

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED EROSION OF THE POLITICS-ADMINISTRATION DICHOTOMY ON GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN A DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENTAL STATE: SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This article provided a qualitative exploratory analysis on the impact of perceived erosion of the politics-administration dichotomy on good governance and service delivery in a democratic developmental state within the context of South Africa. It began by providing an introductory background as well as a theoretical perspective on the phenomenon of ‘politics-administration dichotomy’ and highlighted on the significant role that this phenomenon plays in promoting democratic public bureaucracy and good governance. The manuscript identified four themes which are said to be fundamental to functional and well-performing politics-administration dichotomy relations, namely: (a) strong and visionary political leadership; (b) vibrant apolitical public bureaucracy; (c) well-coordinated and integrated political and administrative structures and systems; and (d) well-mobilised citizenry for active participation, and used them as a basis for this exploratory analysis. Qualitative data collection methods (such as participant observation; in-depth interviewing; qualitative document study; and qualitative case study) and data analysis and interpretation techniques such as qualitative content analysis and qualitative case analysis) were used in this study. Based on the research objectives pertinent to this study, several findings were arrive at, and on their basis, a *(a) Strong visionary political and administrative leadership; (b) vibrant apolitical strong public bureaucracy; (c) well-coordinated and integrated political and administrative structures and systems; and (d) well-mobilised active participatory citizenry politics-administrative model*, was proposed and recommended with the belief that if, and only if it can be properly adopted and implemented, could lead to the improvement to the functionality and performance of politics-administration dichotomy relations in Mzansi.

Keywords: Public Bureaucracy/Service, Political Supremacy, Executive/Administrative Authority, Good Governance, Effective and Efficient Service Delivery, Public Financial Resources, Corruption and Fraud

Introduction and Background

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, Act 108 of 1996, as amended, gives clear provision on the roles; functions, and responsibilities of both the politicians and the public officials (public bureaucracy) in governing and administering the country effectively and efficiently. However, It appears that at all three spheres of government in South Africa (national, provincial, and local), there is this crisis caused by lack of clarity around the “politico-administration dichotomy” concept that is intended to highlight on and define the power relations between politics and public bureaucracy/public administration in

advancing the course of improving the quality of lives of ordinary South African citizens. Equally formidable is the consistently growing array of concepts, methods, technologies, and information available to those seeking to improve the quality of politics and administration decisions at government and service delivery levels. It is logical in modern times and today's organisations, to realise that politicians and administrators alike, should rely upon the production of 'rational decisions' concerning problems and issues within the boundaries of their respective fields

It is true that in a normal democratic and developmental state, *specialisation* becomes programmatic, thus arising from the ways in which formal governments are structured and designed to accomplish their purposes. The major challenge facing politicians and administrators is that both intraorganisationally and interorganisationally, they confront a seemingly ever-expanding matrix of differentiated activities, situations, and objectives. Effectively, within this matrix, there are those who specialise in politics and are expected to give the policy direction for government (politicians) and those who specialise in the execution of government/legislative policy directives and administration of programmes (public bureaucracy/administrators). This in itself represents points at which the skills of field specialists must be brought together, coordinated and integrated, and aligned with government within governmental goals and environments. This is actually where much of the literature on decision-making and problem-solving focuses

In a truly democratic developmental states, where the maxim "*politics-administration dichotomy*" is observed and respected and fully complied with, there are usually the overwhelming majority of administrators operating on the programmatic and bureaucratic levels of responsibility who usually start their careers as field specialists. Once in their current bureaucratic and/or administrative positions, they are expected to apply a perspective that goes far beyond that required of the field specialist. In other words, they must be capable of making programmatically or institutionally rational decisions. In terms of the generally accepted definitions of the administrator's role, they should be, according to Nigro (1984:2):(a) competent in a substantive field; (b) be able to effectively and efficiently supervise the work of others; (c) understand and be able to coordinate and integrate the activities of all units of the organisation and/or programme; (d) be aware of, and in a strategic (2) sense be responsive to, and relevant connections between the programme, the government institution, and its environment; and (e) be capable of formulating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating social, political, economic, administrative, and government policies and programmes based on their competencies in their substantive administrative field. These and other similar complex issues and challenges behind politics-administration dichotomy are factors that motivated and inspired this author to undertake this exploratory analysis

