

**The Tragedy of the African National Congress (ANC) and its Cadre Deployment Policy:  
Ramifications for Municipal Stability, Corruption and Service Delivery**

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**Abstract**

*The much-anticipated shift from apartheid to democratic rule in 1994 brought much jubilation in Africa and globally. South Africa had entered a terrain where a democratically elected party governed it in the African National Congress (ANC). Looking to alter the apartheid policies of the erstwhile National Party (NP), the ANC came into power with no formal experience of governing a state. However, since Nelson Mandela to the current Ramaphosa administration has made some strides in development and economic growth blueprints in South Africa's relatively young 28-year democratic history. As a form of government closer to the people, municipalities are seen as a fundamental area of government besides others, including poverty alleviation, employment creation, and service delivery. However, in the past two decades, the ANC has taken center stage in its cadre deployment policy, resulting in an upsurge in corruption, lack of service delivery, poor performance, and a relative decline in its hegemonic political power. This article examines the link between cadre deployment, municipal stability, corruption, and service delivery. The article shows that cadre deployment has not benefited individuals at the grass-root level because of incompetent individuals, lack of qualifications, corruption, tender greed, comrade beneficiary, and lack of managerial vision at the local government level.*

**Keywords:** *ANC, Local Government, Service Delivery, Corruption, Cadre Deployment*

**Introduction**

The democratic transition from apartheid to democracy was on all levels an overwhelming task for not on South Africa, but its regional neighbors, Africa at large, and the international community taking into consideration the destabilization policies of the apartheid government. However, the democratic South African government inherited a racially skewed public administration at a time when many black individuals comprised the majority of the public servants in lower positions. Hence, this shift became a daunting task for the Nelson Mandela administration. Immense socio-economic and political challenges because of apartheid were significant and would not be going to address in a short period. In the words of Shava and Chamisa (2018), this administration faced a difficult task at the three-administration levels: national, provincial, and local.

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Apart from rectifying the imbalances of the erstwhile apartheid regime, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) also introduced its cadre deployment policy that advocated for party loyalists to not only get employment but occupy senior government positions in the public sector (see Twala, 2014). From a global perspective, particularly in Africa, cadre deployment is a dominant phenomenon administered by various ruling political parties. Nevertheless, from an Afrocentric perspective, this phenomenon is believed to induce a mediocre institutional quality or to cause poor execution of policies by the state. Numerous agencies, writers, and researchers with the notion of providing solutions and strategies to combat it have examined cadre deployment in the South African public sector; hence, the political discussion on corruption and municipal\* service delivery mandates remain relevant in today's academic discourse.

This article ponders the driving forces of the ANC and its cadre deployment policy in the public sector by drawing insights into these implications for municipal stability and service delivery. Referring to the principal-agent and collective theories and a qualitative research approach supplemented by secondary data, this article tries to show that cadre deployment has yet to benefit people at the grass-root level and in municipalities<sup>†</sup>. However, greed, party loyalty, and corruption have led to poor performance, maladministration, and service delivery protests driven by unqualified individuals, lack of Batho Pele<sup>‡</sup> oversights, and incompetence of these cadres lucky enough to be given these positions.

## **Literature Review**

### **From Apartheid to Democracy: The ANC and Inheriting a Skewed Public Service Post-1994**

South Africa's shift from apartheid to democracy is, from a global viewpoint, one of the most pivotal political events of post-cold war era. This widely respected shift was viewed with high

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<sup>†</sup> A municipality may be conceptualized as that part of government that manifests at the grass root level and a vital part of governmental relationships and organizational systems. In South Africa, municipalities are grouped into three categories:

- i) Category A municipalities (metropolitan municipalities) such as eThekweni
- ii) Category B municipalities such as Polokwane Local municipality and
- iii) Category C municipalities such as Capricorn district municipality.

