

QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF PUBLIC SERVICE (BUREAUCRACY) IN DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA: AN ATTEMPT TO FORGE FOR A VIABLE, SUSTAINABLE, LEGITIMATE, AND WORKABLE STRONG PUBLIC BUREAUCRATIC ALTERNATIVE MODEL FOR MZANSI AFRICA (SOUTH AFRICA)

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Abstract

This article represented an attempt to explore the tension between politics and administration, not only as a bone of contention between the two, but also the negative impact this has in good governance and on the effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, viability, legitimacy and workability of the public service in the country. In undertaking this exploratory discourse, the author commenced by identifying two pertinent themes that are central to a well performing public bureaucracy, namely (1) politicization /depoliticisation and (2) Professionalisation / unprofessionalisation of the public service (bureaucracy), and used them as the basis for this exploratory study. The writer preferred a qualitative paradigm to the study, and thus employed qualitative data collection and gathering methods (i.e. participant observation, in-depth interviewing, qualitative document study, and qualitative case study), and qualitative data analysis and interpretation techniques (i.e. qualitative content analysis and qualitative case study analysis) to arrive at the anticipated findings, as directed by the key research problem and its sub-problems, the research questions, and the research objectives underpinning the study. Based on these findings, several recommendations were made, that the study believes, will make a meaningful contribution in enhancing and consolidating effectiveness and the efficiency of public service (bureaucracy) in Mzansi Africa (South Africa).

Keywords: Public bureaucracy, Depoliticisation, Professionalisation, Democracy and Transformation

Introduction

The emergence of a free constitutional and democratically-based political dispensation in South Africa in 1994, though commendable and inspiring as it were, has brought forth along with it, a number of serious and stubborn political and administrative challenges that are still embedded in our current public administration and management (public bureaucracy). Some of these challenges are so fundamental that they render the effectiveness, efficiency, viability and sustainability of the public bureaucracy dysfunctional to say the least and thus driving the public service towards a point of paralysis and complete collapse to say the worst. It is the standpoint of this manuscript to look at ways and means that can be implemented in order to mitigate and minimise the negative impacts that these and other similar challenges may have on South African public administration and management. In an attempt to do so, the study identifies and defines two key fundamental themes that are deemed to be necessary to the establishment of a credible strong public bureaucracy in any transitional democratic country like South Africa, namely: (1) Depoliticisation and (2) Professionalisation, and uses them as the basis for this exploratory study.

This work has been inspired and motivated by the fact that, even though this part of the area of public administration and management has far-reaching implications on the manner in which public bureaucracy can be successfully strengthened and consolidated to improve both governance and service delivery, little or no meaningful research has been undertaken in this area. Qualitative research paradigm will be used in enabling the researcher to utilise both qualitative data collection and gathering methods (such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, document study and case study) and qualitative data analysis and interpretation techniques (such as qualitative content analysis and case study analysis) to collect and interpret data. With regard to the sample of the study, a non-probability purposive or judgmental sample will be preferred and used.

Background

Theoretical and historical background

Theoretical overview

The cornerstone of effective, efficient, viable, sustainable, and workable public service is the existence of legitimate, capable, credible, and strong democratic public bureaucracy that is also based on professional standards and integrity. Within this context, the South African public bureaucracy must undergo a civil service transformation aiming at reforming

its highly “politicised” and “inefficient” bureaucracy into a modern democratic and professional administration. Therefore, this study attempts to uncover the short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes of this administrative transformation in Mzansi Africa (South Africa). Anderson, Reid, and Reyterman (2003) argue that:

The massive political, economic, and social transformation requires the establishment of new types of public service, one with professional skills needed to carry out new policies and protect citizens’ rights.

The current South African government, like many other democratic governments around the globe, is confronted with a challenge of finding new ways and means of providing goods and services in the face of daunting and insurmountable expectations from the already depressed citizens. It is for this particular reason that the country must start to undertake a comprehensive effort to reform and transform its public administration and management, and seriously address the issues of corruption and fraud as part of adopting sound strong, effective, efficient, reliable, credible, sustainable, viable, legitimate, and professional public service (bureaucracy).