Theoretical perspective

Although the theme of politics-administration dichotomy is central to effective and efficient governance and service delivery, very little or no research interest has been shown (by both academics and practitioners alike) in dealing with this important phenomenon. To be able to venture in this topic confidently, one must start with the proper understanding of the goals and objectives of various types of governments that we have. Also of importance in this regard, is the issue relating to the nature of the public services that governments render in order to fulfill their functions as well as to understand how, and from what sources of income should public services be financed. Gildenhuys and Knipe (2000:28-47) gives a clear exposition on different types of state systems as well as their goals and objectives:

- *Laissez-faire system*: Represents a free social and economic association, the maintenance of law and order, the protection of life and

property, and the freeeconomic market.The concept in a nutshell is characterised by themes such as ‘leave us alone’, ‘let us pass or go’, ‘unhampered market society’ , and ‘basic conditions for free competition’;

- *Social welfare system (socialism):* This system incorporates terms such as ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’, even though in purely descriptive terms, can mean different thing to different people. To proponents of socialism, this system manifests itself in and connate equality, social justice, and end to exploitation of whatever form. To the antagonists(i.e. capitalists) the system resembles government confiscation of property, regimentation of the life of the individual, red tape, inefficiency, and coddling the lazy and the incompetent. Within the context of this manuscript, socialism is viewed as a system where the ownership of all factors of production, such as land, raw materials, labour and capital are vested in government –w here production, distribution and trade belong to the community at large and are administered by the government on behalf of the community;

- *Social welfare state system:* The unhappiness over and disillusionment with the harsh methods inherent in the totalitarian socialist (pure communism) systems, such as the then Soviet Union (Russia) and communist China, which were characterised by untold oppression and desperate loss of lives and total fear among people of the world, culminated in the rejection of totalitarian socialism (communism) particularly in the western world. Subsequently, it became increasingly realised and accepted that ‘political evolution was more preferable to violent (3) political revolution’, based on the belief that socio-economic and political changes should rather come about gradually with the minimum disruption to community life and political stability. In essence, the total absence of individual freedom and the excessive concentration of power in an omnipotent totalitarian regime resulted in fear of this type of the government system (Gildenhuis and Knipe, 2000:33).The consequences of this state of affairs presented two scenarios: On the one hand, the theorists in favour of the social welfare state rejected totalitarian socialism (communism)and, on the other they also rejected *laissez faire* capitalism. This led to the welfare state that the protagonists thereof have generally accepted that both extremes are dangerous for the individual and that a balance should be found between the two;

- *Economic welfare state:* In this system the emphasis and focus are on the economic welfare of an individual which should enable the said individual to take care of his/her socio-economic well-being. Fundamentally, this approach is based on the assumption that personal socio-economic welfare and independence from the state for one’s personal growth will create a sense of pride and personal achievement and thus enhancing and consolidating a person’s dignity. Evidently, the foundation of an economic welfare state is the democratic *free-enterprise politico-economic* system, which entails the principles of classic democracy as its supporting value. This system is characterised by: (a)private ownership of the factors of production, (b)freedom of utilisation of the factors of production, (c)regulation by a free-market mechanism, (d) supply and demand in the production processes, and (e)independent courts of law to settle disputes (see Von Hayek, 1972: 41);

- *Modern State*: The challenges and difficulties entrenched and embedded in the struggle between socialism and *laissez-faire* capitalism in the political and economic fields continue to remain a contentious issue even up to the present era. To rationalise and to normalise this controversy, governments in general preferred to support the democratic free-enterprise system, in which privatisation and deregulation remain the policies of the day. More importantly, the current levels of industrialisation, urbanisation, technological advancement, the changing attitudes of the people through intellectual development, and population explosions, demanded large scale changes in the administration and management of a country's socio-economic systems (Gildenhuis and Knipe, 2000:45). These and many similar challenges and opportunities gave rise to the need for the concept of 'modern state' which covers a broad spectrum of issues, including but not limited to: creation of a good quality of life to all citizens of the country, to provide for and address bread-and-butter issues for members of the communities, provide ample and equal opportunities to all, provide (4) sufficient indispensable public services, make provision for good-quality environment, and ensuring that citizens feel safe and secured.

