



TITLE OF DISSERTATION

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“Youth exclusion, participation and apathy in a democratic South Africa: some reflections on National Youth Service”

By

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DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in this dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other institution of learning.

DEDICATION

My grandmother, Madosini Miriam Makhasi - there is no other way of thanking you, other than dedicating this piece of work to you. You have been, and continue to be a great mother, guardian and a pillar of strength to me, and many others. At a very young age, I have seen you struggling to provide for, and give your grandchildren a proper upbringing. You invested your meager state pensions to our education, during the elementary years, when no one took us seriously.

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To my sisters, brothers and cousins - I hope this inspires you to reach even greater heights!

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CHAPTER ONE : BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1. Introduction and overview

The global changes taking place in political economies, technology and population growth requires evolving dynamic tools of analysis. Today, global divisions are no longer perceived along the axis of East-West, but rather North-South. Nations and governments struggle to respond to these rapid changes, inflicted upon them by the heightened pace of globalisation and trade liberalisation; accompanied by the revolution in communications and information technology. These changes have been accompanied by rising levels of unemployment, poverty and lack of social integration in many countries of the South; and most countries are trapped in a cycle of deprivation, poverty and marginalization.

Globally, the major issues affecting youth in specific ways are lack of adequate education and employment, lack of assets and property rights. A number of national economies have not been able to generate sufficient job opportunities for their young people. Nor, have they been able to devise strategies that would deal effectively with the existing situation on a long term- basis.

In response to such challenges, the concept of social exclusion has gained wide currency in the public policy context worldwide as more countries embrace globalisation and the free market system. It has been effectively used to reflect the complex set of linked problems, centred on lack of opportunities and diminished life circumstances, including unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, poor health and family breakdown.

In the process of developing inclusion goals, the citizenship status, contribution and participation of young people has also come to the fore. On one hand, youth participation and apathy has been a subject of debates and contention for a while, especially when the criterion used is voting. The seeming decline in youth voting at international level, serves as an indicator of alienation as well as growing evidence that youth are a segment of the population that is hard hit by socio - economic problems. The search for strategies to bring about participation and democratic renewal has led to a resurgence of a dialogue on an old idea, national youth service. Government agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) throughout the world, have initiated youth programmes which are categorised as youth service initiatives. The history and rationale for these programmes differ from country to country, and the reasons for initiating the programmes are instrumental in shaping their nature and purpose.

Whilst introducing (youth) participation as a strategy for inclusion, this text recognises the existence of other strategies to deal with social exclusion, including the capabilities approach as advocated by Amartya Sen (1992), the rights-based approach and other interventions aimed at dealing with unemployment, poverty and other social challenges. Whilst acknowledging that the dictionary style definitions do not assist us to untangle the complexities associated with certain concepts, an attempt is made to define concepts used, including social exclusion, participation, governance and others.

This research comprises of two sections. The first part (chapters one and two) introduces the background context; provides the varying definitions of young people at

a global level and briefly situates young people within the framework of development. The social exclusion approach is used as a framework of analysis, whilst acknowledging that exclusion within the youth sector takes many forms; for the sake of brevity, we focus on the areas of economic marginalization and exclusion in governance processes. Judging by the rapid rise of youth unemployment, estimated to be triple that of adults at a global level and the declining voting trends amongst young people (UN Youth Report, 2003), it is no wonder that these issues require attention.

The second part (chapters three and four), is a qualitative study of the South African Youth Service Programme, referred to as NYS. The study investigates the relationship between youth service, participation and inclusion goals, in particular the role of communities. In addition to the interviews, and data collected from various organisations; the researcher's experience in the field of youth development is also used to provide more information and comparison. The main question for the study is whether youth service serves as an appropriate strategy to ensure greater participation of young people, thereby dealing with their inclusion. The study answers the attendant sub-questions:

- Does youth service lead to youth participation in political and governance processes?
- Can NYS achieve inclusion goals outside the context of community development?

Two hypothetical statements emerge from the above questions, and inform discussions in Chapter 4. Firstly, the researcher argues that NYS does not necessarily lead to youth

participation in decision making; as the youth service policy is silent on the youth role in democratizing and transforming governance structures. Secondly, to some extent, NYS facilitates inclusion of young people within communities; when the dynamics and challenges of communities are acknowledged and dealt with in an open and constructive manner. The last chapter provides a summary and conclusion to the text; and applies the findings of the study to a broader development context.

2. Definition of term 'youth'

This term has a range of different meanings and connotations to different societies. On one hand, the United Nations (UN) defines youth as people between the ages of 14 and 24 years (UN Youth Report, 2003); and assumes that youth is a phase of life that takes place within these boundaries. Young people are therefore grouped together to form a sort of a statistical entity which makes it possible to produce comparative data.

On the other hand, the Commonwealth Youth Programme, defines youth as those between the ages of 15-29. However, within the Commonwealth countries, the term youth has been defined and applied variously. For example, the National Youth Policy of India refers to youth as that sector of the population aged between 10 and 34 years. Some African countries take the age of 21 years as legal attainment of adulthood; others use the age of 18 years. Countries such as Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania define youth as falling in the age of 15 to 35 years, whilst Nigeria defines its young as between 20 to 30 years. The legal definition also varies according to purposes such as marriage, consent to sex, voting rights, military service and criminal responsibility. Like the rest of the developing world, countries within the Caribbean vary on their definition of young

people. The Bahamas classifies those between the ages of 5 and 25 years to be youth; whilst the majority of other islands define youth as 15 to 29. In Malaysia, youth refers to persons between 15 and 40 years (Ryan, 2003 and CYP Strategy Paper, 2004).

Also, youth definition in developing countries is informed by a set of complex issues emerging from historical, social, political and cultural contexts. For instance, the South African classification of youth, between 14 -35 years is highly associated with political activism, owing to the pertinent role played by youth during the liberation struggle. The term 'youth' has sometimes been used to characterise a segment of the population seen as violent, unruly, undisciplined and/ or underdeveloped (Youth Service Policy, 2003). At a cultural level, youth is generally associated with systematic rites of passage. These rights have symbolic significance in that an individual achieves a new status and position through participation. It is also a matter of genuine community action as the new status acquires validity through community recognition.

3. Situating young people in development

Globalisation has challenged the development agenda of the international as well as local community. The new opportunities and social costs that come with it constitute a major focus of the broader human development agenda. The UN Youth Report (2003) provides a much more updated and clearer picture of challenges facing young people in the globalizing world. It states that young people between the ages of 15 and 24 total almost 1.1 billion and constitute 18 percent of the global population. Youth and children together, including all those aged 24 years and below, account for nearly 40 percent of the world's population.

Young people face many challenges. Although better educated in some parts of the world, 133 million of them remain illiterate; they are expected to deal with the increasing insecurity in the labour market; and now comprise almost 41 percent of world's unemployed. Some 238 million of them, live on less than a dollar per day; an average of 6 000 to 7 000 young people become infected with HIV/AIDS daily. Girls and young women continue to experience discrimination and violence and lack access to reproductive health services in many parts of the world. More than 300 000 young people are estimated to be involved in armed conflicts in many parts of the world.

The issue of employment opportunities is frightening as more young people prepare to enter the labour market. The ILO estimates that 700 million young people will try to enter the labour market in developing countries between years 2003 and 2010; accounting for more than the entire workforce of developed nations by 1990. This requires the creation of more than a billion jobs in order to give these new workers access to labour market and decent employment (Du Toit, 2003).

As a sector, they are the most critical as agents of change, contribute to the process of capital formation and wealth creation; hence social, cultural, economic and political development is imperative. Also, they are pivotal to the acquisition and maintenance of political power, maintaining security and stability within their families, communities and nations; they also occupy a forward position in the scientific and technological revolution and development of the day.

