

Fostering Resilient Futures: An Exploration of the Nexus Between Social Policy, Development Planning, and Education in Post-COVID-19 South Africa

PRESENTED BY: MINENHLE MATELA

RESEARCHER AT THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

AND

PHD CANDIDATE AT THE STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF PUBLIC LEADERSHIP (SPL)

PRESENTED AT THE 2024 SOCIAL POLICY IN AFRICA CONFERENCE 15-17 APRIL 2024, TSHWANE, SOUTH AFRICA

Presentation Outline

Introduction

Theoretical Framework

Nexus Between Social Policy, Development Planning, and
Education in South Africa

Education in the Wake of COVID-19

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations Towards a Resilient
Future

Introduction



The COVID-19 pandemic not only highlighted but also exacerbated existing socio-economic disparities in South Africa, particularly in the education sector, highlighting the digital divide and educational equity issues (Soudien, Reffy & Harvey, 2024).

The COVID-19 pandemic presented substantial challenges for the NDP's education goals in South Africa, intensifying pre-existing learning gaps and inequalities in education access (Soudien, Reffy & Harvey, 2024; Hlatshwayo, 2022).

The effectiveness of social policies and development plans depends on their adaptability to dynamic challenges posed by crises like COVID-19.

This paper argues for the need for a more transformative social policy directive for building a democratic developmental state as advanced by scholars such as Mkandawire, 2005; Adesina, 2007; Noyoo, 2019.

Theoretical Framework

- The paper uses critical social theory as a framework to analyse the nexus between social policy, development planning and education in South Africa. This theoretical framework scrutinises limiting social arrangements and advocates for transformation to a more equitable society. The theory is action-oriented, focusing on alleviating barriers to individual development through strategic actions such as **transformative social policy**. It underscores that policies should not only manage societal issues but also transform society to reduce inequalities and promote social justice.
- Critical social theory is relevant to this paper because it provides a practical roadmap for societal change, emphasising the importance of critically assessing societal structures and their agenda for genuine transformation. It highlights the need for social policies that address entrenched social and economic disparities.
- This theoretical framework is crucial for the analysis and development of social policies, particularly in contexts with deep-seated social and economic disparities, such as South Africa.

Nexus Between Social Policy, Development Planning and Education in South Africa

Social Policy

- ▶ Social policy is a prominent aspect of state intervention, that deals with a range of issues including redistribution, production, reproduction, and protection, as highlighted by seasoned scholars such as Adesina (2007), Mkandawire (2010) and Noyoo (2017; 2019). It aligns with economic policies to achieve national, social and economic goals. In South Africa, the formulation and implementation of social policy are significantly influenced by the historical repercussions of colonialism and apartheid. The core objectives of social policy include providing a safety net for the most vulnerable, promoting equitable growth, and upholding social justice.
- Esping-Andersen (1990) categorises welfare regimes into three distinct types: liberal, conservative, and social democratic, each with unique strategies towards the welfare state and social rights.
- South Africa seems to demonstrate a hybrid welfare model exhibiting elements of all three welfare regimes as theorised by Esping-Andersen and this hybrid model has not been successful in effectively transforming society or eradicating the remnants of colonialism and apartheid.
- South Africa should transition towards a regime that leans more towards the social democratic model as described by Esping-Andersen (1990). In this case, that would be transformative social policy. Transformative social policy, as defined by Adesina (2007), goes beyond mere redistribution; it aims to reshape social institutions and structures to foster meaningful social integration and development. This involves proactive state-led interventions that significantly affect social welfare and relationships, in unison with economic policies to achieve national objectives.

Nexus Between Social Policy, Development Planning and Education in South Africa Cont...

Development Planning

- Development planning is essential for fostering economic growth, social development, and environmental sustainability (Dale, 2004).
- In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, a comprehensive long-term strategic plan was conspicuously absent for a significant period. Despite the implementation of several macroeconomic policies, the country suffered from the absence of a clear development blueprint (Noyoo, 2019). The National Development Plan (NPD) Vision 2030, launched in 2011, seeks to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality by transforming South Africa into a democratic developmental state.
- However, South Africa's development approach shows a significant deficiency in universalising social services, which reflects an absolute differentiation in service provision to the poor and non-poor. As stated by former President Thabo Mbeki, the nation exhibits a profound "duality" in its social and economic structures.
- The reluctance to adopt a more equitable model for social service provision hinders the transformative capacity of South Africa's social policies, perpetuating social divisions and systemic inequalities.
- South Africa needs to re-evaluate its development planning, emphasising equality in access and quality of social services across all societal strata, to catalyse genuine transformation and societal integration.
- By taking this step, South Africa could construct a robust foundation for enduring social and economic stability that resonates with the democratic ideals it had embraced after national liberation.