<sup>‡</sup> Batho Pele Means "People First". The Batho Pele White Paper is the South African National Government's White Paper for Transforming Public Service Delivery. It is all about giving good customer service to the users of government services. All public servants are required to practice Batho Pele. There are 8 principles or guidelines for Batho Pele in the White Paper. They are: Consultation, Service Standards, Courtesy, Access Information, Openness and Transparency, Dealing with complaints, Giving Best Value.

hopes, particularly for the advancement of South Africa and its people (see Mlambo, 2020). South Africa's transition is a well-known phenomenon. After years of violence and sanctions, the ANC and other liberal movements were unbanned in February 1990. After the first-ever general elections in April 1994, the ANC came into power, and Nelson Mandela was sworn in as the country's president. A massive challenge for the Mandela administration was to undo the apartheid legacies of poverty, inequality, and racial segregation and create a single, efficient public service that ought to deliver the necessary basic needs to all citizens. To adhere to such, the government passed numerous policies to stimulate societal transformation and eradicate all aspects of discrimination policies from the statute book (Connolly, 2013).

Sebake and Sebola (2014) submit that since the transition from apartheid to democratic rule, the ANC believed that the cadre deployment policy strategy should directly relate to the National Democratic Tasks as set out in the Strategy and Tactics document. This was to give space to a loyalist who would then create space for the inclusion of the political ideology of the ANC; however, like many other policies, the cadre deployment has had its negative significance. It has created not only room for corruption but also nepotism, favoritism, and lack of service delivery mandates. When the ANC came into power, it inherited a racially skewed public service in which about 95 percent of the 3239 civil servants were majority whites and blacks only made up 0.6 percent; and they made up the majority of public servants in the lower ranks. Hence, this transition was a daunting task for the newly elected Mandela administration. It had to merge the many administrations of the central government and numerous homelands into one coherent, extended administration system and, at the same time, came up with many policies geared toward rectifying the imbalances of the past (Franks, 2014).

With the notion to alma gate all these and other factors, an effective restructuring took place in which a three-sphere system (national, provincial, and local government) was formed, incorporating all previous administrations and rationalizing the previously fragmented local governments. The 1996 constitution provided a robust idea of the kind of public service management that was anticipated and included:

- i) Professionalism, impartially and excellence
- ii) Accountability and Transparency
- iii) Participatory policymaking

- iv) Efficiency, effectiveness and equity and
- v) A developmental and service orientation

However, as per the apartheid regime-run government, the public service has been overwhelmed by political loopholes as many policies have been misused for their ideological interests as well as next of kin and comrades. Incompetent line managers began to misuse their terms in office and hire less competent allies to safeguard their position. While the ANC government came into power as a movement of liberation, it soon had to swiftly transform itself into a ruling political party.

**On the concept of Cadre Deployment: Unpacking its Afrocentric meaning with particular focus on Democratic South Africa**

Masuku and Jili (2019) submit that political connections have been seen as very significant aspects that influence the ways and norms in which public institutions perform and this is particularly true for post-democratic South Africa. Mchunu (2018), in his assessment of party loyalty in South Africa, noted that from 1994, the deployment of ANC cadres into vital positions in government became common and was used to accelerate the process of government transformation. The concept of cadre deployment may be viewed as the appointment by a government governing party of a loyalist member(s) in an organization and bringing that institution under the party's control rather than the state.

It pertains to an individual or individuals who are trained to function in a particular political or business segment but can be deployed to serve anywhere else if the party decides to do so, irrespective of their level of qualification, skills, and competence. By viewing it from an economic angle, cadre deployment is patronage dispensed to individuals, companies, and agencies by the government governing policy, albeit not on merit but on the basis that they enjoy a degree of political connection to the governing party. The mass challenges of apartheid driven by the National Party (NP) government confronted the ANC with a plethora of issues. Similarly, and particularly to the ANC, a fundamental prerequisite for its success was the existence of a robust revolutionary organization. The strength of this revolutionary organization lay not only in numbers but also primarily in the quality of its cadres. Ndedi and Kok (2017) noted that the cadre policy of an organization is determined by both short and long-term goals. From an apartheid perspective, the long-term goal was to overthrow the apartheid government and moving forward, establish a non-racial and democratic South Africa.