Young people define the cutting edge of fashion both as creators and producers, as well as consumers. The pattern of sales and purchasing records of all leading consumer manufacturers (cars, clothes, electronics etc), and their advertising pitch would confirm that companies see young people as the cradle of ideas, the testing ground for their creation, and targets for what they produce. From the point of view of business, young people as a sector are critical to the economy, in the sense that those with spending power, boost aggregate demand for goods and services. As a consequence, greater tax revenues are generated, and more money is available to the governments and the country for investments in development related areas such as health, education, housing and others (CYP, 2004).

CHAPTER TWO : THEORETICAL BASIS FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION

1. Introduction

Within the current global policy debates, social exclusion has been used to describe emerging patterns of social disadvantage. Widely debated within Europe, it is increasingly being adopted by the developing world as an analytical tool to deal with the above challenges. Also, it is an approach that promises to present a dynamic tool of analysis and integration of youth challenges and their needs to the broader development agenda.

Emerging from the policy discourse in France in the mid-1970s, this approach was adopted by the European Union in the late 1980s; and is influential in the social policy discourse of a number of western countries. For instance, shortly after coming into power, the British 'New' Labour Party declared that the greatest challenge facing Britain was to tackle the scourge and waste of social exclusion (Mandelson, 1998). Like many other fields of social sciences, the relevance of this approach to the youth sector, within a developing context, has not been researched widely. Research undertaken by IILS and UNDP focused on almost all sectors (women, immigrants, the unemployed and others) affected by social exclusion, in developing countries such as Russia and the Republic of Yemen, and left out the youth sector (see Rodgers et al, 1995; Tchernina, 1995, Figueroa et al, 1995 and Hashem, 1995).

Of course, some may argue that youth issues are cross-cutting and arise throughout the studies as young people are part of immigrants, unemployed, women and other groups.

Whilst that has some value and truth to it, such a line of argument is self-defeating, as young people constitute a majority of the socially disadvantaged, marginalised and excluded. The peculiar challenges they face range from denial of their rights to participate, homelessness, unemployment to lack of access to basic services such as education, health care and others; and require special attention.

This chapter provides a brief history and definition of social exclusion, and applies the social exclusion approach to young people. For sake of brevity, it focuses on two main areas of youth exclusion, that is, participation in governance processes and in the economy. There are overlaps as these areas are interlinked; lack of participation in one area affects the other. The following section looks at the concept of participation; its benefits when used as a strategy to ensure inclusion of young people.

2. Defining the concept of 'social exclusion'

The meaning of social exclusion remains unclear and open to a number of interpretations, as literature on social policy continues to offer numerous understandings. According to Silver (1995), the term was originally coined in France to refer to various categories of people who were unprotected by social insurance at the time but labelled as 'social problems'. They were either

'...mentally and physically handicapped, suicidal people, aged invalids, abused children, substance abusers, delinquents, single parents, multi-problem households, marginal asocial people and other social misfits' (Silver, 1995, p63).

However, Rodgers et al (1995) states that the 1980s saw a shift from such stigmatisation to an acceptable view of exclusion as a concept that encompasses the 'new poverty', associated with technological change and economic restructuring. It then referred to a process of social disintegration, in the sense of a progressive rupture of the relationship between the individual and society, occurring because of factors such as increased long term unemployment, greater family instability and other causes.

On one hand, this concept has also been applied to a wide variety of outcomes and behaviours. For instance, the UK government defines it as:

'.....a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown' (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001:10).

Rodgers (1995) argues that though very clear on the 'problems', the above definition does not specify the links between the problems. What is needed is a conceptual understanding of social exclusion as a process rooted in the dynamics of poverty and inequality. Proponents of this view argue that the social exclusion approach is distinct from the poverty one, in that it offers broader explanations beyond income and economic terms as the case with poverty analysis. It also encompasses deprivation in a number of spheres such as low income, insecurity of employment, lack of access to education, health care, social networks and others (Silver, 1995; Gore, 1995 and Francis, 2002). Francis (2002) further argues that the encapsulation of the multi-faceted character

of social exclusion, especially its institutional and cultural aspects is one of its main strength. He further states that this approach also suggests ways in which the levels of deprivation interlock as economic, spatial, cultural and psychological factors reinforce each other in causing poverty and making it so difficult for those trapped to escape.

On the other hand, there is an ongoing debate amongst scholars on the applicability of this concept to developing countries. Some scholars are concerned about the value of exporting western concepts/ approaches such as social exclusion from the North to the South. They question the value and relevance of such concepts/ approaches informed by existing socio-economic relations; from a situation where the great majority are well off (North) to situations where the great majority are very poor and worse off (South). In response to the above, the proponents, including Rodgers (1995), argue that it is possible to formulate a concept of social exclusion that is non-Eurocentric, but rather capable of yielding analytic and policy insights globally. They argue that the ability of this concept to deal with developing country context stems from its potential to integrate loosely connected notions such as poverty, deprivation, lack of access to basic services, precariousness of political and social rights and of providing a general framework (Faria, 1995; Rodgers et al, 1995 and Gore, 1995). They further argue that the social exclusion approach has a potential to understand poverty beyond the economic aspects; to political and cultural dimensions.

Different nations adopt various strategies to deal with social exclusion; informed by factors such as nature of interventions, targeted sectors and others. Strategies may range from interventions aimed at the re-insertion of the unemployed into the labour market,

enforcing human rights to targeted social welfare provisions. Amartya Sen (1992), in his capabilities approach calls for efforts to ensure that all people have equal access to basic capabilities such as the ability to be healthy, well-fed, housed, integrated into the community, participate in community and public life, and enjoy social bases of self respect.

Another strategy, well established in developed countries and gaining popularity within developing countries is the rights-based approach. This approach is premised on the use of existing laws such as International Conventions, Constitution and others to enforce the rights of the poor, marginalized and vulnerable sectors of the population (Kraak, 1999). According to the Overseas Development Institute, a rights-based approach to development sets the achievement of human rights as an objective of development. It uses thinking about human rights as the scaffolding of development policy and invokes the international apparatus of human rights accountability in support of development action. Bessant (2003), states that rights and obligations are fundamental to young people's citizenship status and capacity to participate in democratic practices. This is a large topic and considering it fully is not possible in this text.

Given the multiple meanings and the various contexts discussed above, the social exclusion approach may lead to misunderstanding. However, for the benefit of this discussion, the researcher employs social exclusion as a general metaphor that refers to a range of socio-economic problems that a place and its young people may face, with an emphasis on exclusion in governance processes and economic marginalisation.

3. Applying the social exclusion approach, for a better understanding youth challenges.

Globalization has had a profound impact in the youth sector. It has created a number of opportunities that continue to benefit a fraction of young people globally - those who are educated and skilled. The majority - illiterate and unskilled, are at the receiving end of many social problems. The UN Youth Report (2003) defines globalization as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. In this context, it is impossible to conceive globalization as a singular concept due to the increasing economic and cultural interdependence of society on a world scale. Characterised by spatial segregation, globalisation inevitably leads to exclusion, as it increases the disparities that already exist between the global elites and the localized majority. Globalisation also intensifies social divisions, as young people struggle to establish themselves in a new social order, sometimes intimidated by the adult world.

Contemporary approaches to social exclusion frequently cite withdrawal from the labour market and non-participation within households, communities and local structures, as constituting key elements of social exclusion. Recent years have seen renewed global concerns about the apparent withdrawal of young people from civic engagement, in particular within industrialized nations. Much anxiety has focused upon decreasing levels of electoral participation of young people; especially disengagement from conventional politics - a subject dealt with in Chapter 4.

3.1 Exclusion from governance and decision-making

There are a number of sources of exclusion for young people. The household, as the first point of contact plays a critical role in influencing a young person's behaviour and view of the world. As Fahmy (2003) argues, parents and/or adults are potential agents for young people's exclusion as they may fail to spend their income fairly or wisely and invest in their future whilst they are still children. They may also fail to take enough interest in the young person's education and health; as well as helping them develop the required social skills and contacts at younger ages.

