The new union formed by community health workers complained that care workers earn as little as R1 000 per month, and some of the union's demands included better working conditions, permanent employment by the state, benefits and decent wages.

Fifth and finally, precarious workers were able to use the law to challenge their position of precariousness. The Gauteng Community Health Care Forum (GCHCF) was formed by the Community Health Workers (CHWs), in 2015, to campaign for their acceptance as permanent employees of the Gauteng Department of Health, and for improved working conditions (GCHCF 2016). In 2016, the organisation won a legal victory after the Johannesburg Labour Court ruled that care workers servicing patients in Gauteng should be regarded as employees of the Gauteng Department of Health. The Court ruled, "... [I]n the light of the foregoing, the applicants are declared to be employees of the respondent, as contemplated by the *Labour Relations Act, 1995*" (Mokoena and Others v MEC Gauteng Department of Health: Mahlangu N.O. (J 352/16) [2016] ZALCJHB 98; (2016) 37 ILJ 1445 (LC) (18 March 2016).

In 2014 the amended *Labour Relations Act* (LRA) (Section 198A (3)(b) stated that a worker employed by a temporary employment service or labour-broker not providing a temporary service for a client company, "... is deemed to be the employee of that client and the client is deemed to be the employer; and (ii) subject to the provisions of s198B, is employed on an indefinite basis by the client (Republic of South Africa Section 2014:198A (3)(b)).

According to CWAO, the rights captured in the LRA granted precarious workers space to challenge their status as part-time workers. CWAO commented: "a fixed-term contract must not be longer than three months. After three months you must become a permanent worker with the same benefits as other workers who do the same kind of work" (Casual Workers Advice Office, 2015).

Labour-brokered workers employed at state facilities, such as Eskom, have used the law to demand their inclusion as employees of state companies. Workers employed by a labour-broker called SGB, which builds scaffolding for Eskom in Emalahleni, took their case to the Commission for Conciliation and Arbitration (CCMA). The workers were supported by the Casual Workers Advice Office. A worker who was part of a five-person delegation that met with a legal officer at CWAO said:

We currently have a case against the company we work for called SGB at the CCMA. We want permanent employment, we want to be treated fairly, we want to get the same salaries especially when we are doing the same kind of work... We have people who have been working for the company for

more than 20 years and they are not permanent staff members, while there are people who join the company for two weeks and then become permanent (Focus group interview, 28 January 2017, Germiston).

The State Responds

There were three kinds of responses from the state and its agencies: the first was an apparent reluctance to comply with the court judgement. This was an important issue, as all laws and governance by the South African state and its bodies have to articulate with the *Constitution*. It appeared that the executive arm of the state had administrative lapses, which was why it seemed as if the courts were telling the executive what to do through court orders (see Nicolaides EWN, 17 March 2017; *Economic Freedom Fighters vs Speaker of the National Assembly and Others*; *Democratic Alliance vs Speaker of the National Assembly and Others* [2016] ZACC 11).

In early 2016, the Johannesburg Labour Court ruled that community health-workers in Gauteng were employees of the Gauteng Department of Health. Despite this ruling, the Department of Health re-advertised the positions of these workers and then hired Smart Purse Solutions, a private agency, to manage the stipends of health-workers. According to a newspaper article:

As it stands, it's unclear who employs them, and this has sparked the protests. Their stipends are paid by the Department of Health, but are managed by a third party, Smart Purse Solutions Pty Ltd. The workers took the Gauteng Health Department to the Labour Court earlier this year [2016] to oppose the re-advertising of their jobs,

and the court ruled in their favour. But they still only get paid if they are signed up with Smart Purse Solutions (Panyane, *Saturday Star*, 26 July 2016).

It was reported that Smart Purse Solutions earned R87 million for managing the stipends of community care workers (Panyane, *Saturday Star*, 26 July, 2016). This meant that resources that could have been used to strengthen the state's capacity to manage the affairs of care workers were syphoned off. Instead of finding ways to implement the court ruling and recognising community care workers as its employees, the state defied the court order and found other ways of externalising the work of healthcare workers. Currently, it is likely that healthcare workers will go back to the Court to ask for another order to correct the situation.

