
CAPACITY, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the characterisation of the post-apartheid dispensation in South Africa, particularly its capacity and planning component. Since 1994, there have been many discussions about the capacity of the government or capacities in the South African government – literature terms this kind of capacity 'institutional capacity'. In the mid-2000s, there were comprehensive discussions in the government about the capacity and the organisation of the government. Former President Thabo Mbeki introduced these discussions with a document he had authored in 2004. The discussions culminated in a government decision that South Africa should become a democratic developmental state. In 2007, the ANC in its Strategy & Tactics document resolved that South Africa must become a developmental state. More specifically, it was determined that what must be "put in place approximates, in many respects, a combination of the best elements of a capable state and social democracy" (ANC, 2007:13). There have been many initiatives aimed at this. Government was significantly re-organised in 2009 and again in 2019. In 2010, the National Planning Commission was inaugurated. The Government has continued to introduce all sorts of interventions aimed at bolstering its capacity and improving long-term planning with the hope of ameliorating socio-economic development outcomes. This chapter delves into these issues in a comparative context.

The aspects that are given priority here are institutional capacity, development planning, developmental ideology, and state-society relations. These are critical issues in relation to developmental outcomes. The specific factors dealt with in this book are critical for South Africa despite marked differences in the contexts of similar countries. Williams (2014:2), among others, argued for additional factors that must be borne in mind in the 21st century including economic restructuring, domestic politics, epistemic shifts and ecological limits. Technological changes should also be taken into account. Probably the most critical point is the trade-offs that take place between democracy and development. Many scholars emphasise the need for decentralisation, which by implication presupposes democracy. In fact, van Dijk and Croucamp (2007) assert that:

The new state is one where equal emphasis is given to the concepts of development through performance, managerial, technical and bureaucratic efficiency and effectiveness, and institutional rationalisation and transformation, this while maintaining the democracy

which provides a voice for the poor and marginalised, protects and accrues the rights of citizens, promotes institutional separation of powers and functions, transparent decision making, accountability and effective monitoring and control. (van Dijk & Croucamp, 2007:664)

Although the debate about democracy and development continues, there are many who believe that democratic societies are equally, if not more, capable of delivering better developmental outcomes. Indeed, numerous countries, such as China, have improved developmental outcomes while under authoritarian regimes. However, so much has changed that democracy has become indispensable. I acknowledge that democracy and development are not necessarily at opposing ends of the spectrum. Mkandawire (2006:22) advanced a view that democracy is good in and of itself, although he also acknowledged that there are at times "choiceless democracies". Mkandawire also wrote on what he called "disempowered democracies".

Let me present and briefly discuss the conceptual framework that has guided the critical enquiry of this book.

DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

Arguably, the best way to examine socio-economic outcomes and institutional architecture is through the developmental state framework. It is important to indicate that there is no single definition of developmental state that everyone can agree on. Based on research and experience, I propose that a developmental state has to be a "state that is actively pursuing its agenda, working together with social partners, and has the capacity and is appropriately organised for its predetermined developmental objective" (Gumede, 2008:9). It is widely agreed that a developmental state should have necessary capacities to ensure that set goals are met. It is also widely agreed that a long-term plan is critical. Based on Leftwich (1995), developmental ideology, developmental elite, meritocratic recruitment, neutrality of public servants and the existence of various capacities are critical aspects of developmental states.

Given this, a conceptual framework (see Figure 1) that shows how the various aspects that make up a developmental state should help in demonstrating the critical importance of the institutional architecture for socio-economic development. Both conceptually and empirically, an assessment can be undertaken, taking the various constituent parts that constitute a developmental state into account, to come to a conclusion as to whether the manner in which government is capacitated and organised can ensure that socio-economic outcomes are improved.

To emphasise, the Developmental State Framework in Figure 1 distils from developmental state literature, especially of leading scholars such as Chalmers Johnson (1982), Louis Amsden (1989), Peter Evans (1995), Adrian Leftwich (1995) and Thandika Mkandawire (2001). It is also based on the research I have undertaken over many