With the absence of strong community values, this is likely to lead to a situation where young people do not play any role. This denial to participate is much more visible when decisions are taken with regards to allocation of resources both within and outside households. This exclusionary practice usually does not take into account the role played by young people in generating resources either through unpaid work within the household; working in family business or contributions from the young person's earnings. This situation worsens when taking into account the gender analysis of households and communities. A majority of young women, in particular those residing in rural and traditional settings are likely to find themselves in a much more peculiar situation, as they are not only excluded in decision-making because they are young; also because they are women. For instance, they are expected to assist with household chores and attend to other mundane tasks, such as looking after younger siblings during meeting times, where decisions are taken. In line with Beneria's argument (2003), there is a clear intersection between gender, age and class.

Also, governments easily exclude young people from governance structures and public services. Whilst providing adequate public services that fulfil a primary social or leisure need to the community; governments always fail to integrate youth concerns due to inadequate investment, inadequate current funding, or poor organization. Fahmy (1999), states that a failure to address young people's needs and concerns in the provision of key services has a major impact, as public services play an important role in raising the living standards of poor households. For example, Gordon and Townsend (2000) found that over half the income of the poorest 10% of households in UK is in the form of benefits in kind.

However, sufficient public sector allocation to ensure delivery of mainstream services to address the disadvantage amongst youth is an essential problem. (Micklewright, 2002) echoes this view and argues that such underinvestment in youth is a result of, amongst others, economic and social policies, as governments fail to intervene and ease the access of young people in the labour market. Inadequate support to the household and other social institutions that are supposed to nurture young people also impact negatively to the growth and development of young people.

3.2 Economic marginalisation

As outlined in previous chapter, youth unemployment has become a contentious issue. Studies undertaken by the International Institute of Labour Studies (IILS) on 'patterns and causes of social exclusion in a number of developing countries (Peru, Cameroon,

Russia and others) identify three economic disadvantages that are particularly associated with labour market exclusion. These are long term unemployment, precarious types of labour market insertion, and various forms of non-wage employment. As outlined by Fahmy (1999), tackling long term unemployment and labour market non-participation of young people is viewed as central to addressing exclusion.

Governments of both developed and developing countries design various schemes to help the unemployed, in particular the young to access the labour market. However, Colley and Hodkinson (2001) argue that underlying the governments' approach is an individualized and moral account which focuses upon young people's own deficiencies and shortcomings. Reference is rarely made to the structural changes which have undermined young people's labour market position and made the transition to adulthood increasingly precarious for disadvantaged and excluded youth.

On one hand, Rees (1989) and O'Higgins (2001) argue that although the lack of demand is the major cause for adult unemployment, the changes in aggregate demand have much higher consequences for youth unemployment. According to them, general human resource practice in recession times is usually to discontinue recruitment, which affects young entrants to the labour market and makes younger workers rather than older workers redundant. Du Toit (2003) further argues that youth are separated from jobs through lay-offs more than older workers; mainly because it is cheaper to retrench them and also because they are less experienced.

On the other hand, Gore (1995) states that exclusion from the labour market not only has direct effects on livelihood, but also exacerbates other processes of exclusion, in particular those related to basic rights, social security and identity. Micklewright (2002) agrees, and further argues that 'exclusion' offers a useful label for the fate that awaits many young people who suffer from various disadvantages which threaten their ability to achieve in the future. Social exclusion of young people necessitates serious attention from both scholars and policy-makers, since it violates their rights and capabilities.

In support of views expressed by Gore and Micklewright, Klasen (2003) states that social exclusion has a close empirical relationship to other social problems that threaten the stability and prosperity of society at large, such as crime, racism, xenophobia and others. It is therefore imperative for governments and society at large to deal with their exclusion. Failure to deal with young people's exclusion may cause a threat to the future well being of society, as they grow up with little or no stake in the existing society. To the extent that exclusion is transmitted intergenerationally, socially excluded young people may create ever deeper divisions within society that amplify across generations. Governments need to explore various participatory approaches to ensure inclusion in governance as well as deal with the burning issue of unemployment as a first step.

4. Understanding the concept of 'participation'

Participation seems to be highly fashionable in terms of the current development discourse; and is now a prerequisite for project funding and everything else. Until the 1990s, the development discourse emphasized the role of the state and international

agencies delivering to the people. Like social exclusion, participation is difficult to define; and has become the most elusive goal to attain.

Theories on participation derive on how societies are organized and how they can be changed. These are in a sense ideological; as participation is often used by people with different ideological positions, who give it very different meanings depending on the context and what needs to be done. The World Bank President, during his 1998 Annual Meetings speech, declared that participation matters not only as a means of improving development effectiveness; but as the key to long term stability and leverage, quoted in Cleaver (2001). According to Cooke and Kothari (2001), the World Bank views participation as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources that affect their lives. This recognition and support for greater involvement of local people's perspectives, knowledge, priorities and skills is suspect; it is seen as part of the broader neo-liberal project aimed at displacing national and local governments.

Chambers (1995) draws parallels between the World Bank changes of embracing participation and the introduction of new ideas from the North American organizational management which emphasizes concepts such as decentralization. In such organizations, the rigidities of Fordism are being eliminated by removing middle management, and empowering workers to operate flexibly in team, responding to situations as they arise and communicating ideas for improvement directly to senior management. Nelson and Wright (1995) are of the view that this appears empowering only if a pluralistic view is taken of society as made up of free floating actors, each with

different interests which they pursue by bargaining with each other in inter-actional space; however the reality is quite different.

Throughout the literature, a distinction is made between two types of participation. The first one focuses on participation as a means in order to accomplish the aims of a project more efficiently, effectively. The second is on participation as an end, where the community sets up a process and controls its own development. Nelson and Wright (1995) concur with views expressed by authors, such as Richardson (1983) and Cleaver (2001), that both types of participation imply the possibility of existence of different power relations between members of a community, the state and agency institutions. The concept of power and how it is analysed has been a central topic of debate in social sciences since the early 1960s. However, it gets more complicated once associated with participation, as empowerment was introduced with an idea that some can act on others to give them power or enable them to realize potential.

Along the same lines of power disparities and inequality, Chambers (1995), argues that human society can be thought as patterned into hierachal relationships, by analogy described as North and South. He sees many relationships as vertical, between uppers and lowers; and individuals as multiple uppers and multiple lowers. According to him, a person can be upper in one context and lower in another. This analogy can be further extended to describe the situation that young people find themselves in respect to participation.

5. (Youth) participation as a strategy for social inclusion of youth

The idea that young people can and should work in partnership with adults to improve conditions in their communities has gained currency in the past decade. Youth participation has become a rallying point across the world, characterised by impassioned pleas and phrases that come out of youth discussions, such as:

Young people must have a voice!
Youth should be empowered to determine their own faith!
Youth are a resource!
Young people should have the opportunities and tools to make a contribution!
We must build strong partnerships between youth and adults (CYP, 2004)

These pleas are well captured in the compelling UN statement that came out of the UN Youth Forum in Lisbon (1998); and the Commonwealth Youth Ministers conference held in Botswana (2003). According to the Lisbon declaration, youth are a positive force in society, and have enormous potential for contributing to the development and advancement of societies.

Mokwena (2003), states that this vision has generated a flurry of activities, some more effective than others. Young people are being asked to sit on boards, submit ideas and support community efforts through structured volunteering and other means. But as with most ideas, it is not clear why young people are encouraged to participate. Is it in order to occupy idle time, build the next generation of leaders, apply academic knowledge and gain real life experiences, give back to the communities or develop lifelong habits?

In line with the earlier argument, power disparities and intergenerational issues play a critical role in the lives of young people as they grow to be adults. They experience the world in relation to adult-created and adult run institutions including the family, the

school, religious institutions and government structures. Their participation in society is mediated by adults, such as relatives, neighbours, teachers, church elders and others. The relationship between these adults and young people are most often underlined by inequality. Participation, therefore, is about the equalization of power relations and the creation of a more horizontal relationship between young people and adults in institutional and non-institutional settings (Mokwena, 2003).