The ANC believed that its cadre deployment policy would somehow safeguard the new government from sabotage by opposition parties. The best way to neutralize this imminent menace was to install loyal party members who could at least be trusted politically. Thebe (2017) opines that apart from poor service delivery mandates, cadre deployment has produced relatively inexperienced and uneducated public servants and leaders over the years, which has given political leaders massive dominance after failing to hold public office. This brings service delivery protests because of the lack of delivery of services as promised to communities. As already alluded to, the constitution, especially sections 40(1) and (2) establishes the three spheres (national, provincial, and local government) within certain parameters for intergovernmental relations. Of importance, here are municipalities that are established under section 152 of the constitution to offer democratic and accountable government for local communities.

This pertains to ensuring the provision of basic services with the notion of promoting economic and social development. In contrast, these political deployments need proper political education and training to maintain the significance of human resource management, financial administration, and management and analytical skills. Over South Africa's young democratic history, the researcher argues that municipal hindrances are not limited to leadership, accountability, service delivery, and budgets; however, these are also closely driven by cadre deployments. The concept of service delivery is linked to the government's role to satisfy its clients (in this context, members of the public) through the provision of goods and quality services.

In South Africa as in other countries continentally and globally, service delivery is a constitutional mandate and should be fulfilled without bias and provided in a way that is impartial, fair, and without discrimination. Since 1994, this has yet to prevail as efficiently as expected by the government in power. This has emanated from poor leadership and management by those in power. Today, there are many South African communities that still lack basic shelter, proper sanitation, and electricity (Magidimisha & Chipungu, 2019). While these are often spearheaded by poor leadership, cadre deployment at the local level has meant that those in the office need more skills and education to render services to the people. Some mechanisms have been implemented to address the effects of cadre deployment in South Africa to improve performance and service delivery at the local government level. Some of these include the

Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation system, single public service, Public Service Amendment Bill, African Peer Review Mechanism Program of Action, Provincial Growth and Development Strategies, and Integrated Development Plans. These were established to improve the performance of public servants, which would, in turn, improve service provision to the public. However, while these were seen to re-alter the paradigm shift of the public service, they have not sufficiently done what they were intended to do. Poor oversight mechanisms and monitoring and evaluation have made individuals find many loopholes to alter what these were supposed to achieve.

### **The Nexus between Cadre Deployment and Municipal Ineffectiveness**

De Jager and Steenkamp (2016) aver that the early elites of the ANC embraced values of individual accountability, ethics, and a sense of social consciousness. However, modern ANC elites seem to be leading through a different set of principles. This stems from the increased rates of corruption, and as Desai (2018) noted, political trust is an essential factor for a healthy democratic rule, and without such, any state will find the going tough. Under the administration of Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, the ANC elites were focused on how to build a democratic state robustly and firmly articulated most values laid out in the country's constitution, that of human dignity, the achievement of equality, the advancement of human rights, non-racialism and non-sexism. Nevertheless, the ANC cadres no longer see these sentiments as a policy statement.

According to Kondlo (2017), the anticipated transition from apartheid to democracy forms an important backdrop in understanding South Africa's political landscape, and this transition (because of many socio-economic ills) continues to be the center of debates. The local government sphere in South Africa has come a long way from the time when there were large numbers of racially segregated municipalities. In 2000, more than 800 municipalities were merged, and such municipalities are scattered all over the country. Their role is focused on growing local economies and maintaining the provision of basic municipal services. Many municipalities in South Africa are facing serious challenges, including debt and the inability to pay their bills. Despite some achievements attained, there are still many service delivery issues and socio-economic development challenges, especially in rural-based municipalities. Municipal development duties, as enshrined in the constitution under section 152(a), require that:

“A municipality must structure and manage its administration and budgeting and planning process to give priority to the basic needs of the community, and to promote the social and economic development of the community and participate in provincial and national development programs.”