The second response by the state was to amend the LRA to provide some protection for workers employed by labour-brokers (as discussed earlier) and to draft policies and sectoral determinations to provide minimum regulations for EPWP workers' wages and conditions of service. According to the policy of the Department of Public Works, "the selection of each worker must be done based on a clear set of criteria and should follow a fair and transparent process to minimize patronage and abuse" (Department of Public Works, 2015).

The problem was that the Department of Labour struggled to enforce existing labour laws that protected permanent and precarious workers. It was, therefore, difficult to imagine how the Department could monitor the implementation of guidelines pertaining to EPWP workers. The Department reported:

The Unit [inspectorate] has experienced a high staff turnover due to inspectors leaving for better remuneration elsewhere. The Department has been unable to retain highly skilled and qualified inspectors due to low levels of salaries paid compared to market-related salaries in the private sector. This affects performance and visibility of labour inspectors on the ground (Department of Labour, 2012).

The third response was "insourcing", which took place after unprotected strikes by precarious workers. In 2015, NEHAWU and UCT signed an agreement which stated, "UCT will insource the outsourced services at the time of contract expiry for a short handover period where these expiry dates are within the next six months" (UCT and NEHAWU, 2015:1). A number of universities were initially opposed to outsourcing, citing financial constraints as reasons for privatising cleaning, security, gardening and printing, which were viewed as "non-core" services that could be outsourced to save money – a response to declining university budgets (Van der Walt *et al.*, 2003). Pressure from students and workers compelled most of the universities to implement insourcing, but the process was uneven. Reporting on progress, Furlong (*Ground up*, 14 March 2017) stated, "only one university [UCT] in the Western Cape has brought all workers onto its payroll, despite all four universities beginning debates on "insourcing" in 2015, one of the rallying cries during the #FeesMustFall protests".

Perhaps some of the ambivalent responses on the part of the state were driven by the economic context. The state has always tried to maintain fiscal discipline, which

implies that expenditure must be reduced; this has resulted in the freezing of posts at all levels of government and the adoption of cost-saving measures such as outsourcing. In a budget speech, the former Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan, mentioned some of the structural problems facing the South African economy. He commented:

These South African realities are known to all of us:

Income growth has been uneven – the bottom 20 percent have benefited from social grants and better access to services, the top 20 percent have benefited from the rising demand for skills and pay increases. Those in the middle have been left behind.

Wealth remains highly concentrated – 95 percent of wealth is in the hands of 10 percent of the population.

35 percent of the labour force are unemployed or have given up hope of finding work (Gordhan, 2017).

Gordhan also complained about slow economic growth and high unemployment (Gordhan, 2017). However, COSATU noted that even when the economy improved between 1994 and 2009, jobs were not created and South Africa experienced "jobless growth" (COSATU, 2016:1). The manufacturing sector, which created the real value, had been declining since the 1980s, leading to worsening unemployment; those who were supposed to be working had to be taken care of by the state through precarious work and other forms of state support. Besides social grants and the National Development Plan (NDP), which promised growth and

redistribution, the state had not developed concrete strategies for dealing with what Gordhan described as "the wealth that is concentrated in the hands of the few". State-owned companies were accused of corruption and state capture, or of serving the interests of the elites. The generalised corruption and the scandal associated with the use of state resources to build President Zuma's home, and the crisis concerning the payment of social grants has made it impossible to speak of the state helping to rebuild the manufacturing sector or redistributing or expanding economic activities. It, therefore, appears that precarious work, with all its social and economic injustices, is likely to prevail in the public sector for the foreseeable future.