Richardson (1983), outlines the value of participation both in the context of due processes as well as it relates to individual development. At an individual level, participation is claimed to have two distinct effects. On the one hand, it affects the direct well being and behaviour of the participant; while on the other hand it affects decisions taken by the group (Richardson, 1983). Participation is assumed to contribute to enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of investment and to promote processes of democratization and empowerment.

However, Cleaver (2001), states that there is little evidence of the long term effectiveness of participation in materially improving the conditions of the most vulnerable and excluded persons or as a strategy for social change. While there is evidence for efficiency on a small scale, the evidence regarding empowerment and sustainability is more partial, very weak and depend on assertions of the rightness of the approach and process rather than convincing evidence of outcomes. He refers to participation as an act of faith in development, based on the three main tenets. Firstly that it is intrinsically a salutary thing especially for the participants; secondly that a focus on getting the techniques right is the principal way of ensuring success of such approaches; and lastly

that consideration of power and politics on the whole should be avoided as divisive and obstructive. Chambers (1995), further argues that participation is used as a cosmetic label, to make whatever that is proposed appear good; and serves as a co-opting practice, to mobilize local labour and reduce the costs.

Mokwena (2003), identifies four key concepts, which are key to understanding the concept of youth participation, as being the question of power, the right to participate, citizenship and governance. Firstly, there are concerns with power relations within households where young people see the world in the eyes of adults, and do not participate in decision making. As discussed earlier, participation is about creating horizontal relationships between young people in institutional and non-institutional settings. Secondly, the young people's right to participate draws its justification and impetus from international instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of Children (1989), the World Youth Forum (1989) and local youth policies. These instruments provide a framework for participation of young people within a legal context; which countries need to respect and withhold.

The third concept on citizenship is informed by the ideal of full participation of young people alongside other members of society. It is the most compelling concept that informs the discourse on youth participation; and premised on the idea that young people have the right to options and exercise choices as part of households, community and society. The last element is governance; concerned with young people's role in formal decision-making processes; applying to different contexts such as schools, community organizations, national governments, regional bodies and international

agencies. According to Pitman (1995), this is premised on the notion that young people, like adults, have fundamental political rights to determine how power is allocated and exercised. They also have a right to influence the allocation of resources in society.

However, in spite of a growing lobby in favour of young people's rights and responsibility to participate, there remains an intransigence in some quarters about whether such involvement, especially at political level is appropriate. Lansdown (1995), points to a number of reasons, on why some adults are reluctant about young people's participation in decision-making. Firstly, giving youth the right to say threatens the harmony and stability of family life by calling into question parents 'natural authority' to decide what is in the best interests of a child. Secondly, imposing responsibilities on young people detracts from their right to being young, a period in life which is supposed to be characterised by freedom from concern.

The last strand to the argument is that young people cannot have rights until they are capable of taking responsibility. In the current context, the abovementioned reasons are irrelevant and outdated, and not applicable even to the youngest age cohort of 14-24. They ignore the fact that young people have mounting responsibilities, as a result of the deteriorating socio- economic conditions; and fail to acknowledge the varying definition of young people, especially within the developing context where youth definition stretches as far as 40 years and above.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the reader to various definitions and interpretation of social exclusion, with a focus on its applicability to the youth sector. Youth challenges are seen to be deeply rooted in the unequal socio-political economic structure; and an integral part of the broader challenges facing society. Therefore, the researcher has employed the social exclusion approach to illustrate that youth challenges cannot be fully addressed outside the broader social and economic policies; including cultural and institutional issues.

(Youth) participation is introduced as a strategy that can contribute significantly to deal with social exclusion. As Cleaver (2001) articulates, participation is not a straightforward event; it is a promising, but messy and difficult process, approximate and unpredictable in outcome. There are various degrees of participation for young people which, to some extent form a continuum; and there can be no progress in society if young people are disengaged and alienated from shaping processes that affect them and society at large. As Krauskopf (2000) states, 'we need to recognize that young people are not waiting for us, they take initiative'. By ignoring the role that young people can play, communities and society at large is missing out on unique experiences, perspectives and resources that young people bring with them to the table.

The next chapter is a case study, tracing the evolution of National Youth Service in South Africa, and looks at whether the youth service programme opens up channels and opportunities for young people to participate in governance structures, ranging from community to national level. In short, the study investigates whether NYS empowers and ensures real and effective participation of youth in decision making processes.

CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY AND CASE STUDY DESCRIPTION

1. Introduction

Youth Service is an idea that has a long history, and has emerged as a contemporary multi - dimensional strategy to deal with multiple problems facing young people. It is a value adding lever in deepening the transformation, at which government policies are directed towards. Its central theme rests on asserting the rights and capacity of young people, to make a meaningful contribution to national development; thereby making service a preferred strategy by many governments.

Over the past years, SA has followed this trend by adopting NYS as government policy; and made substantial investments to ensure successful implementation. Internationally, the idea of service is firmly based on the notion that communities are entities that are functional and willing to support, nurture and guide young people. Proponents such as Krauskopf (2000), see youth service not only as a tool for community development, but an idea that ensures real and effective participation of young people. However, as the study will show, youth service, does not do well when it comes ensuring sustainable youth participation at governance level.

Based on the hypothesis that youth service facilitates social inclusion of young people; this study draws data from a number of sources. The researcher held interviews with key policy makers, bureaucrats, and youth activists in order to bring a wide spectrum of views. Also, the text draws from personal stories of youth service participants (see annex 5); and the experiences of the researcher as a youth development practitioner/activist.

2. Background to the study

2.1 Status of young people and their challenges.

According to the results of Census '96, approximately 40% of the country's total population is between the ages of 14 and 35 years, declaring SA as a 'youthful' population. The high youth share reflects comparatively rapid population growth, estimated at 2.3 per cent a year, a characteristic of the demography of developing nations (Stats SA, 2002). The table below shows youth as a share of the different cohorts.

Age group	Population in millions	Percent of total population
0-14	15.0	35%
15-19	4.5	10%
20-24	4.4	10%
25 - 34	7.0	16%
Over 34	12.3	28%
<i>Total</i>	<i>43.3</i>	<i>100%</i>

(Source: Statistics South Africa, October Household Survey 1999)

The changing youth demographics have a profound impact in the country's political landscape, as the age cohort constitutes the majority of voters and the most poor within society. Transfer of political knowledge is also difficult to achieve, since many young people who were actively engaged in politics in the 1970s and 1980s have either 'grown up' or do not see themselves as youth activists anymore. The younger generation, those born in the 1980s, who grew up in the 1990s seem not to share the same experience of heightened resistance and political mobilisation.

Under the apartheid rule, South Africa's young people have been victims of adverse political and socio-economic conditions. They have been subjected to poverty, blatant political manipulation and racial segregation that tore the country apart. They experienced poor housing conditions, restricted and racially segregated access to

education, training and employment opportunities, high levels of crime and violence and a general disintegration of social networks and communities. And yet, they have asserted themselves by forming youth organisations, protesting against injustices and insisting on a decent education and living conditions. Everatt (2000), states that the 1980s witnessed massive youth mobilisation, spearheaded by the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO), which claimed a membership of more than a million youth.

Post 1994, the new government was faced with a huge responsibility to ensure re-integration of young people into society, and overcome the above apartheid inflicted challenges. In the words of policy makers and youth activists interviewed (see box 2 and annex 2 for full interviews), youth unemployment (estimated at 70%) presents the greatest challenge for the country. There is also growing incidence of teenage pregnancies and HIV/AIDS infections amongst youth; the Department of Health states that the 20-24 age cohort carries the highest rate of infection, with most infections occurring in people under the age of 30. (Chisholm and Peterson, 1999). There are other challenges that lead to exclusion of young people such as limited access to social support, education housing and others, which the study is unable to deal with in detail.