The significance of Politics-Administration Dichotomy in promoting democratic public bureaucracy and good governance

Within the context of this article, the concept of 'politics-administration dichotomy' represents the development of greater cooperation between politicians and administrators in the process of governing the country and consolidating service delivery to the citizens in a sustainable manner. The *rationale* for this lies in the belief that when politicians and administrators work together in a healthy environment of mutual trust and respect, which is free from any kind of intimidation, this could lead to making better informed policy decisions, managing ambiguous loyalties, reconciling different interests, and negotiating competing goals on behalf of the country's citizenry. In forging this cooperative relationship however, Orr and Bennett (2012: 487) advised that robust recognition should be made of the fact that politicians and administrators do have distinct set of interests, expectations, and priorities. This suggests that adequate insight should be provided into the dynamics of politics and administration together with complexities and dilemmas involved in the politics-administration relations. It is also critically important to realise that these complexities and dilemmas are inseparable from the politics of good governance and service delivery.

From the above introductory and theoretical background, the purpose of this article becomes to attempt to situate the current politics-administration dichotomy within a South African perspective and to contribute to knowledge about the political and administrative dynamics in the country. To achieve this purpose, the manuscript locates the interest in politics-administration in the context of on-going developments in governance and service delivery, the role and responsibilities of politicians and administrators, and the basis of politics-administration relations. By definition, the relationship between politics and administration has been one that is near and dear to the hearts of many South Africans. This position is well-captured by Ngidi and Dorasamy(2014:1) in their submission that good governance, the rule of law, and systems of accountability are essential elements in guaranteeing that resources are equitably shared. These resources are to be used efficiently, effectively, and economically. Prior 1994, quality service was only reserved for whites. Given this

legacy, the transformation of the South African government had to be initiated and the endeavours by the African National Congress (ANC) to deal with the ills of the past gave birth to the White Paper on the Transformation of Public Service Delivery (1997). Practically, it is acceptable that both the politicians and the administrators influence both the direction and content of politics and public administration (bureaucracy) in order to bridge the gap between the two.

Clarifying the “politics-administration dichotomy” concept

The difficult search for an appropriate term to describe the interaction and/or relationship between politics and administration itself suggests the political nature of joint responsibility and accountability, and thus requires further research. The article tends to describe this as (5) involving ‘cooperation’, that broadly means the accomplishment of good governance and service delivery by politicians and administrators working together at each stage of the process, including, but not limited to, conceptualisation, design, fieldwork, analysis, and presentation of the work. This ‘cooperation’ sought to bring about politicians and administrators together. More significantly, the idea of politics and administration cooperation is increasingly found in public services to denote the idea that service users’ choices and behaviours are integral to the development and delivery of the services (Bovaird 2007; Boyle, Clark, and Burns 2006; and Taylor 1971). Also the concept has been used to denote a new way of thinking about welfare provision at a time when resources are declining and expectations are rising (Boyle and Harris 2009). ‘Cooperation’ in most instances has been used by state agencies trying to “join up” government through collaborative programmes and provision. Orr and Bennett (2012:496) put it clear that ‘cooperation’ is both a critique of existing practices and a response to their shortcomings. It remains useful for both politicians and administrators to engage in what is called ‘joint research’ or ‘research partnerships’ or ‘research collaboration’ which implies ‘to work together with another or others on something’. This however, does not mean and/or include ‘to cooperate or collude’ with an enemy or to collude in committing corruption (Easterby-Smith and Malina 1999; Rogers 1995; Rynes, Bartunek, and Daft 2001).

Finally, this cooperation between the politicians and administrators does not effectively mean that the ‘independence’ of both the politicians and the bureaucrats (public administrators) should be compromised. What politics-administration dichotomy advocates against is the unwavering political dominance and interference of politicians over administration, especially when such is manifested in the form of political intimidation and threats (i.e. political micro-managing on public bureaucracy). This is indeed an untenable state of affairs where one finds ‘poor’ administrators and public servants being in a state of constant fear of being harassed, victimised, vilified and even side-lined by their political ‘masters’ who tend to be senselessly and totally power-hungry (power-mongers). This manuscript has identified four themes which are said to be fundamental for a functioning and well-performing politics-administration dichotomy relations, namely, (a) strong and visionary political leadership; (b) vibrant apolitical bureaucracy; (c) well-coordinated and integrated political structures and systems; and (d) well-mobilised citizenry for active participation, and used them as a basis for this analysis.