CONCLUSION

Using empirical data, this article has shown that precarious work remains one of the anchors of work in the public sector. Contrary to the promises made about decent work and respect for labour standards (African National Congress, 1994), precarious work in the public sector has created a resilient, two-tiered labour market system. Unlike permanent workers who are employed by the state and its agencies, precarious workers earn low wages and have no benefits such as a medical aid or pension funds. Precarious workers tend to be women and young people. This means that women, as a historically oppressed group, continue to carry most of the social and economic burden, subsidising the state through cheap labour in post-apartheid South Africa. Writing about the transformation of work in the public sector in post-apartheid South Africa and the emergence of South Africa's new labour

elite represented by trade unions, Borat *et al.* (2015) conclude:

Therefore, we find that a key new facet of the South African labour market is an estimated wage wedge between unionized public sector workers and other formal non-agricultural workers in the labour market. In one conception, we could argue that the post-2000 period has generated a new labour elite in the labour market, namely the unionized public sector employee (Borat *et al.* 2015).

This research article confirms what is argued by Borat *et al.*, (2015) that public sector unions, to a very large extent, are representing the interests of a middle class stratum, earning salaries and receiving benefits such as medical aid and pension. In fact, way back in 2005, Buhlungu (2005), based on his research on trade unions in the public and private sector, also contended that unions in post-apartheid South Africa tended to

represent the interests of a middle class stratum and those belonging to the upper social echelons of workers, resulting in a neglect of precarious workers.

The findings indicate that precarious workers have been able to challenge their conditions through negotiations, unprotected strikes and other means. In some cases, they have managed to change their working conditions by achieving wage increments and reversals of outsourcing. By forming organisations and using the courts to challenge their conditions of employment, workers have shown that, despite many social, economic and political challenges, South Africa currently remains a vibrant democracy that holds the public sector accountable. However, failure by the state to build the economy and the manufacturing sector, as well as generalised corruption, leads one to conclude that precarious work is here to stay. The constitutional democracy and new organisations of precarious workers will help to navigate this terrain.

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POLICY VIEWPOINT

POLITICAL ADMINISTRATIVE INTERFACE: MKHUSELI APLENI'S CASE

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Would the question about the political administrative interface ever be settled? For cases about it in the post-apartheid South Africa abound. Mkhuseli Apleni's (the Director-General of the Department of Home Affairs) case is one of many. What do they suggest, policy vacuum or inadequacies in the system of the administration of the state? Is this the reason the National Development Plan (NDP) calls for stability at the political-administrative interface? Apleni's case reminds us of these questions and, more importantly, necessitates continued reflections for policy praxis. Here is the story. Even though Apleni won the case against his suspension by the then Minister, Hlengiwe Mkhize, President Jacob Zuma could still have re-located him to some obscure department, especially if he believed his minister's allegation against him. Mkhize had suspended Apleni ostensibly for insubordination and incompetence. The court ruled that ministers don't have powers to suspend or fire Director-Generals. Those powers rest with the president.

The ruling aside, Apleni's suspension surprised many. For he had served under four ministers at the Department of Home Affairs (DoHA) – Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Naledi

Pandor, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula and Malusi Gigaba. None of them ever mentioned anything that showed disapproval of his conduct. That was because Apleni has been one of the best performing bureaucrats, overseeing a dramatic turnaround at DoHA. Being at Home Affairs offices today is no longer a nightmare and applications for official documents are processed a lot quicker than previously. All this explains why Apleni's contract was renewed, in April 2015, for another five-year term. Apleni's continued stay at DoHA is obviously based on merit. It even appears that President Zuma thinks so highly of Apleni that, instead, he removed his minister. It is rare for President Zuma to reward excellence. How does one then explain this anomaly? Or is it an anomaly at all? Retaining a diligent bureaucrat such as Apleni is commendable, but is potentially misleading when examined in isolation. When examining this case in its entirety, one sees that Apleni's retention does not detract from the neo-patrimonial (or personalised) nature of Zuma's presidency. The clue lies in how Zuma handled Mkhize, especially in the light of Apleni's damaging allegations against her. They have a bearing on her competence and suggest that she is possibly dodgy.