Box 2

'The reality of HIV/AIDS is also hitting young people very hard and eating away the pride of society. ...generational issues play a role as far as it pertains to communicating about sexuality' (interview with Pumelele Nzimande, 10 June 2004)

'...lack of participation in political processes and unemployment form part of the key issues affecting youth, as apartheid excluded not only them, but black people from participating in the country's activities' (interview with Dr. Essop Pahad, 10 June 2004).

3. Purpose of the study

This study investigates the relationship between youth service, participation and inclusion goals, with a particular focus on the role of communities in ensuring inclusion. The main question to be answered is whether youth service is an appropriate strategy to combat exclusion of young people. Below are the attendant sub-questions.

- Does youth service promote youth participation in decision making?
- What role do communities play to ensure inclusion of young people?

4. Methodology

Data for this study was collected using in depth interviews and documentation from key youth development agencies.

4.1 Interviews

The researcher planned to interview ten informants in order to bring a wide selection of views on the subject matter. A schedule of questions guided the interview (see annex one). Semi - structured interviews ranging between 45 and 60 minutes were held with five informants in SA, in June 2004. Two informants sent responses electronically, and the remaining three did not send written responses as requested (see annex two for the interview transcripts). The questions were piloted and altered accordingly before the interview.

4.2 Documentation

The National Youth Commission (NYC), a statutory youth development agency set up to guide and advise government on youth issues was requested to provide relevant documentation. This organisation has played a leading role in the conceptualisation and

implementation of NYS; and continues to lobby for greater participation of young people. This was complemented by reports and documents from other youth agencies and various state and civil society institutions involved in youth development.

4.3 Data analysis and reporting

Each interview was written up separately based on the information gathered. Following this, the interviews were collectively analysed for patterns and themes in order to answer the above questions. These themes are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

5. Limitations of the study

The following limitations of the study are recognised and acknowledged:

5.1 Lack of quantitative data on youth participation

The study is weakened by insufficient quantitative data to support some of the arguments advanced in the text. Where data exists, it is often from the developed countries and may not be applicable to the developing context.

5.2 Limited youth perspective

The focus of the study is on youth participation, but has not extended its reach to civil society-based organisations of young people. Though it draws real life stories of young people involved in youth service; it is not driven by experiences of ordinary young people. The researcher is of the view that this required more time and deeper analysis not possible within the given timeframes.

5.3 Researcher values and bias

The researcher acknowledges that this work was guided by own experiences of youth participation and own bias towards a positive youth development approach. The analysis therefore reflects the value she places in real and effective youth participation as a key tenet of any democratic order.

6. National Youth Service (NYS) in South Africa

NYS has its roots in the Human resource Development component of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which proposes that youth development focus generally on 'education and training, job creation, and enabling young people to realise their full potential (ANC, 1994). The RDP articulated NYS as a programme to give young people structured work experience, while they continue with their education and training. It emphasises the need not to displace or substitute workers in permanent employment, 'the programme should not be seen as a job creation measure, however, but as youth development and capacity building.'

Whilst there exists various youth service definitions and purpose globally, in SA, it is about direct participation and involvement of young people in activities that provide benefits to the community (see box one and annex two). It recognises that young people are disengaged because of a sense of powerlessness and irrelevance, as opposed to apathy or disinterest; and that overcoming this requires access to opportunities for participation as individuals as well as a generation (NYS Policy Framework, 2003).

Box 1

"NYS is a method of allowing youth to develop identity and skills, deal with backlog of services needed in communities..." (interview with Penny Foley, June 2004).

“... way of doing development work, strengthens the bond between communities, government and young people as citizens and is a building block for governance” (interview with Makhosazana Sibeko, June 2004)

Below is an outline of the critical phases that have shaped the concept and evolution of youth service in S.A.

4.1 The establishment of the National Youth Commission (NYC), 1996

The defining moment for the youth sector was the establishment of the NYC in 1996; whose key task was to develop a youth policy as well as provide ongoing advice to government on youth issues (refer to annex 3 for a list of functions). The NYC successfully co-ordinated the process of establishing the first ever National Youth Policy, adopted by Cabinet in 2002. Also, it managed to transform the RDP commitment on youth service, as encapsulated in the youth service policy.

4.2 Green Paper on National Youth Service, 1998 – 1999.

The NYC convened a national conference on NYS in January 1999; a major consultation platform attended by more than 350 delegates. This conference, composed of youth delegates from different organizations and parts of the country, saw heightened discussions on the scope and nature of youth service; and managed to reach consensus on key issues. At the time, consensus was key in terms of SA politics, especially in the sector – characterised by high levels of political activism.

Immediately after conference, the Green Paper was released for public comments. It set very clear programmatic areas, with an emphasis on the need for integration with

existing government initiatives; it also reiterated the 'multiple' interventions of personal development, learning and service to communities necessary for success (Mulaudzi, 2000). According to Foley (2004), the main weakness of the Green Paper was its failure to identify an appropriate financing strategy for youth service programmes.

4.3 White Paper on NYS, 1999- 2003

After public discussions and submissions to the Green Paper, a White Paper was prepared, and submitted to the Cabinet by late 1999. The White Paper became was premised on the principles of service to community, development, structured learning and support for participants. It set out the vision and goals of service and outlined components of recognized service programmes. From these principles, emanate the main components of a service programme for South Africa:

- Work on projects that improve the quality of life for the poor.
- Accredited learning while working on projects
- Development and support to account for psychological, emotional and other needs.

Provision of post-service benefits, tailored to the various needs of target groups (unemployed youth, youth in conflict with the law, youth in higher and further education and training) is one of the main issues embedded in the White Paper. Such benefits would include a service voucher redeemable towards further education and training; preferential access to employment; student loan schemes and reference letters.

Cabinet approved the White Paper, as the NYS Policy Framework (herein referred to as youth service policy), in June 2003, after a long process of negotiations and seeking commitments for successful implementation.

One of the key issues to emerge during the final stages of the policy, was a focus on institutional arrangements. Therefore, it is no surprise that the youth service policy places much stronger emphasis on institutional arrangements necessary, above anything else. Also, some key proposals were eroded during the policy process. In particular, the proposal aimed at ensuring that Parliament enacts NYS legislation, immediately after policy adoption did not make it to the final stages. From a youth sector point of view, legislation would amongst others, ensure compliance to implementation targets by various state agencies. Also, the youth service policy is non-committal on after care support, and post service incentives.

In terms of youth participation, the NYC ensured their maximum participation during the initial policy processes; as the process was effectively in its control. However, once handed to Cabinet, it became clear that youth were to play a lesser and lesser role; as the process was in the 'hands' of government, and no longer a youth issue. Whilst the NYC represented youth during this process of intense negotiations and compromises, the state institutions involved (including Cabinet Clusters) were not very keen on engaging with youth views. They were more concerned with 'mechanising' and fitting youth service into the government programme; instead of looking at it as a transformatory tool that had a potential of revamping some areas of service delivery.

4.4 Piloting phase and implementation, 2000 and beyond.

Pilot programmes were designed and implemented in areas such as literacy, HIV/AIDS, environment, and infrastructure development, to test assumptions embedded in the policy. The Department of Public Works worked closely with the NYC and organizations of disabled people to implement the first pilot, which it financed to the tune of R50 million (NYC Annual Report, 2001). More than 500 unemployed young people, drawn from three provinces (Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Kwazulu Natal), were engaged in providing and improving access to public buildings for people with disabilities.

Key lessons that emerged from this pilots, centres on the realization that NYS requires active involvement of communities and participants, during planning and implementation stages. For instance, provinces like Limpopo had to deal with ongoing threats of strikes and demonstrations by participants, who felt exploited and excluded from decision making processes by the service providers and contractors. Currently, a Projects Partnership Team, chaired by the Minister in the Presidency has been set up to develop an implementation plan and sort out operational and implementation issues.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the reader to the youth service programme as conceptualised, and implemented within the South African context. Like any other policy process, there has been negotiations and compromises; resulting in winners and losers. In most cases, young people have been losers, as protocol renders their proposals

not final - until ratified by the government bureaucracy, which has, throughout the policy process, shown a different understanding of NYS. From the RDP processes, youth participation in political and governance processes, has never occupied a central position, and this has progressed to the NYS policy processes.