Statement of the problem

Based on the above introductory background and theoretical perspective, it becomes very clear that the relationship between the politicians and public

bureaucracy is characterised by many insurmountable challenges and problems that impact negatively on good governance and effective and efficient service delivery in Mzansi. The state of politics-administration dichotomy relations is so much entangled and fraught with ambiguity and uncertainty, thus causing unnecessary mistrust and instability within the political and public bureaucratic domain. The key research problem underlying this study is thus presented as follows:

(6) Even though the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, Act 108 of 1996 provides for a healthy, cooperative, and functioning relationship between the politicians and administrators in promoting good governance and sustainable service delivery, the position of this relationship between politicians and administrators remain entirely evasive and illusive and thus rendering the entire relationship completely dysfunctional and untenable in Mzansi

Contributing to this research problem, might be the following sub-problems:

- *The nature and scope of political leadership pertaining to politics-administration dichotomy in Mzansi;*
- *The nature and scope of public bureaucracy pertaining to politics-administration dichotomy in Mzansi;*
- *The nature and scope of political and administrative structures and systems available for politics-administration dichotomy in Mzansi; and*
- *The nature and type of citizenry in respect of politics-administration dichotomy in Mzansi*

Research questions

Linked to this key research problem and its sub-problems are the following research questions:

- *What is the nature and scope of political leadership pertaining to politics-administration dichotomy in Mzansi?;*
- *What is the nature and scope of public bureaucracy pertaining to politics-administration dichotomy in Mzansi?;*
- *What is the nature and scope of political and administrative structures and systems available for politics-administration dichotomy in Mzansi?; and*
- *What is the nature and type of citizenry in respect of politics-administration dichotomy in Mzansi?*

Research objectives

Following from the above research questions, the following research objectives became eminent, which are to explore and analyse:

- *The nature and scope of political leadership pertaining to politics-administration dichotomy in Mzansi;*
- *The nature and scope of public bureaucracy pertaining to politics-dichotomy in Mzansi;*
- *The nature and scope of political and administrative structures and systems available for politics-administration dichotomy in Mzansi; and*
- *The nature and type of citizenry in respect of politics-administration dichotomy in Mzansi (7)*

Population of the study

Population refers to the universe of units from which a sample is selected (Jones *et al*, 2010:104-108).The target population for this study is designed in such a way that it covers the entire North West Provincial Government that consists of twelve (12) provincial departments and the legislature. North West Province of South Africa is bounded on the north by Botswana, on the south by the provinces of the Free State and the Northern Cape, and on the north-east and east by Limpopo Province and Gauteng respectively. This province was created in 1994 by the merger of Bophuthatswana, one of the Bantustans (or black homelands), and the western part of Transvaal, one of the four former South African provinces. The province covers 118,797 sq km, and its population is estimated to be 3 669 778 people, and approximately 65% of this people live in the rural areas (Stats RSA Census 2001 released in July 2003)

Sample and sampling technique

Non-probability purposive/judgmental sampling technique was preferred and selected for this study as it allows the researcher to use his judgment based on his knowledge of the subject of the study. This sampling technique is essentially an umbrella term to capture all forms of sampling that are not conducted to the cannons of probability sampling (Bryman, 1999:202). The sample for this study consists of at least seven provincial departments in the North West Province, namely, Finance; Local Government and Traditional Affairs; Public Works and Transport; Agriculture and Rural Development ;Sports, Arts, and Culture; Human Settlement ,Public Safety and Liaison; and Provincial Legislature .In each of these institutions, one Director-General, one Chief Director, five Directors, ten Assistant Directors, and ten General Employees were earmarked for the study and were subjected to a rigorous participant observation and vigorous in-depth interviews for a reasonable length of time.

Table!::The sample of the study

Department	Director-General	Chief Director	Directors	Assistant Directors	General Employees	Total
1	1	1	5	10	10	27
2	1	1	5	10	10	27
3	1	1	5	10	10	27
4	1	1	5	10	10	27
5	1	1	5	10	10	27
6	1	1	5	10	10	27
7	1	1	5	10	10	27
(8)						
Total	7	7	35	70	70	189

Research methods and techniques

Qualitative data collection methods and qualitative data analysis techniques were used in this study. These methods and techniques were applied with due regard to the validity, reliability, credibility, objectivity, and consistency of data gathered and used in this study.