For starters, Mkhize had accused Apleni of failure to organise regular meetings with senior staff, and to settle legal disputes lodged by private companies with DoHA. Apleni's responses, submitted in an affidavit to court, are quite revealing. In relation to the meetings, for instance, of the seven bi-weekly meetings that were scheduled since Mkhize joined DoHA in April, she only attended two. The rest were cancelled at her instruction. Nor did Mkhize attend any of the two quarterly meetings that had been convened since her appointment at DoHA. In another instance, Mkhize set her first one-on-one meeting with Apleni for 6:30am, only to cancel it just as he was arriving at the venue. This can only mean that Mkhize's accusation is false. She is the disorganised one.

As for her allegations that Apleni failed to settle legal disputes, Mkhize comes across as meddling in administrative matters. One dispute involves a company, Fireblade Aviation, owned by the Oppenheimer family. The company has taken the Department to court for refusing them, as Apleni puts it, "exclusive use of a section of the airport for themselves and those who are approved by them on the basis that they are 'very, very important persons'". The implication of granting this application for DoHA is that it would have "to make available its own staff, relating to immigration and customs... to the service of Fireblade, to the exclusion of other users and customers". Apleni found this to be "unconstitutional" especially because it would happen "without a competitive bidding process". Whereas her predecessor shared Apleni's views, Mkhize disagreed and, according to Apleni, even went to see representatives of Fireblade without him in order to negotiate a deal.

Another legal dispute that Mkhize alleges Apleni defied her on involves Atlantis Corporate Travel. Mkhize's son, Sizwe, is associated with the company, which has taken DoHA to court claiming they were owed about R1 million. The Department disputes the claim. Sizwe resorted to talking to his mother to intervene on his company's behalf. In one correspondence to the department, Sizwe made a point of telling the officials that he has also spoken to his mother about settling the supposed debt:

Writing to you in regard to the issue of Department of Home Affairs [owing] Atlantis Corporate Travel close to R1 million for travel services dating back to 2014.

I do believe that you had received all documentation sent by Nelisiwe Luthuli this past Monday. Forwarded information to my mother, Minister Mkhize, but don't want to keep bothering her with this matter, as well, while she is away on business.

At this point, my superiors just wanted to check if there is anything that can be done to solve the matter without having to go to court, even though legal process has just started. (Sizwe Mkhize)

Mkhize's accusations, therefore, were simply a ruse. The real reason, Apleni believes, was to get him out so that she could get her way. This included getting the Department to pay her son. The court revealed Mkhize to be exactly what she had accused Apleni of being: inefficient and possibly unscrupulous. This then brings us to the question about Jacob Zuma. Why did he retain Mkhize as minister, especially in a critical department like Higher Education at such a delicate moment in our

universities' history? By the way, Zuma knew of Mkhize's ineptitude long before Apleni's revelations in court. She impressed none of the ministers she deputised for, and her deputy at DoHA was reportedly also beginning to complain about her incompetence. The answer as to why Zuma retained Mkhize lies in what has been happening in Higher Education. He wanted sole control over the decision-making in order to institute a no-fees policy at the universities. Because Mkhize is indebted to him for remaining in cabinet, while her record does not warrant it, Zuma knew that she would be pliant to his dictates. He even replaced her (and her DG) with a 28-year old chap, Morris Masutha, to make the decision.

Masutha briefed cabinet and the ANC leaders, trying to get them to agree to a no-fees policy without saying where the universities would get the money from. Ministers and leaders of a liberation movement were all forced to listen to this young lad, even though he had neither qualifications nor experience in higher education. The only qualification for assuming that role was that he dated Zuma's daughter. He was a potential *mkhwenyana*. That was enough for Zuma to entrust him with the future of our

educational system and risk wrecking our already precarious public purse. Personal relations trumped merit.