Most municipalities in South Africa have been criticized for their poor administration; corruption, fraud, and cadre deployment remain a huge challenge. Mamokhere (2019) puts to the fore other reasons why service delivery has become an issue in most municipalities, these are:

- i) Dissatisfaction with service delivery
- ii) Unemployment and poverty
- iii) Corruption and nepotism
- iv) Unfulfilled promises
- v) Lack of access to information and
- vi) Lack of participatory democracy

Drawing from the preceding, many municipalities are prone to such issues. Thus, many residents feel as if their voices are not taken into consideration and are never consulted nor informed of municipal and service delivery issues. Skills shortages, inadequate infrastructure planning, maintenance, and investment have also driven this. However, it must also be noted that rural municipalities cannot equally compete with cities with a high-income tax base to stimulate and entice investments. In the local government sphere, political leadership ought to realize that service delivery is essential, and any dishonesty and incompetence in this regard lead to poor citizen confidence (Mantzaris, 2014).

Manyaka and Nkuna (2014) admit that corruption is very harmful in developing countries such as South Africa because these countries possess fewer resources and need to utilize such resources most effectively. The consequences of corruption are drawn from spheres that include political and social. In terms of the former, corruption may lead to political instability as unrest may occur driven by individuals who have had enough of corruption. From a social perspective, corruption gives individuals the opportunity to loot state resources for self-enrichment (see Mlambo et al., 2019). This is notwithstanding that South Africa has some of the continent's best anti-corruption agencies. These include but are not limited to the National Prosecuting Authority

(NPA), the Anti-Corruption Task Team (ACTT), the Asset Forfeiture Unit (AFU), the Public Protector, the South Africa Police Service (SAPS), the South African Revenue Service (SARS), Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID), the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC), the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigations (DPCI) and the Auditor General of South Africa (Mlambo, 2019). While these may seem robust and efficient, at times, they have and continuously fail to bring corrupt public servants (especially those in high government positions) to book and prosecute them.

According to Qobo (2019), the local government sphere has been a causality of the party's interference in resource allocation in the state, and yearly, the Auditor-General paints a dark picture of local government driven by irregular wastage, corruption, and cadre deployment is one channel through which the party-state relationships is blurred. Because of this situation, Brooks (2004) is of the view that perhaps this is driven by the implications of a dominant party system, in this case, the ANC in South Africa. In this vein, she submits that in a prospect where a particular party dominates the political arena and faces the account minimal prospect of electoral defeat, concerns rise about the possibility of declining government response to public opinion and accountability. Indeed, and in support of the views raised by this scholar, any ruling party will tend to lower its gear if it is of the view that whatever happens, it still enjoys majority support from citizens. While this is true, particularly from an African context, it does not account for good governance and putting the needs of the populace first before that of the party. In essence, it gives room for complacency and provides the needed services to the public.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework aims to detect the line of review and methodology that is used to answer it. Thus, the theoretical framework of research narrates the ethical basis on which the research takes place and forms the link between the theoretical aspects and practical mechanism of the undertaken investigation (Ennis, 1999; Ocholla & Le Rouj, 2011). Cadre deployment and corruption are complex phenomena, and no one theory explains everything. However, several theories assist in further constructing this phenomenon; two of the most prominent ones in literature are the principal-agent and collective theories.

### **Principal Agent-Theory**

Over the years, most literature has focused on the theories underpinning the numerous methodologies for tackling corruption emphasizing that a robust understanding of this may lead to better policy designs and solutions (Schwertheim, 2017; Marquette & Peiffer, 2018). According to Mitchell (2020), the Principal Agent-Theory (PAT) approaches corruption from two lenses, the rational choice perspective as well as an economic standpoint, entailing that deliberation of personal gain plays a pivotal role in this. The theory gained prominence in the 1970s among economists and before being adopted in the field of International Relations and Political Science. This theory is based on two key elements, the principal (government employees) and the agent, individuals, or groups that the principal monitors.