Therefore, it is no wonder that South Africa deals with youth participation in governance processes so tactlessly. Also, it is clear from this case study that youth service is embedded in communities, and therefore NYS gains to society are impossible without community participation and support. Chapter 4 discusses the thematic issues emerging from the study in detail.

CHAPTER FOUR: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, AND/ OR 'YOUTH APATHY'?

1. Introduction

'Youth apathy' seems to be an international phenomenon that continues to preoccupy the minds and souls of politicians, policy-makers, bureaucrats and youth activists alike, especially during election periods. It is impossible to provide a universally acceptable definition for this concept; as the Oxford English Dictionary definition refers to lack of interest or enthusiasm, and could be a reflection of exclusion or denial to participate due to factor's such as one's socio - economic status.

The concern with youth apathy has featured prominently in South Africa's national discourse since the 1999 general elections. Data reveals that the average voter registration for these elections stood at 80%, and the figure for those in the age group 18 -20 totalled 48% - less than half of the people in this age group. Hence, Hofmeyr (1999), concludes that there is a direct correlation between age and low registration figures. Certainly, this is a matter of concern for any government, as turnout and the outcomes of general elections are often determined largely by the extent of participation of young people. According to the CYP, no political party in the developing countries of the Commonwealth today can expect to win an election without gaining a significant percentage of the youth vote.

Whilst global trends may be pointing to a decline in youth voting trends, the extent of participation and non-participation is not clear, and almost impossible to quantify. This is due to, amongst others, the non-existence of reliable, time series data, examining the

electoral behaviour of different cohorts of voters throughout their lives. This would perhaps be the only reliable way to assess the extent of young people's non participation at general elections across generations. Available empirical evidence, narrowly focuses on measuring perceived disillusionment amongst young people at one stage of life, using limited indicators such as declining party membership, political attitudes and voting behaviour.

Also, not only is there problems with data; there is no clear single explanation as to why increasing numbers of young people continuously fail to turn up during elections. Several explanations have emerged, and for convenience sake, are organised into four, as discussed below.

2.1 'Youth focused' explanations

This approach suggests that young people fail to vote because of either a problem with the individual (apathy) or because of a particular characteristic associated with the individual such as gender, class and other classification. To a large extent, youth focused explanations inform media and lay discourses on youth participation, which have portrayed young people's failure to vote as reflecting a broader problem concerning their attitudes and lifestyle choices. An article published by the Dispatch Online, few weeks after the 1999 general elections entitled, 'Politics is a yawn, its party time for youth' (see annex 4) confirms this view. Writers like Bristow (2004), agree that attitudes and lifestyle choices play an important part and determine the level of participation or non-participation in politics for both adults and young people. However, they fail to look at the reasons informing such attitudes and lifestyles.

For starters, globalisation plays an increasing role in influencing lifestyle choices of many young people. It continues to import international popular culture characterised by high levels of consumerism and materialism; thereby replacing local culture which may have its roots in political and social activism. New democracies that have a rich history of youth participation during liberation struggles, such as South Africa, are at the receiving end of these changes. He also points to high levels of political illiteracy amongst young people, resulting in them being recipients instead of drivers of democracy. Also, Mottee (2004) points to increasing political illiteracy, in particular amongst young people as a major concern. This view is strongly supported by results of an action survey research conducted by the NYC in two local settings (urban and rural) in 2003, which found that the majority of young people are excluded from local decision-making processes. This results in limited knowledge of local democracy and governance arrangements amongst the youth (Sibeko, 2003).

Whilst the above holds, explanations that locate non-participation solely as the responsibility of young people provide an inadequate account of low levels of electoral participation. Therefore, adopting this approach on its own, would be to ignore the possibility that other factors, such as the failure of the political system to engage youth, alternative value and generational issues, contribute to young people's declining participation.

2.2 'Politics focused' explanations

The obsession with youth apathy has failed to acknowledge the changing nature of politics and interrogate the concept of political engagement of young people in its totality. To some, the increasing levels of non-participation are a consequence of outdated electoral systems and institutions; and a result of the failure of political parties to attract young people. For instance, prior to SA's 1999 general elections, many youth organisations argued that young people were not only inadequately informed, but that the electoral process presented many problems to them.

They lobbied and campaigned for, amongst others, greater use of technology to ensure a 'flexible and roaming' registration system, which allows young people to vote in any part of the country. This is particularly important, if governments are keen on maximising youth participation, as young people are highly mobile. They may register in one area and be somewhere else during election day (s).

Also, many young people point to the boring nature of politics and political parties. There seems to be less momentum for grass roots mobilisation as countries mature into democracy, and the political landscape becomes more normal and formalised. Political youth organisations (where they exist), become formalised and subjected to sometimes constraining, formal party policies and structures. According to Mokwena (2003), this often results to the loss of the sense of immediacy, usually present before any democratic transition.

Whilst political systems may present challenges to youth participation, youth activists such as Gigaba (2004), argue that it is perfectly normal for young to behave in the manner they do, within a democratic system. According to him, freedom and democracy has presented many opportunities for SA's young to freely explore and express themselves, through various mediums (sports, arts, education), without any suppression by the state. Therefore, it is the duty of political parties to mobilise and attract the youth vote, by amongst others, continuously making politics more accessible and relevant to their needs and aspirations.

Other contributory factors are linked to the delivery of public services to young people. Youth research conducted by the Community Agency for Social Enquiries (CASE) in SA, concluded that technical issues such as possession of identification documents and other mechanics of voting contribute to lower youth voter turnout. In its research, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), found that more than five million South Africans, majority of whom belong in the youth range, did not have correct identity documents to register and vote in 1999 (Levin, 2000).

2.3 'Alternative value' explanations

One of the more popular discourses to emerge during the 1990s, is that young people have alternative values that are different to those of older generations. It is felt that young people's interest in environmental and identity politics (in particular those from the North), has led them to develop an interest in issue- based organisations and protest politics. Proponents of this view argue that this has subsequently led young people to reject orthodox politics focused around political parties, and rigid political systems.

They argue that young people are more likely to be attracted to issue-based organisations, because they are either weakly integrated or not integrated into the 'old politics'. This explanation seems to have some value, as young people increasingly form part of the rank and file of social movements, concerned with issues that range from poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, to environment and others (Kimberlee, 2002 and Dalton, 1988). They also consume hip hop and kwaito (SA genre) music that addresses political concerns such as poverty, crime and unemployment.

This shift from traditional politics to social movements, or protest politics is further confirmed by the rapid increase in membership statistics of issue-based organisations. Kimberlee (2002), states that youth membership in the social movement has increased at a fast pace, whilst political parties have witnessed a dramatic decline over the past years. Amnesty International has seen a rapid expansion in its student and youth section in recent years, from 1300 members in 1998 to 15 000 by 2002; Greenpeace has also seen a dramatic increase from 80 000 in 1987 to 215 000 in 1998, with the greatest growth in the youth membership (Kimberlee, 2002).

2.4 'Generational' explanations

Fanon wrote in 1963 that each generation has a purpose in life, and must define its mission, which it either fulfils or betrays. Also, Roddick (2002), states that every generation is vulnerable to imagining itself, either uniquely blessed or uniquely cursed, for understandable reasons. After all, it is simply human nature to attach more importance to the time in which one has been fated to live and die. Whilst Fanon's

statement is salutary, the current generation is faced with mounting challenges, which may compromise its mission, before they are able to define it.