Emphasising the relevance of efficiency as a key pillar in professional public service, Nzwei and Kuye (2007) state that:

Efficiency as one of the key pillars of public administration and management represents a critical link between tasks and resources (e.g. finance, time, human) especially in the highly limited resource environment of the public sector. As such, measures to maintain efficiency in the delivery of public services must continually be sought

It is true that a credible and strong public bureaucracy has as its key purpose the systematic evaluation, monitoring, and measuring of work processes and procedures towards greater effectiveness and efficiency in all government institutions and organisations.

In South Africa, public expectations regarding the role of the state in providing public goods and services are on the rise and will remain so for a long time to come. Subsequently, the government must start working with relevant stakeholders (i.e. other developing countries in Africa and elsewhere around the globe) to assist it in enhancing and consolidating the quality and credibility of its public administration and management. By implication, this suggests that the government must truly and genuinely commit itself to abide by its resolve to not only “reform”, but also transform its public administration and management structures, systems, rules, and procedures (not just merely cosmetic changes, but complete overhaul is what is needed)

Such a move according to Reid (2012) will be demonstrated by:

- Credibly signalling a comprehensive anti-corruption reform efforts (which include civil service reforms) that will reduce corruption and lead to foreign investment

- Passage of civil service reform legislation that provide for such a credible signal, and indeed provide for a more credible signal than that of actual application of cosmetic and symbolic rhetoric

- The state that has a unique opportunity to send such credible signals

This theoretical background is intended to substantiate the proposition that:

- The existence of a civil service transformation agenda in South Africa that should be systematically associated with the lower level public sector corruption;

- That the country should introduce a range of effective disciplinary measures seeking to constrain irresponsible behaviour in the public sector and increase public accountability and transparency/openness

- The public administration and management reform and transformation laws that should introduce meritocratic principle of recruitment and the prospect of long-term careers based on individual competence and performance that in turn may be expected to discredit the short-term benefits of corrupt practices.

In entrenching this culture of a functional and credible public administration and management Neshkova and Kostadinova (2012) submit the view that:

Administrative reform facilitates transparent governance and found empirical evidence to support this expectation

Most importantly, the other key objectives of reforming and transforming the civil service, namely, Professionalisation and Depoliticisation of the public bureaucracy are central to this manuscript, as they promise to create more competent, credible and predictable strong public bureaucracies that are usually associated with conducive entrepreneurial environment that is so needed for both business and good governance. If clearly adopted, such an environment could lead to a sharp and steady increase in the number of Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) in the country concern. South Africa as a developing country can greatly and enormously benefit from this amazing experience.

Historical perspectives

The sustainability and viability of bureaucratic and administrative transformation in modern democracies can be clearly explained from historical context of the reformation of the public service. It is the intent of this manuscript to explore this historical context in terms of two dimensions, namely: (1) The pre-communist perspective of public service reform; and (2) The post-communist perspective of public service reform:

Pre-communist perspectives

The nature and the position of public service in the Soviet Union (Eastern Block) during both the pre-communist and communist era were

completely totalitarian. It is within this context that this manuscript believes that the legacies from this totalitarian past have contributed enormously in making the process of transformation of public bureaucracy more difficult and complex. As a starting point, to embrace the idea that during this era, issues of institutional reforms were constrained by politics and as Haynes and Husan (2002) observed:

The task of judicial reform as more important than the politicisation of bureaucracies full of servants who were “excessively servile to the Communist Party”

Again, Schamis (2002) presented the view that:

In some of these communist countries, it took more than a decade for legal changes in civil servants’ status to get approved. State institutions inherited from the previous regime were deeply politicised and weak. Ironically, although marketisation called for less government involvement, efficient and competent bureaucracies were required to secure property rights and enforce contracts. Yet institutional reform occurred only when self-interested political elites found it congruent with their priorities.

Post-communist perspectives

The impact of the Cold War was felt throughout the entire Eastern Block (Soviet Union), to the extent that it led to a high level of disagreement amongst the practitioners and scholars of post-communist politics on the issue of accomplishments of administrative reforms in the ‘new ’Eastern European democracies. Within this context, Neshkova and Kostadinova (2012) alluded to the fact that:

The transformation of the public sector after 1989 has aimed to consolidate the democratic process and enhance economic development. Sceptics, however, argue that administrative reforms face serious challenges in the context of economic liberalisation, insufficient capacity for modernisation, and cultural legacies of the past.