This explains the present saga around the Minister of State Security, Bongani Bongo. He is embroiled in all manner of scandals ranging from accepting kick-backs while still a civil servant in Mpumalanga, to attempting to bribe a parliamentary lawyer in the enquiry on corruption at Eskom. Bongo wanted to kill the parliamentary probe. Such machinations are synonymous with gangsters, rather than ministers of state. In fact, a background check on Bongo, as ought to happen with any ministerial appointment, should have disqualified him for appointment. Either it was never done or Zuma does not care that Bongo is a dodgy character. His main consideration was that Bongo would act as his henchman. Killing the Eskom investigation also benefits Zuma. He is implicated in state capture. And, we do not know what else Bongo has been doing since his appointment as chief of spies. Self-interest remains Zuma's primary consideration in decision-making. It even outweighs the public good. That is why it is difficult to fathom why he would not do everything necessary to sway the ANC's elective outcome in his favour. It is all about himself.

BOOK REVIEW

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF STATE-MAKING IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

Sihle Moon

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Sihle Moon restarts the "Developmental State" debate – where will he take us? He has done us an exceptional service, in part, because he has published a book based on his York University PhD, through Africa's most important publisher – albeit one not well enough known in South Africa: Africa World Press. (AWP also published my own PhD about 20 years ago and, with Moon's work, I have a much greater sense of AWP's rigorous yet accessible approach, and it is wonderful to see a Cape Town imprint address). Congratulations to all concerned for the production of this fine book.

It is also exceptionally rewarding to read a well-rounded, balanced book that is so current to the debates about South Africa's future, now that we have such extreme flux and "Radical Economic Transformation" rhetoric floating about, yet without sufficient grounding. Here, finally, is what the leading

ANC cadres, who are promoting radical change, need to read. It is the most serious analysis that has yet come from within their own ranks, and as a book it could – and should – easily be a policy prerequisite as well as a contribution to academic knowledge. It is hard to carry out both tasks, but here is why I think Moon has succeeded.

Firstly, this book joins the greatest works in the field – ably summarised by Moon – including classics by Friedrich List and Alexander Gershenkron in the late 19th through mid-20th centuries, and then the revival of the Developmental State discussions worldwide through East Asian analyses by Alice Amsden and Ha-Joon Chang and then, finally, in the 1990s, the South African applications of Ben Fine and Zav Rustomjee. However, the failure of the 1990s debates within the South African elite classes, to take seriously the lessons of Afrikaner empowerment strategies from the 1930-60s and the Malaysian Bumiputra experience are obvious (which Moon covers well). And one reason, with explicit evidence provided in Moon's middle chapters, is the dumbing-down of Developmental State analysis by the Bretton Woods Institutions and "scenario planning" gambits mainly by corporate hucksters.

From 2002-08, once the world commodity super-cycle began, economic prospects looked up (at least for the mining houses and smelters), along with massive consumer credit expansion for the lower middle class (leaving half the borrower's credit-impaired by 2009). Yet, while the debate on state economic intervention was regenerated, it unfortunately occurred through Thabo Mbeki and Joel Netshitenzhe's revival of "Two Economy" narratives, which Moon deftly

circumvents since these took us backwards to modernisation theory.

Then, in the Zuma era, with leadership from Trevor Manuel and Cyril Ramaphosa, the 2012 National Development Plan (NDP) has provided an outsize reliance upon White Elephant mega-projects. This turn was just one unfortunate reflection of that earlier debate's failure to generate clarification on whose interests benefit from state policy, a mistake Moon does not make. Such class analysis should have highlighted the social and ecological costs of the vast carbon-intensive infrastructure investments proposed. Is a developmental state truly one that can build a R800 billion project for export of 18 billion tonnes of coal via Richards Bay or the R250 billion South Durban Dig Out Port and petrochemical complex expansion – which are the top two NDP strategic infrastructure projects (not to mention the R1.4 trillion nuclear proposals)? We recall that these kinds of mega-projects were much beloved by South African elites dating back to the time of Cecil Rhodes. But, the post-1994 fusion of neoliberalism and unsustainable mega-project development can be blamed on new politicians, allied bureaucrats and corporate leaders who share grandiose multi-billion rand industrial projects. Prior to the NDP, these projects included the Coega complex north of Port Elizabeth, where the Minister of Trade and Industry, Alec Erwin, planned to provide massive amounts of very cheap electricity and water, to be consumed in a new Alcan smelter – which never materialised, leaving only a "ghost on the coast". There were also the corrupt Lesotho Highlands Water Project mega-dams, which continued to put unreasonable emphasis on Gauteng as the site of water-intensive economic activity.