The theory has been dominant to scholars writing about corruption who are of the view that corruption takes place when information and preference asymmetry among principals and agents offers narratives for agents to engage in corruption. Generally, corruption occurs when principals cannot sufficiently monitor agents and when the goals and visions of the two are not aligned (see Walton and Jones, 2017). The PAT is of the view that agents (public officials) assist to protect the interests of the principal (either public, parliament, or supervisors). However, in reality, the interests of the agents often diverge from the interests of the principal. In this instance, an agency problem arises where the agents choose to engage in corrupt activities to further their interests and to detriment of the interest of the principal.

In the modern era, anti-corruption literature and policy have been largely influenced by the principal. Political elites are, in most cases, tasked with the role of principal, monitoring the actions of bureaucrats or agents as a means of holding them accountable. Nevertheless, due to a lack of logistical and oversight mechanisms, principals may have and/or need to improve their knowledge about the agents. Similarly, corruption may occur when rationally-minded bureaucrats use their discretion over resources to extract rents when such opportunities arise.

### **Collective Action Theory**

While the PAT has been used for decades to draw a nuanced appraisal of corruption, in recent years, another prominent theory that has surfaced is the Collective Action Theory (CAT). This theory goes beyond traditional PAT and emphasizes the significance of elements such as trust

and how individuals perceive the behaviors of others. Hence, corruption is regarded as a collective problem as individuals rationalize their behavior based on the perception of what others may do in the same situation.

Thus, when corruption becomes a social norm, everyone sees it as the right thing to do, albeit being aware of the consequences. In the CAT, the motivation behind corrupt behavior is an individual putting his or her interest first. An alternative framework that may be utilized to understand corruption is by framing it as a CAT. In general, the CAT is the idea that when a group of individuals shares a common vision, achieving this vision becomes challenging due to members' conflicting interests (Mitchell, 2020). These two theoretical settings assisted in the logical prognosis of the article. This is because firstly, they inform the nexus of corruption between the principal and the agent, and secondly; they provide in part some nuanced understanding of why conflicting interests arise in corruption-related schemes.

### **Methodology**

Methodology pertains to the methods, research design, and procedures used in gathering data. To exemplify this, respondents, data gathering, data analysis, and instruments are part of the broad methodological fields (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The methodology used in this article was qualitative. The collected data was sourced from relevant sources and analyzed contextually without necessarily involving any quantitative techniques. According to Creswell (2003), researchers undertaking qualitative studies aim to gather a strong viewpoint on human behavior and its rationale. This method is important in delivering on the relationship and arrangements between dynamics or the background in which the action happens.

From the preceding data retrieved and analyzed from secondary sources, the researcher exploited relevant published works from books, chapters in books, journals, newspapers, and published and unpublished articles such as dissertations and theses together with credible and reliable online sources of applicable organizations dealing with and/or monitoring the topic under investigation.

### **The ANC and Re-Thinking the Cadre Deployment Policy: Possible Recommendations**

Post-1994, the issue of cadre deployment in the South African context has been discussed widely in literature, policy documents, and the media, together with solutions to rectify this. Similarly, a plethora of recommendations has been put to the fore by scholars, policymakers, and opposition

parties to come up with robust policies to curb this problem. This article adds to such literature by outlining other possible recommendations. What must be made clear is that individuals' attitudes are shaped by various indicators, including but not limited to corruption and accountability (see Mlambo, 2019) and the performance of their entrusted government.

To further carry out local development plans and enhance better service delivery blueprints at the local level, political leaders out to be reactive to the desires of the citizens. No matter the years as loyal members, Cadres should be hired based on their qualifications and merit, not because one is a loyal member. Being a loyal member and not possessing the required and sufficient know-how has proved detrimental for most ANC-run municipalities post the Mandela administration, with some even going under administration. It is somewhat ironic that in its 5<sup>th</sup> National Policy Conference held in 2017, the ANC itself was of the view that a robust initiative should be paid to the quality of cadres at both the political and administrative levels from their education, academic qualifications, and ethical attributes. However, even before and past the conference, there is little evidence that this is given strong attention, as many cadres in various departments hold high positions who are unqualified.