In this instance, these authors judge the effectiveness of civil service transformation by assessing the impact of civil service reform on government transparency and foreign direct investment. The outcome of their empirical study subsequently confirmed that once civil transformation is adopted, public administration and management (and thus the bureaucracies) will become more effective at reducing corruption and attracting direct foreign investment. Consequently, despite the delays and difficulties of implementation, the genuine adoption of the transformation of the civil service (public bureaucracy) is important in and of itself, and democratic countries can truly expect results sooner than sceptics predict.

Furthermore, it is extremely important to realise that at any given time, the core of effective democratic governance is the presence of viable

and sustainable public administration and management (strong public bureaucracy) that is capable of adhering to professional standards and administrative/managerial integrity. This assertion has been clearly expressed and demonstrated by the likes of Evans and Rauch (1999); Rauch and Evans (2000); and Recanatini, Prati and Tabellini (2005), when they advanced that:

Since the collapse of communism in 1989, all of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe (Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland, Romania, Macedonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Estonia, Czech Republic, Croatia, and Bulgaria) have undergone civil service reforms aiming to transform their highly politicised and inefficient bureaucracies into modern professional administrations

This position was potentially intended to make civil service (public bureaucracy) more efficient, effective, transparent, and more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the public. Notwithstanding this, it became apparent that in the context of political and economic transformation, reforming the state public bureaucracies was postponed in many of these communist countries. In this instance, for example, Meyer-Sahling (2006) raised the point that:

Moreover, implementing institutional reform became difficult because of insufficient resources. Legislation for the establishment of a professional and depoliticised bureaucracy was introduced, but legacies from the past instilled a reluctance to transform. Furthermore, front-runners such as Hungary and Poland rolled back the requirements for impartiality from their laws, thus effectively letting politicisation back in.

Meyer-Sahling (2009) further indicated and posed the fundamental question that:

This prompted some analysts to claim that civil service laws had practically failed in depoliticising the Central and Eastern Europe civil service systems. The move towards greater professionalisation has also been hampered in cases such as the abolition of civil service authorities in Poland and Slovakia and the late and weakly implemented reform in Czech Republic. Given this contradictory record of achievement and frustration, has the recent administrative transformation in Eastern Europe had any tangible results?

Notably, the post-communist administrative and/or bureaucratic experience in the Central and Eastern European countries coincided with a world reform movement in the Western Hemisphere which was driven by the philosophies and principles of the New Public Management (NPM). Notwithstanding, it appeared that the NPM approach for a long time remained foreign to transformation efforts in these post-communist countries, which unfortunately chosen to reform their administrations along

the lines of the classical theorists, amongst them being Frederick Taylor(Scientific Management),Henri Fayol(Principles of Organisation), Max Weber(Bureaucracy), and Ralph Davis(Rational Planning)(See Robbins & De Senzo 1995)

At first look, the Central and Eastern Europe became noticeably sceptical of the New Public Management approach, and several scholars provided various explanations for this position. For example, Goetz (2001) maintained that:

The movement toward more managerial freedom and business-like practices simply was not feasible in the context of post-communism.

Moreover, Nunberg (1999) pointed to:

Strong national and organisational cultural preferences for the classical traditions as well as the fact that the European Union (EU) also endorsed the classical type of professional nonpartisan bureaucracy for countries aspiring for membership of the EU. Finally, Bossaert and Demmke (2003) highlighted that:

Another group of authors sees the orientation towards the

Weberian model as rooted in the lack of relevant information about the latest developments in advanced democracies.

South African position

The negative impacts of the past colonial and apartheid rule in South Africa on public administration and management are well-known and fully documented and thus cannot be repeated here. However, note must be taken of the fact that the new democratic South Africa inherited a skewed racially-based system of public service (bureaucracy) that was deliberately meant to serve the interests of the minority at the expense of those of the majority, resulting with untold level of inequities and injustices in South Africa, that still remain a dominant feature of the country's public administration and management arena even today.