The unnecessarily expensive new and refurbished soccer stadiums for the 2010 World Soccer Cup are considered "white elephants" even by Danny Jordaan. Other mega-project disasters include the R43 billion arms deal; the Pebble Bed Nuclear Reactors (ultimately fruitless, wasted expenditure); countless construction projects that were overpriced due to corporate collusion; and hundreds of billions of rands spent on climate-killing, corrupt and incompetently-built coal-fired power plants. Other huge anti-developmental projects include the imported aeroplanes for SAA – which, when I fly on gives me (and everyone else in the 9 million annual passenger pool) a R600 subsidy per trip – and the R20 billion+ Gautrain fast rail network (where I get a R90 subsidy from the taxpayers each time I embark on a trip), both affordable only to elite travellers.

As a result of how impoverishing this strategy has become, I think Moon is exactly right to focus the core of this book on the missed opportunity of the 1994 RDP, which, due to the adverse balance of forces, soon became known merely as Rumours, Dreams and Promises (thanks to Mangosuthu Buthelezi's wit). (Disclosure: I was the main editor of the RDP and RDP/White Paper/ from January-September 1994 and personally experienced just how adverse the power relations were for President Mandela, Minister Jay Naidoo and those who really wanted developmental progress.) My sense is that Moon's work could become vital in the coming months and years because, just as the Freedom Charter's minerals socialisation clause motivated the Malema

breakaway from the ANC in 2012, and with the recent revival of land nationalisation demands, there needs to be a much richer debate about the full character of developmentalism.

This, in turn, will require more sophisticated thinking about social policy (beyond just tokenistic and shrinking child welfare grants of only R380/month), industrial policy (beyond just 10% incremental tariff hikes to try, unsuccessfully, to protect quite corrupt Indian and Russian steel companies from Chinese dumping), financial policy (beyond promotion of micro-finance) and mega-projects. Indeed, the latter is one area to which Moon could now turn his attention, given how well he has established the theoretical, structural and policy terrains.

The most important point, though, is that Moon has accomplished something that all of the neo-Marxist theorists of South African race, class and accumulation (like myself) failed at, namely, making a major intervention from within a powerful grouping. There is nothing in this work that will please the so-called Zupta or neo-liberal camps within the state. Whether we need a new revolutionary movement or whether, instead, the ANC can be reformed from within remains to be seen. Moon may want to turn his skills to considering this dilemma. Regardless of who wins the future influence over the state, Moon has provided the next generation with a powerful tool; serious consideration of Economic Transformation and a sound explanation of why we have not had that consideration to date.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions to the *Journal of Public Administration* are invited from academics, experts, and practitioners in the field of Public Administration and Management. Before publication, contributions will be subject to adjudication. Contributions must be accompanied by a certificate that the language editing had been done by a suitably qualified person.

The *Journal* is intended to provide the widest possible coverage of the various aspects of the comprehensive field of Public Administration and Management. Public officials of all grades and specialities, academics, as well as others, are invited to submit articles for publication to the Chief Editor.

A variety of contributions may be made to the *Journal*. These include full articles, review articles, viewpoints, and research results. It should be noted, however, that these articles are weighed differently for the purposes of publication.

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COMMENTS

Comments on the *Journal* are invited from readers who may address these to the Chief Editor or to the office of SAAPAM at the same address.

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