This approach suggests that the contemporary young generation, living in modern or post modern societies, are experiencing unique circumstances or events that are discouraging them from participation; and that they are qualitatively different to previous young generations. Youth discourses today highlight the difficult and changing transition experiences young people face on their journey from childhood dependency to adult status. Therefore, understanding generational issues facing them, is crucial in analysing patterns and trends of their participation. Many never achieve the independent adult status due to the effects of social and economic restructuring, that have altered the youth labour market beyond recognition. In line with Lipsitz (1994) arguments, the current time is an unprecedented time of danger for young people; the labour market is increasingly marginalising them.

These generational issues have led some nations to declare young people as the 'lost generation'. Critics were quick to label young people as a lost generation, prior to SA's first democratic elections in 1999. The same happened prior to the 1997 general elections in Britain, as the 'New' Labour Party declared in its campaign that British youth were 'lost' (Kimberlee, 2002). True to Foley's argument (2004), proclamations of young people as a lost generation are irrelevant and uncalled for, as no generation can be lost, especially in a country with a youthful population like SA. Such proclamations do very little to unveil the causes, or the extent of the challenges facing young people.

3. Key themes emerging from the study

3.1 NYS does not lead to genuine youth participation in decision making processes

At a policy level, NYS is more aligned to the government agenda, with a greater emphasis on institutional arrangements for delivery of service programmes; instead of focusing on how best to use service as a leverage for young people to participate in governance processes. The policy also establishes a strong link with economic integration of young people, in a bid to deal with the increasing youth unemployment challenge. In reality, youth service cannot do much to deal with unemployment; as youth are unemployed not simply because they lack skills and confidence. According to Du Toit (2003), youth unemployment is a result of a number of factors ranging from the social and economic structure to the behaviour of the labour market. The success of service programmes rely on a host of external factors, including a supportive economic and social policy environment; genuine political commitment and better resourcing of the youth sector.

To some, NYS alignment to the government agenda is acceptable and a better strategy that enlists commitments, whilst ensuring integration of youth issues to the country's development objectives. However, those suspicious of government motives, such an arrangement is too close for comfort; as it results to alienation of certain sectors who may not agree with government policies. Also, alignment with government agenda does not guarantee that youth have a stake in defining the development agenda in its totality. There is often no shared consensus amongst policy makers and bureaucrats on the relevance and urgency of youth issues.

The researcher is not blind to the fact that there are cases where youth, in this context youth service participants, acquire an opportunity to participate in governance structures. This is largely a result of negotiations, individual good will, passion and commitment to youth development by those in management. In some instances, participants organise themselves into pressure groups, and use some kind of force to secure their participation within and outside NYS projects.

On one hand, most state interventions, including NYS identify social and political mobilisation of young people as one of the key objectives; but exclude political participation. This is often due to the lack of genuine commitment to engage young people in the public sphere. There are both sociological and psychological explanations for the above. However, popular prejudices of young people as lazy, unreliable and 'up to no good,' explain the tendency to exclude them in political and governance processes.

Also, most youth programmes, NYS included, confine youth participation to volunteering, mentoring, leadership education and enterprise schemes directed towards increased governance and management of youth. The notion of youth as the 'future', also explains much the way youth participation is expected to achieve a range of outcomes, such as nation building, restoring social and moral standards, and rejuvenating the economy; without upsetting the status quo. In this context, youth participation is acceptable, as long as they do not 'rock the boat'.

The absence of explicit youth service policy provisions for youth participation in governance, has resulted in a wide scope for manipulation of methods and practices to which the term 'participatory' is attached. As Stevens et al. (2003) argues, the existence of such policy gaps can result in reproduction of various patterns of exclusion. Therefore, government structures and youth agencies involved in implementation must be sensitive to this issue and adopt appropriate participatory approaches, in order to close such policy gaps. If left unresolved, such issues render programmes such as NYS, to be more pre-occupied with extending the management of young people by governments, rather than improving conditions for their democratic participation. Also, the failure to integrate appropriate interventions to deal with social exclusion, both at policy and legislative levels, often results to the social structure (be they household, community) less likely to see the need for participation in the world of power politics.

On the other hand, whilst the NYS policy is silent on youth participation in governance processes; SA has formally adopted a national youth policy which deals with this issue in detail. However, the researcher still maintains that the neglect by the youth service policy requires attention, as NYS develops and becomes the face of youth development in the country.

3.2 Youth service is deeply rooted in community development, some communities are functional and others dysfunctional.

Much has been written about successes of youth service; ranging from its contribution to individual growth, participation, youth acceptance by society to building skills for

young people's access to the labour market. Youth activists, politicians and decision-makers lobby for, and support expansion of youth service programmes based on such literature and empirical evidence where it exists. The SA context is no different, as it is informed by the view that youth service allows young people an opportunity for personal growth; and ensures their sustained contribution to the attainment of the goal of reconstruction and development. Also, NYS is part of the government's delivery mechanism for public services; and presents a tool for integration of youth development into the country's national development objectives (interview with Vusi Gumede, June 2004).

A study conducted amongst youth service participants in SA, revealed that participants learned new personal skills, gained knowledge and their attitude towards life had changed for the better. Service programmes also seems to have a positive spin-off to families, as all participants surveyed reported their family members were pleased with the changes they had undergone. Participants mentioned that they were being more responsive in their homes; were approachable and pleasant to be with. These positive spin-offs seem to have spread into the community as well, since participants reported they had a renewed sense of belonging to their communities. They showed a greater interest of working with other young people in their communities. Some committed themselves to work hard and ensure that the NYS projects continue within their communities, in order to benefit other young people and the community as a whole. Participants from one of the provinces (North West) who won an award for the community work undertaken whilst on youth service, decided to re-invest their winnings back to their community; and started an educational programme to empower

community members about their rights and responsibilities (Tshabalala, 2004, see annex 5 for youth testimonies).

Belief in the 'positive impact' of youth service is further echoed by all informants interviewed (see box 3 and annex 2). They seem to agree that youth service helps to build strong ties between young people and their communities; a major step towards inclusion. Also, Sherraden (2001) agrees that service fosters trust between citizens and helps develop norms of solidarity and reciprocity which are essential to stable communities. Apart from the tangible goals of their activity, service working together helps bridge differences that lead to greater trust and respect amongst persons who may otherwise never come together.

Box 3

"Youth Service builds lasting relationships between the server and the served (community) ... (interview with Lyndall Shope, June 2004)

"It's a national programme which seeks to engage young people in a disciplined process of contributing to a programme of reconstruction and development by providing service to their communities in which they live (Interview with Mzwandile Radebe, June 2004)

"Youth service is about ensuring participation of young people in community development ... and is a vehicle to addresses local and national development objectives" (interview with Pumelele Nzimande, June 2004).

The above seems like the case of a development project having gone very successful; or, rather, a reflection of what Botes and Rensburg (2000), refer to as the over reporting of development successes. Like most development projects, youth service is presented as having positive spin-offs for the community, without an appreciation of who constitutes the community; what kind of dynamics exist within communities and what active role

should communities play during the different phases of the various youth service projects.

According to Bessant (2003), communities form an important part of the public sphere and consist of a variety of social groups with different interests and different perceptions of their actual and desired roles and needs. They are characterised by power disparities based on age, experience and access to resources; and addressing such disparities is crucial, because if young people continue to enter the public sphere in its current format, they do so at an extremely unequal footing. Experience attests to the fact that unequally powerful groups develop unequally valued styles of operating, resulting in marginalisation and exclusion of subordinate groups, such as young people.

The researcher, informed by her own experiences in the field of youth development, is of the view that youth service programmes are not immune from the community challenges outlined above. Most service projects are conceptualised at national level, then communicated to provincial and local structures for implementation. In most cases; consultants and NGOs or private sector organisations are contracted to manage the implementation processes, with no direct supervision to ensure real and effective participation of young people and their communities.

Also, project funding is a tedious process, characterised by bureaucracy and redtape, to the extent that funds are released at a very late stage, simply to avoid redirection to other projects or rollovers to the next financial year. In such cases, there is always tensions between imperatives of delivery and community (youth) participation, between

the cost of time and the value of the debate or argument. Excessive pressure for immediate results often undermine attention to institution building, and make it difficult to address issues related to inclusion.