Public administration and management since 1994 democratic dispensation

With the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994, several efforts were made toward transforming the country's society in general and the public service in particular. In respect of the latter, the government committed itself by introducing several legislative measures intended to democratise and to transform the country's bureaucracy. The intent was to create a public service system which was not only all-inclusive, but was also viable, sustainable, legitimate, workable, representative and entirely responsive to the needs and aspirations of all South Africans. Notably, several democratic public departments/ institutions were created by the

government to give effect and expression to and the democratic decisions of the respective legislative structures. Within this context, a specific framework was adopted within which the country must be governed and administered

Definition of concepts

The concept of public administration and management in the context of this manuscript is understood as having two primary connotations which are:

- First, that the concepts administration and management are synonymous terms denoting all activities and processes related to the running of public organisations and the rendering of public goods and services; and
- Second, is that management is a component of administration relating only to those activities performed on a managerial level, and, with regard to personnel function in particular, relating to personnel utilisation.

However, the latter approach suggests that public personnel management is to be considered as referring to the utilisation of personnel only and this is a view that is totally opposed by both Nigro and Nigro (1980) and Robbins (1982) who maintains that:

The terms are synonymous.

Other relevant definitions are those offered by most prominent South African writers on the subject and they include, but are not limited to:

- Denhardt (1995) who regards public administration as:
Management of public programmes

For the purposes of this article, and based on this definition, the terms management and administration, and thus public personnel administration and public personnel management are considered as synonymous terms

- Cloete (1991) presents the view that:

The staffing function is also known as the personnel function, personnel administration and personnel work

- Andrews (1988) articulates the fact that:

The personnel function is an all-embracing term which refers to a complex network of generic enabling functions, functional activities, analytical methods and auxiliary aids. These components are in continual interaction for the purpose of recruiting, training, utilising, remunerating reasonably and fairly and retaining an effective, motivated and trained personnel corps for the public sector

- Klingner and Nalbandian (1993) observed that public personnel management can be described as:

The policies and techniques used to manage those who work in the public Sector... and they state further that public personnel management

consists of the functions needed to manage human resources in public agencies.

Legislative Framework

In giving effect to the democratisation and ultimate transformation of the public service in South Africa, a number of legislative measures were introduced and adopted which include, amongst others:

• **Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act (Act 200 of 1993):** This Act came into effect in April 1994 and amongst other things authorised the constitutional transformation of the Republic of South Africa, and thereby giving all citizens the same rights and freedoms.

• **The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act (Act 108 of 1996):** The Interim Constitution of 1993 was repealed and was replaced with the final and supreme Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. According to Cloete(1996), the **Bill of Rights** as it is incorporated in the Constitution, remains the cornerstone of the South African democracy as it enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedoms, emphasising that the state must respect, protect, promote, and fulfil the rights in the **Bill of Rights**.

• **Public Service Act (Act 103 of 1994):** In essence, this Act is probably the most eminent piece of legislation regulating the employment of public employees. The Act provides for the organisation and administration of the public service of the Republic, the regulation of conditions of employment, terms of office, discipline, retirement and discharge of members of the public service and matters connected therewith. According to Cheminais, Bayat, Van der Walt and Fox (1998) the Act consists eight chapters and three schedules which covers the broad aspects of public service employment such as: administration; organisation and staff; appointment, promotion, and transfer; termination of service; inefficiency and misconduct; obligations, rights, and privileges of officers and employees; and miscellaneous...remuneration, the limitations of the actions of public employees, the liability of the State, regulations, and the Public Service Staff Code.

• **Labour Relations Act (Act 66 of 1995)** as amended: This Act applies equally to both the public and private sectors in South Africa. It is fundamentally aimed at allowing for closer cooperation and communication between the employer and employees. It is intended to try to resolve work-related conflict peacefully through negotiation, mediation and/or conciliation, and arbitration. In respect of the Public Sector in particular, the Act makes provisions for: the establishment of a public sector bargaining council; the jurisdiction of the Labour Court; and the creation of dispute

resolution procedures and strike procedures. However, Benjamin (1993) decries the idea that:

Criticism levelled at the Act stems from the fact that there are many different categories of disputes which are referred to different forums that could lead to technical objections about how a dispute was classified. Furthermore, many features of the Act favour the employer over the employee and this could result in labour unrest. Lastly, the definition of what constitutes an essential service is extremely wide, going beyond the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition, that is, a service the interruption of which would threaten the health and safety of the community

Essentially, according to (Kemp 1992; Cherrington 1995; Van Fleet 1991) the context of labour relations can be viewed as:

The working relationship between employer and employees, including the rights of each party with regard to how decisions are made and how problems are settled, as well as dealing with employees when they are organised in a labour union.