The conference also contributed to the fact that the ANC faces internal politics that will contribute to its declining fortunes; these include corruption, money politics, and poor performance in government that undermines its image in the broader public. However, the deployment of cadres may be an acceptable norm if these individuals possess the necessary skills suitable for their position. There needs to be more than the concept of loyalty in itself, but the issue of education and experience should be considered because of poor performance. Unqualified, incompetent, and unprofessional civil servants contribute significantly to poor, bad, and incompetent governance. If the ANC is to regain the people's trust (which seems to be dwindling), it should get back to the drawing board and revisit its strategies of cadre deployment and fighting corruption.

The weak rule of law (mainly for political elites) and unpredictable state institutions are part of the developing context, and societal changes may add to the challenges of governing good governance. There is also a need to implement more robust and well-monitoring and evaluation government institutions that should act as pivotal watchdogs in all three spheres of government.

This can also be achieved by putting more resources into existing ones and creating new anti-corruption agencies that are protected from political interference.

Qobo (2019) noted that a successful transition from corrupt societies to significantly less corrupt systems has accrued in countries such as Georgia, Denmark, China, Singapore, Sweden, and the United States. However, some of these countries (unlike Africa) are relatively stable and have more robust institutions to fight corruption, which is well monitored. In the case of Africa and South Africa in particular, corruption has been an ever-increasing trend often seen in the yearly statistics released by Transparency International. Much of the challenges witnessed at the local government level in South Africa today have roots in the overlap between the party and the state and have created conditions for what Qobo calls large-scale corruption and the weakening of vital institutions together with the under-delivery of socio-economic commitments. The rule of law will remain with a loophole unless competent individuals create, strengthen, and resource such institutions.

This has increased the social discontent of loyalists of the ANC to care more about its future than the many social ills it has to address. If it seeks a more fruitful change in the millions of individuals suffering from basic service delivery issues, it will need to make major reforms to uproot corruption and its cadre deployment policy, and these will have to take place from the national to the provincial level. This is because wherever there is corruption, accountability and transparency disappear, which is common in most municipalities.

The National Development Plan (NDP) vision 2030, a vital blueprint document implemented in 2013, seeks to serve as a road map plan for South Africa, among other things, to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality. It also identifies critical challenges that should be addressed in the three spheres of government that are:

- High unemployment rates
- Poor quality of school education for black people
- Poorly located infrastructure which is further inadequate and unmaintained
- Special divides that weaken inclusive development
- Uneven and poor quality of public service
- High levels of corruption and
- South Africa's divided society.

The preceding further shows that the government itself is aware of the challenges affecting the public sector, and particularly from a local government point of view, corruption and poor quality of service are rife. Therefore, the ANC ought to demonstrate in actual practice its commitment to fast-tracking fundamental transformation by correcting its flaws and declining public image.

This has further eroded the Batho Pele (People First) principles of good governance, an initiative requiring public servants to be more service-oriented, strive for excellence in service delivery, and commit to continuous service delivery. To robustly ensure that both the effective and efficient delivery of public services, especially in local government, are vastly improved, the ANC government will have to take note of the most pressing challenges and address them in a more coordinated and proactive manner, particularly paying attention to macro goals in a manner where most citizens benefit. Again, there should be a shift from government to cooperative governance. The latter is a relatively new term that emerged in the 1990s. Succinctly, it outlines that power exists both inside and outside formal structures of government and that the government cannot do it all alone. The relationship between the government, the private sector, and civil society is of utmost importance (Nealer, 2017; Mlambo, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

This article has explained the drivers of cadre deployment and corruption in South Africa and the local government post-1994. It shows that the deployment of individuals loyal to a party has brought about corruption and derailed service delivery at the local government level. The article argues that the issue of cadre deployment has ruined the capacity of municipalities to function better and offer better service delivery. Similarly, the increasing corruption levels at municipalities under the ruling ANC have also hampered the ability of these municipalities to function, and this has declined the standard in their performance management driven by incompetent individuals at the helm.

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