Data collection methods employed

Participant observation

This method of data collection was used because it gives comprehensive perspective on the problem under investigation, and the participant observer might discover things no one else has really paid attention to and that previously went unnoticed (Bailey 1994:243-244; Muller 1995:65; Thyer 2001:337-338). It is a

method that is mostly recommended by the proponents of qualitative research who indicate that it is a research procedure typical of the qualitative paradigm as it necessitates direct contact with the subjects of the observation

In-depth interviewing

This method of qualitative data collection is primarily for organisational change and development processes and uses a systematic process to refine the information collected (Dick 1990:357). It is the most appropriate technique for building theory in an underexplored area. Driedger *et al* (2006:1145-1157) argue that in-depth interviewing can be usefully applied in under-researched areas characterised by an absence or dearth of established theoretical and methodological foundation and it can therefore be viewed both as an interviewing technique and methodological approach to qualitative research. In this manuscript, the researcher engaged in this mode of data collection knowing that interviewing participants involves description of the experiences, as well as involving reflections on the description

Document study

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003:35) documentary study involves the study of existing documents, either to understand their substantive content or to illuminate deeper meanings which may be revealed by their style and coverage. Most documents are, however, not written with a view to research (Marlow, 2005:182 In this article, a variety of non-personal documents such as minutes of meetings, agendas, newsletters and internal office memos were critically studied to amass the required and relevant data.

Case study

According to Creswell (2007:763), a case study involves an exploration of a “bounded system” (bounded by the time, context, and/or place), or a single or multiple case over a (9) period of time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. In this instance, the case being studied may refer to a process, activity, event, programme, or individual, or multiple individuals. It might even refer to a period in time rather than a particular group of people. More importantly, the exploration and description of the case takes place through detailed in-depth data-collection, involving multiple sources in formation that are rich in context. Subsequently, the researcher in this article, went through politics-administration dichotomy cases lodged with the sampled departments to qualitatively explore and analyse both the successes made, failures reported, and challenges that may still lie ahead with regard to the relationship between politicians and public bureaucrats in consolidating, enhancing, and fast-tracking good governance and sustainable service delivery in democratic South Africa

Data analysis and interpretation techniques employed

Data analysis and interpretation techniques used in this study include qualitative content analysis and qualitative case analysis

Qualitative content analysis

Content analysis is defined as a process of identifying patterns and themes of experiences research participants bring to the study, what patterns characterises their participation in the study, and what patterns of change are reported by and observed in the participants (Patton 2002:146). As a qualitative research technique, content

analysis played a significant role in this study as it involves detailed and systematic examination of the content of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, and even biases. The contents of the relevant documents secured during data collection were subjected to a rigorous analysis through this technique. The same is true with the information gathered through participant observation and responses from interviewees

Qualitative case study analysis

Case study analysis is an intensive investigation of a single unit or an examination of multiple variables (Babbie and Mouton 2001:280-283). This technique has been used in this article, as it takes multiple perspectives into account and attempts to understand the influences of multilevel social systems of subjects' perspectives and behaviours—the defining characteristic of this technique is its emphasis on an individual. In this manuscript, relevant cases from the sampled departments were assimilated and their relevance to the study cautiously scrutinised to assess their contribution to the entire study

Findings and recommendations

Findings

Subject to the above exposition and subsequent to the qualitative data collection methods and qualitative data analysis and interpretation techniques used, and also based on the (10) research objectives underlying this study, several findings were made and are hereby presented

Objective 1: *To explore and analyse the nature and scope of political leadership pertaining to politics-administration dichotomy (i.e. the relationship between politicians and public bureaucrats) in Mzansi*

Finding 1: The study discovered that in essence the country has indeed a strong political leadership and an observation was made of the fact that even the Constitution of the country does give absolute 'executive powers' to the politicians at the detriment of the public bureaucracy (public administration) which is rendered completely subservient to the political masters. The study found that to this unfortunate state of affairs, Mzansi lacks a powerful and well-established public bureaucracy whose function should not be only to execute and bluntly implement government policies, but should also involve putting politicians in check against any form of abuse of political power. In most instances, the study discovered that public bureaucracy remains in constant threats of political harassment and intimidation leading to untenable and unsustainable political-bureaucratic (politician-administration) relationships in the country—and thus impacting negatively on good governance and service delivery in South Africa. In other words, within this context, the politics-administration dichotomy /relationship is completely blurred and dysfunctional

Objective 2: *To explore and analyse the nature and scope of public bureaucracy to politics-administration dichotomy in Mzansi*

Finding 2: The revealed that real responsibilities of the bureaucracy could not be readily noticed and clearly articulated, save to say that it appeared that the bureaucracy is only there to implement the directives of the politicians with almost no power whatsoever to question the will of the masters. . The roles of bureaucracy to influence and contribute to the policymaking and decision-making processes in running the country and fast-tracking se were found to be either minimal or

completely non-existent in some instances. The relationship is more often characterised by characterised by fear, confusion, and sheer political vilification and victimisation