Finally, it must be stressed that in addition to these legislative measures of ensuring the creation of an environment in which public administration and management must operate in the country, there are also a number of policies adopted and public institutions established specifically for this purpose. They include, amongst others: The Bill of Rights; Ethical Guidelines for Public Administration and Management; Employment and Occupational Equity; Basic Conditions of Employment; Affirmative Action; Management of Diversity in the Public Service; Public Service Training and Education; Skills Development; Health and Safety; and Public Service Commission. From all these, it becomes clearly evident that South Africa as a developing democracy, has one of the finest public service environments that is best and second to none

Problem Statement

Subsequent to the above-stated background overview, the key research problem underlying this study is stated thus:

In spite of the availability of the best, finest, conducive legislative and institutional environment for the effective and efficient functioning and performance of the public service in South Africa, the viability, sustainability, legitimacy and workability of the public service (bureaucracy) in the country still pose a serious threat to public administration in South Africa

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

1. The politicisation and/or depoliticisation of the public service (bureaucracy); and

2. The professionalisation and/ or unprofessionalisation of the public service (public bureaucracy)

Research Questions

This qualitative exploration into the effectiveness and efficiency of public service (bureaucracy) in South Africa centres on the following research questions:

1. What is the position regarding the politicisation and/or the depoliticisation of public service (bureaucracy) in South Africa?
2. What is the position regarding the professionalisation and/or the unprofessionalisation of public service (bureaucracy) in South Africa?

Research Objectives

Emanating from and link to the above-stated key research problem and its sub-problems, together with the research questions posed, are the following research objectives:

1. The nature and level of the politicisation and/or the depoliticisation of public service (bureaucracy) in South Africa; and
2. The nature and level of the professionalisation and/or the unprofessionalisation of public service (bureaucracy) in South Africa

Research Design and Methodology

The meaning of “research design” in the context of this article is the same as the one provided by (Babbie and Mouton 2001) which states that:

A research design involves a set of decisions regarding what topic is to be studied among what population with what research methods for what purpose...research design is the process of focusing your perspective for the purposes of a particular research/study

Coincidentally, the term “research methodology” refers to the study and the use of research methods. Consequently, this study adopted a qualitative research design and methodology as directed by and in justified by the nature its key research problem and its sub-problems, the research questions and research objectives underlying the study. The selection of this paradigm/approach stems from the belief that it is the most appropriate in answering research questions raised in this manuscript.

Population

Working along the confine and perimeters of qualitative research, both descriptive and exploratory approaches were adopted by focusing largely on the public service (bureaucracy) in South Africa. This exploratory synthesis concludes with a gap analysis that aimed to determine the required skills in delineating an ideal profile public service (bureaucracy) in South

Africa. The population selected for this study, comprises of all public servants (administrative and political) in South Africa’s public sector. In this regard, particular care has been taken of the fact that the term “population” refers to the universe of units from which the sample is selected (Bryman 2012).

Sampling technique

As stated earlier, the sample represents that segment of the population. Based on the aim and purpose of this exploratory study, a non-probability, purposive, and judgmental sampling was preferred and used as it allows the researcher to choose the subjects of analysis on the basis of their knowledge of the research problem to be addressed. This sample was therefore compiled based on the nine provinces that constitute and reflect the demography of South Africa. It was designed in such a way that at least two hundred and fifty public administrators, two hundred and fifty civil service officers, and two hundred and fifty members of the civil society from each province be identified, observed and interviewed for the purpose of the study.

