BOOK REVIEW

Anne Mc Lennan and Barry Munslow (eds), *The politics of service delivery*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009. ISBN 978 – 1 – 86814 – 481 – 5. vi plus 321 pages.

Recently South Africa has experienced a series of local protests. These protests were commonly referred to as service-related protests. When the African National Congress (ANC) took governance of South Africa after the April 1994 elections, it stuck to the new Constitution which guaranteed human rights and democratic governance and promised efficient delivery of service. In trying to do so, the authors argue that the ANC government was confronted by the challenges of transforming a racially and ethnically fragmented and unequal public service delivery system into one that would be able to meet the demands of a newly franchised citizenry for economic, social and political development.

The legacies of apartheid combined with widespread poor budgetary and financial management, a massive backlog in basic services and infrastructure, race and regional inequalities in provision and sometimes tense social relationships, tended to limit opportunities for social development and expanded delivery. The authors generally argue that rural communities and marginalised urban communities were claiming the benefits of democracy, using protest as a means to secure the resources to meet their needs. The protests reflect the tensions in managing the shift from the politics of struggle to that of delivery in a highly unequal and dynamic context. The chapters explore these tensions in different ways, reflecting the challenges of the transition, but also looking forward to a period where issues are defined less by legacy and more by policy. In most cases the tensions arose because of the communities' expectations from the government. The chapters therefore provoke a debate on how to address the problem of service delivery protests in South Africa which seems to be escalating. The book consists of eight chapters written by different authors.

Chapter 1 (pages 19-42), entitled "The delivery paradox", by Anne Mc Lennan argues that service delivery is highly politicised in South Africa. It further explores the implications of improving access to ensure equity for social justice and development. It shows that the process of managing service delivery is multifaceted and political. The author contends that impoverished rural and urban communities are claiming the benefits of democracy, using protest as a means to secure the resources to meet their needs. Three approaches are suggested to deal with service delivery protests in South Africa.

In Chapter 2 (pages 43-103) on "Delivering the democratic development state in South Africa" the author, William M Gumede, argues that South Africa as a developing state is bound to experience service delivery protests. He compares

South Africa with other countries in East Asia and argues that to a certain extent the success of a democratic developmental state depends on an interplay between a number of key factors including: the level of socio-economic development and the nature of the social structure of a society; the associational structure of society, the way in which civil society is organized both as individuals and groups. In South Africa, for example, Gumede argues that the ANC government has lagged in making the public service more accountable.

Chapter 3 (pages 104-136), entitled "Beyond the ballot and the brick: continuous dual repertoires in the politics of attaining service delivery in South Africa", written by Susan Booysen, explains why there is a concurrence of service delivery protest and continuation of both voting and voter support for the ANC. This chapter demonstrates how the politics of attaining service delivery in a certain period interfaced with central questions of post-liberation politics in South Africa.

Chapter 4 (pages 137-154) on "Decentralization and service delivery" by Pundy Pillay, differentiates between exclusive and concurrent powers of government. The chapter provides answers as to how the provincial and local government spheres should be made efficient and effective in order to contribute to the country's broader development goals, which include the eradication of poverty, reducing interpersonal and interregional inequalities and stimulating economic growth. Failure to address the above and decentralise political powers leads to service delivery protests.

Chapter 5 (pages 155-190), entitled "Dispatches from the war on poverty in South Africa's 21 poorest rural and urban nodes, 1996-2006", by David Everatt is about tackling poverty in South Africa. The chapter analyses the impact of poverty between 1996 and 2006 and how this influences service delivery issues.

Chapter 6 (pages 191-224), entitled "The potholes of service delivery: Reflections on the Eastern Cape Department of Education", by Wendy Ngoma, contends that some of the problems experienced by this Education Department are the results of a reconciliation and compromise solution sorted out before 1990. The department had to absorb senior civil servants who were anxious, demotivated and in some instances hostile. Such servants failed to execute their duties effectively, hence service delivery was compromised.

Chapter 7 (pages 225-246), entitled "*Amanzi, Wabenzi* and the National Democratic Revolution: The politics of water supply during South Africa's first decade of freedom", by Mike Muller, highlights the needs to address historic inequalities and poverty. Muller argues that there are currently two defining features that characterise the post-apartheid society, namely, who has access to what kind of water service and who drives what make of car. The author argues that water supply to the communities is one of the basic necessities, therefore in most cases of the service delivery protests; this question came to the fore.

Chapter 8 (pages 247-274), about "Building and sustaining systems for delivery education: The role of the State", by Stephanie Matseng Allais, discusses the fact that a serious lack of skills is argued to be one of the contributing factors to poor service delivery in South Africa. The chapter uses education reform in South Africa as a case study in solving the above-mentioned problem. Educational institutions, Allais argues, must deliver competencies in students according to the specified standards. South Africa needs an educational reform that will entirely overhaul the fragmented, inefficient and unequal apartheid education system and ensure that education play a role in overhauling the economy and reduce social inequalities.

The book's value is enhanced by the inclusion of two maps and 22 diagrams consisting of tables and graphs. There is a comprehensive list of sources which attests to the thorough research that was conducted for the purpose of this book. Those interested in the politics and history of service delivery in South Africa should read this thought-provoking book.

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