The Education Context in South Africa

- Post-apartheid, South Africa's education system has seen substantial transformation, particularly with increased accessibility (Walton, 2018). Despite legislative strides like the Minimum Norms and Standards for educational facilities to bolster educational infrastructure, implementation has been inadequate (Walton, 2018).
- As of 2018, out of 23,471 public schools, 20,071 lack laboratories, 18,019 lack libraries, and nearly 1,000 lack sports facilities (Mohammed, 2020). These infrastructural deficiencies disproportionately impact students in impoverished and rural areas.
- The quality of education is a concern, with over three-quarters of nine-year-old South Africans unable to read with understanding. In provinces like Limpopo and the Eastern Cape, illiteracy rates are extremely high, reaching 91% and 85% respectively. Unsafe school infrastructure, such as the use of pit latrines, has led to tragic fatalities (Walton, 2018; Campbell, 2021).
- There exists a significant disparity in educational outcomes mirroring wider systemic inequality. The top 200 schools in South Africa produce more distinctions in mathematics than the subsequent 6,600 schools combined.
- Therefore, it is quite evident that the quality of education received is heavily influenced by students' socio-economic status and geographical location, perpetuating cycles of inequality (Walton, 2018; Mohammed, 2020).

Education in the Wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic

- South Africa's education sector implemented strategic interventions in response to COVID-19 disruptions.
- Government and educational organizations introduced digital tools for remote learning. Laptops were distributed to National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) beneficiaries. Zero-rated educational websites were promoted to enhance online accessibility. (Higher Education Sector) [*Basic Education left behind*]
- The transition to digital learning exposed significant inequalities in technology and internet access. There's a highlighted need for structured policies for effective digital tool integration in education.
- The above-mentioned initiatives demonstrated an ad-hoc response to the pandemic without a clear plan for sustainability. The government has been urged to consider both immediate needs and long-term strategies for blended learning in policy development. These policies should aim at reducing inequality, improving digital literacy, and expanding infrastructure for digital education.

Conclusions and Recommendations

South Africa requires "social re-engineering for inclusive development" as advanced by Noyoo (2019) to create a society of social justice, equity, and inclusiveness.

Transformative social policy should address structural inequalities and historical injustices.

Universal access to high-quality basic services, particularly education and healthcare, is integral for socio-economic development.

Education plays a key role in sustainable economic and social development and should be prioritised.

A comprehensive social protection system is essential for providing a safety net for those in need.

Implement policies to confront inequality's root causes, including land reform, equitable urban development, and investment in marginalised communities.

Promote inclusive economic growth through job creation, entrepreneurship enhancement, and equal opportunity policies.

Strengthen governance, improve governmental coordination, and establish robust feedback systems to enhance policy implementation and monitoring.

Reference List

- ▶ Adesina, J. O. (2007). *Social policy in sub-Saharan Africa: A glance in the rear-view mirror*. International Journal of Social Welfare, 16(S1), S37-S51. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2397.2007.00517.x>
- ▶ Cooke, B. (2006). *Critical social theory: Culture, history, and the challenge of difference*. Blackwell Publishing.
- ▶ Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Princeton University Press.
- ▶ Gumede, V. (2018). *Delivery and efficiency: Inclusive development? Assessing social policy in a democratic South Africa*. Journal of Public Administration, 47(1), 111-120.
- ▶ Mkandawire, T. (2005). *Targeting and universalism in poverty reduction*. Social Policy and Development Programme Paper Number 23. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.
- ▶ National Planning Commission [NPC]. (2011). *National development plan: Vision for 2030*. Government Printer.
- ▶ Noyoo, N. (2019). *Social policy and human development in Zambia*. Routledge.
- ▶ Titmuss, R. M. (1974). *Social policy: An introduction*. Allen & Unwin.