Figure 1: Graphic presentation of the sample:

Province	Public Administrators and Managers	Public Service Officers/ Officials	Members of the Civil Society	Total
Gauteng	250	250	250	750
North West	250	250	250	750
Limpopo	250	250	250	750
Mpumalanga	250	250	250	750
Kwa-Zulu Natal	250	250	250	750
Western Cape	250	250	250	750
Eastern Cape	250	250	250	750
Northern Cape	250	250	250	750
Free State	250	250	250	750
TOTAL	2250	2250	2250	6750

Source: Own Source

Research Methods And Techniques Employed

Data collection and gathering methods used

Qualitative data collection and gathering methods were employed having taken due care in ensuring that the validity, reliability, credibility, objectivity, and dependability of data were not compromised in any way or manner. This basic process entailed the following:

Participant observation: This is a qualitative research procedure of data collection that necessitates direct contact with the subjects of observation (Neuman 2000). In this procedure the author got involved in the one-continuum ranging from total involvement on the one hand and total

observation on the other. This allowed the writer to decide beforehand on the role he intended to take in the inquiry since this decision affects the total process of the inquiry. The author spent lengthy period of time actively observing participants in their natural setting in their workplaces

In-depth interviewing: This is the most predominant mode of data collection in qualitative research, and all interviews conducted in this article were interactional. Using this method, the interviewer was deeply and yet unavoidably implicated in creating meanings that ostensibly reside within the participants (Krueger and Casey 2000). Coincidentally, the author engaged in this mode knowing that interviewing the participants involves description of their experiences as well as involving reflection on the description. After a lengthy uninterrupted period of preliminary interviews, the author prepared a detailed open-ended interview schedule, and on its basis, conducted in-depth interviews with the respondents

Qualitative document Study: In this article, the author used a variety of non-personal documents such as minutes of meetings, agendas, internal office memos, newspapers, magazines, and Government's legislative and policy documentation with the knowledge that if these documents are studied and analysed for the purpose of scientific research, the method of document study as a data collection method becomes operative (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Government publication, journal articles on public service bureaucracy) and politics were used to amass the required and relevant data for the study

Qualitative case study: The writer is of the view that a descriptive or factual statement makes a claim about what really is a case. Incidentally, there are various kinds of descriptive statements that allow the researcher to distinguish between types of descriptive statements according to the following dimensions: the number of cases covered by the description; the number of variables included in a description; and the level of measurement in the study (Leedy and Ormrod 2001). Cases lodged with the different provincial government departments and institutions, and that have particular contribution to make in this study, were secured and studied for the purpose of this exploratory research

Data analysis and interpretation techniques

The following qualitative data analysis and interpretation techniques were employed in this manuscript:

Qualitative content analysis: In this study, content analysis is viewed as a process of identifying patterns and themes of experiences research participants bring to the study...what patterns characterise their participation, and what patterns of change are reported by and observed in the participants (Patton 2002). As a qualitative technique of data analysis and

interpretation, content analysis played an important 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 documentations obtained and secured during data collection phase were subjected to a rigorous analysis through this technique. The same is true with the data gathered through 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). This qualitative data analysis and interpretation technique was adopted in this study as it takes multiple perspective into account and attempts to understand the influences of multiple social systems of the subjects’ perspectives and behaviours—the defining characteristic of this technique is its emphasis on an individual . In this manuscript, relevant cases from provincial government departments and institutions visited, were assimilated and their relevance to the study cautiously scrutinised to strengthen and consolidate their contribution to the study

Findings

Focusing on the research questions and research objectives underpinning this study, and employing the appropriate qualitative data collect collection and gathering methods and data analysis and interpretation techniques, as well as using the interview schedule containing relevant open-ended questions, the following findings were arrived at;

•**Research question 1:** What is the position regarding the politicisation and/or the depoliticisation of public service (bureaucracy) in South Africa?

•**Objective 1:** Explore the nature and level of the politicisation and/or the depoliticisation of the public service (bureaucracy) in South Africa.

•**Finding 1:** The study revealed that like in the post-communist politics of the East European democracies (particularly in countries such as Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Estonia, Poland, Romania, Macedonia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Czech Republic), the public service (bureaucracy) in South Africa is potentially politicised. In South Africa, this state of affairs is not an anomaly, but it is a fact that is even entrenched in the supreme law of the land (the Constitution). It is the very Constitution that provide for the unfettered **executive powers/authority** to the legislators and other politicians alike

In a highly politicised public service (bureaucracy), the study observed that there is this possibility that even the adoption of administrative reforms and the passage of civil service legislation will not be sufficient to prevent the politicisation of the state/ government. The study also found out

that bureaucratic politicisation and patronage will always remain the order of the day because of a trust deficit in government-bureaucracy relations. This naturally leads to a situation where public servants will start developing an inertia of running the administrative processes and procedures in an old fashion way and adopt a conscious reluctance to change their behaviour for the good

•**Research question 2:** What is the position regarding the unprofessionalisation and/or professionalisation of public service (bureaucracy) in South Africa?