Objective 3: *To explore and analyse the nature and scope of politics-administration dichotomy's structures and systems available in Mzansi*

Finding 3: The structures and systems meant for effective and efficient politics-administration dichotomy relations were in some cases found to be lacking and in other instances were found to be in complete state of disarray and with lack of meaningful co-ordination and integration. The study also found that more often actions were done and decisions taken on an *ad hoc* basis with little or no strategic planning on sight. This led to errors of judgment which in turn resulted with poor governance and service delivery

Objective 4: *To explore and analyse the nature and state of citizenry in respect of politics-administration dichotomy relations in Mzansi (11)*

Finding 4: The study discovered that majority of the South African citizenry was completely oblivious of the relationship between the politicians and administrators regarding the issues around good governance and service delivery in the country. What is more disturbing was the discovery that a large number of citizens do not take their civil responsibilities seriously, and thus becoming very passive even in government and service delivery matters that directly affect them. In most of the time they remain at the periphery rather than at the centre of government activities where they are expected to be active in challenging and engaging the government on actions and decisions that impact directly in the lives. In fact the researcher was shocked to find out that the South African citizenry was more passive compared to those of countries such as the United States of America and Great Britain

Recommendations

From these findings it became that the present *status quo* of the politics-administration dichotomy relations in Mzansi was completely undesirable and untenable, and as such some form of paradigm shift becomes eminent. Consequently, based on these findings, this article suggests and recommends a **(a) Strong visionary political and administrative leadership; (b) vibrant apolitical bureaucracy; (c) well-coordinated integrated political and administrative structures and systems; and (d) well-mobilised active participatory citizenry** model that is believed once adopted and rightfully implemented could lead to stable and sustainable politics-administration dichotomy relationship and thus contribute to good governance and sustainable service delivery in Mzansi

In terms of this suggested model:

- **Strong visionary political and administrative leadership** means that both the politicians and administrators together must identify and develop strategic plans to enhance good governance and provision of services to the citizens on equitable basis. This can only be achieved by removing all executive powers from politicians and hand them over to the administrators, hence the maxim: **politicians must politic and administrators must administrate**
- **Vibrant apolitical and strong public bureaucracy** refers to a public bureaucracy that is completely free from political influence, intimidation and other kinds of political proliferation. The type of public bureaucracy whose function is not merely to execute government policies and legislation, but also keep the politicians in check against any form of abuse of power, fraud, and corruption. The public bureaucracy that has been given the full administrative and executive powers;

- ***Well-coordinated and integrated political and administrative structures and systems*** means that these structures and systems be clearly articulated and be designed and be an expression of coordination and integration; and
- ***Well-mobilised active participatory citizenry*** refers to a situation in which members of various communities in the country be allowed and encouraged to take and play an active role, not only in the decision making processes of government, but also in influencing the political and administrative directions that government should (12) take—in other words, the government should be truly one that is ‘by the people, to the people, and for the people’—tenant of democracy!!!!!!

Conclusion

This article provides a qualitative exploratory analysis on the impact of perceived erosion of the politics-administration dichotomy on good governance and service delivery in a democratic developmental state: South African perspective. It begins by providing an introductory background as well as a theoretical perspective on the phenomenon of ‘politics-administration dichotomy and highlights on the significant role that this concept plays in promoting democratic public bureaucracy and good governance. The article identifies four themes which are said to be fundamental to a functional and performing politics-administration dichotomy relations, namely: (a) strong and visionary political leadership; (b) vibrant apolitical public bureaucracy; (a) well-coordinated and integrated political and administrative structures and systems; and (d) well-mobilised citizenry for active participation, and uses them as a basis for this analysis. Qualitative data collection methods (such as participant observation; in-depth interviewing; qualitative document study; and qualitative case study) and data analysis and interpretation techniques (such as qualitative content analysis and qualitative case analysis) are used in this study. Based on the research objectives pertinent to this study, several findings are arrived at, and on their basis a ***(a) Strong visionary political and administrative leadership; (b) vibrant apolitical strong public bureaucracy; (c) well-coordinated and integrated political and administrative structures and systems; and (d) well-mobilised active participatory citizenry politics-administration dichotomy model*** is proposed and recommended with the belief that if, and only if it can be properly adopted and implemented, could lead to the improvement to the functionality and performance of politics-administration dichotomy relations in Mzansi

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