•**Research objective 2:** Explore the nature and level of the unprofessionalisation and/or professionalisation of public service (bureaucracy) in South Africa

•**Finding 2:**The study discovered that hiring, promoting, training, developing, and empowering people in the public service(bureaucracy) based on the principle of merit is a core and basic requirement in professionalising, transforming and creating a strong public service(bureaucracy).This principle is critical, and the study has reveal that once compromised , can lead to a negative impact on the efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, viability, legitimacy and even the stability and workability of the public service (bureaucracy).This, as the study observed, can result in the total collapse of good governance and public service (bureaucracy) that is in a state of paralysis.

Recommendations

The history of communist and post-communist administration and politics era, in which administrative structures, systems, processes, and procedures are highly politicised, can turn to be extremely challenging to the effectiveness, efficiency, viability, sustainability, legitimacy, and the smooth functioning and operationalisation public service (bureaucracy) in any given democratic country. Therefore, based on the findings of this study, recommends, amongst other things that a democratic country like South Africa must forge for:

- A difficult, yet a brilliant task of connecting what is politically acceptable and administratively sustainable—politics and administration—as a fundamental prerequisite for effective and sustainable governance and viable and legitimate public service (bureaucracy). The bottom-line is that failure to bridge the gap between political acceptability and administrative sustainability will always result in decreasing legitimacy for governing departments/institutions and increasing challenges for public service (bureaucracy)
- In the area of the professionalisation of the public service (bureaucracy) in South Africa, the manuscript recommends that a concerted

effort must be taken to give utmost expression to the merit system without any compromise. In this regard, the government must initiate and launch administrative modernisation programmes and processes that will assist in identifying practices professional government administrators/managers must bring to the citizens. The chief administrator's role of working in and bridging the gap between the arenas of politics and administration must be reinforced. More importantly, professional public service (bureaucracy) should be more involved with community partners, including elected officials to facilitate communities and enable democracy. Bureaucratic professionals must help build communities and support democratic and community values. This means that professional public administrators/managers must help build communities by facilitating partnerships among sectors, groups and individual, and must work with informal groups of people as well as established groups, organisations, and other governing departments/institutions. Public Service (bureaucracy) professionals through their values, training and experience must remain supportive of democratic values and work effectively and tirelessly toward inclusion, accountability, and transparency. They must help in the fight against all forms of corrupt and fraudulent activities and practices both in the public and private sectors.

Conclusion

The past twenty of democratic dispensation in South Africa had been a challenging, and at times tumultuous period in the relations between politics and public service (bureaucracy) in the country. The period in question was, and still is, characterised by: (1) this perceived failure from the part of public administrators/managers to more effectively work the intersection between political and administrative arenas; (2) the lack of promotion of collaborative work and synchronising political and administration work, particularly with problems that have no jurisdictional boundaries; and (3) the total lack of active citizen participation governance relations. The latter (active citizen participation), can no longer be considered as merely optional but must be honestly taken as an imperative. This article attempts to explore this tension between politics and administration, not only as a bone of contention between the two, but also the negative impact that it has in good governance and on the effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, viability, legitimacy, and workability of the public service in the country. To achieve this exploratory journey, the author commences by identifying two critical themes, namely: (1) politicisation/depolicitisation and (2) professionalisation/unprofessionalisation of the public service (bureaucracy), and uses them as the basis for this exploratory study. The author prefers a

qualitative paradigm to the study, and thus uses qualitative data collection and gathering methods (i.e. participant observation, in-depth interviewing, qualitative document study, and qualitative case study), and qualitative data analysis and interpretation techniques (i.e. qualitative content analysis and qualitative case study analysis) to arrive at the anticipated findings. Subsequent to the key research problem and its sub-problems, research questions raised and research objectives central to this study, **several** findings are arrived at and recommendations are made on the basis of these findings.

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