In order to counter some of the above issues, youth service programmes should be explicit about the likely depth and scope of the community involvement; and clarify whether youth participation is pursued as a means or an end. This assists us to know whether young people's involvement is about providing cheap labour to the community, or a developmental and empowering act. Also, it is important to identify what constitutes a community locally; understand the main differences that divide the community; which of the differences matter and what are the issues within the different age cohorts.

4. Conclusion

The discussion on youth participation and apathy, leads us to conclude that it is not young people's fault that they appear apathetic at election times, but a challenge for the politicians and civic institutions, since they continuously fail to respond to the rapid changes that have engulfed the youth sector. Young people are failing to vote in their large numbers not because they are apathetic, but because politics and politicians are, for a variety of reasons, remote and irrelevant to them. A majority of them appear to have a very low opinion of politicians and politics; since they believe that politicians tend not to listen and rarely take youth views into account during policy-making processes.

Also, they have witnessed and experienced situations where their leaders patronise them, and use their needs and aspiration as 'tokenism' during election campaigns; whilst showing no regard of their issues once in office. They also despise the tendency to postpone their capabilities and resourcefulness to the future; rather than being recognised as active agents for social change. This inability of politics and policy-making processes to develop policies informed by young people's cultural experiences and changing transitions render political parties, in particular those in government unattractive and out of touch with youth issues. As a consequence, young people largely construct their own identities in other social sites (e.g. churches, youth clubs, and social movements) where orthodox politics and political parties are absent.

From a policy perspective, the study has revealed that NYS, as adopted in SA, does not prioritise the issue democratising and transforming governance structures, in order to allow for real and effective youth participation. Also, youth service seems to provide a better platform to combat social exclusion of young people, once the challenges and opportunities presented by the 'community' are taken into account. Community-based action remains a powerful and essential tool for inclusion, as long as it addresses youth issues and other dimensions of social difference within communities. Experience with youth service, shows that it get things not normally addressed by neither public policy nor the private sector done; encourages active citizenship, closes the intergenerational gap and unifies people.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

1. Introduction and chapter summary

This chapter provides a summary of the discussions entailed in this text, highlighting key issues emerging from each chapter; and generalises the thematic areas emerging from the study to the development context at a global level.

As stated in *chapter one*, youth, at a global level are faced with various challenges, and the seriousness and urgency of such challenges differs from one country, region, and continent to the other. On the one hand, young people may be using the strategy of non-participation in elections as a tool to voice their anger, disillusionment and frustration. However, such a strategy is not useful; as disengaging from the political and governance processes further alienates them. The broad definition of young people has always presented problems both to development practitioners and government; the bigger the age cohort – the greater is the challenge.

Chapter two makes use of the social exclusion approach, and (youth) participation strategy as a framework that provides a theoretical basis for the ensuing discussion. Conjoining the social exclusion approach (for analysis purposes) and (youth) participation (strategy for inclusion), presents a dynamic tool of analysis, and strategic intervention. This empowers both the development practitioners and policy-makers to have a better understanding of, and locate youth challenges within the broader developmental agenda. Whilst providing a conceptual understanding of social exclusion as a process rooted in the dynamics of poverty and inequality; this text has offered

broader explanations that encompass deprivation in a number of spheres such as low income, insecurity of employment, lack of access to education, health care, social networks and others (Silver, 1995; Gore, 1995 and Francis, 2002).

Also, the social exclusion approach exposes the cultural and institutional dimension to inequality. This is where an initial disadvantage creates conditions through which, it makes sense to young people, at a time, to make choices and pursue lifestyles that, in turn can reduce their life chances and those of their children. This is particularly clear in the area of teenage pregnancy, where associations are made between deprivations and educational failure; and peer, class or family cultures, in which early parenthood 'makes sense' and is valued within local terms (Roche, et al. 2004).

On one hand, understanding youth challenges as deeply rooted in areas of deprivation is critical; and provides a salutary platform for integration specific youth needs into development priorities, whilst ensuring decisive outcomes for the youth sector. However, governments and society at large would need to pursue a combination of strategies (such as national youth policies, establish structures to represent young people, provide sufficient resources to youth programmes), in order to ensure that youth issues are not over-shadowed by other competing priorities, which may be deemed more serious by some sectors of the bureaucracy.

On the other hand, the (youth) participation strategy, as advocated for in the text, acknowledges that youth issues are interlocked within the existing economic, political, social and cultural systems of society; and therefore are not the domain of young people

alone. However, once given an opportunity, young people are capable of providing solutions to prevailing social and youth challenges rested with individual, local community, national and international level. Thus, to some extent, development issues could be effectively dealt with, by developing policies and programmes that ensured real and effective youth participation, capacity building, increased education and others.

In *chapter three*, we trace SA's youth challenges from the colonial and apartheid era; and illustrate how such challenges have evolved from a period characterised by state sponsored exclusionary laws and practices, to the democratic era. Notably, the democratic era has been characterised by a youth friendly government; a more conducive policy environment; with 'much talk' and 'little action' when it comes to youth participation in democratic and governance processes. This chapter has also given the reader an insight, into the idea of youth service as conceptualised and implemented in South Africa. The researcher is of the view that the thematic areas emerging from the study, are applicable at an international level, as more governments embrace youth service as a multi - dimensional strategy to deal with the multiple challenges of young people.

A number of countries, including United States of America, Mexico, Nigeria, Botswana, and South Africa continue to experiment with different kinds of service related initiatives targeting young people. Judging by the declining rates of youth participation, it seems as though these countries still struggle to bridge the gap between service and aspirations of young people when it comes to participation in political and governance processes. This gap can be traced from the policy and/or legislative level, since youth

specific policies (be they youth service, national youth policies, policies on education and training) fail to engage with the democratisation and transformation process of governance structures. Where policy clearly articulates the link, as is the case with SA's youth policy, there is always a danger that bureaucrats and policy makers ignore such provisions based on their prejudices about youth; and there is no recourse for young people.

This study has also revealed the complicated relationship that exists between youth service and community development. Communities play an important role in ensuring inclusion of any excluded group; however they sometimes can be a source of exclusion. This is the case, because communities are not as organised and coherent as some development literature suggests; in many cases they are highly dysfunctional and confronted by conflicts, power disparities and generational issues.

In *chapter four*, I have shown that there are at least four different explanations to understanding the recent decline in political participation and voting trends amongst young people at a global level. The 'youth focused' explanation is mostly used by commentators and politicians alike; whilst the 'politics focused' one seems to be mostly favoured by youth oriented organisations. However, we can not solely blame politics and the political structure alone; as it is suggested that young people are still interested in issues, and may not be voting because their political interests may be outside the ambit of political parties. According to Kimberlee (2002), single issue activists accept this as a feasible reason for young people's declining participation in general elections. The last explanation is the 'generational approach', and explains the declining participation

as having to do with young people's changing journey to adulthood; which is different from the journey taken by previous generations few decades ago. These explanations provides a much more comprehensive understanding of declining youth participation beyond voting; and may be a useful pointer for policy-makers, when crafting policies and strategies for youth participation and inclusion. The chapter also discussed the thematic issues that emerged from the study as outlined above.

3. Conclusion

The greater participation of young people in the development process is not merely a requirement; but is part of young people's fundamental human rights supported by a number of international conventions. The development literature needs to 'rethink' the role of youth in society, acknowledge and respect the many positive contributions young people can, and continue to make within communities; and how adults can provide young people with support. A strong commitment to youth participation and governance structures is required, so they can be part of processes aimed at assisting them to be responsible and active citizens.

Also, the youth sector can draw many lessons from the women's movement and struggle of indigenous people, where they have successfully sought participation in democratic practices. To some extent, these groups have managed to contain one key impediment - the combined effect of prejudices used to identify them, and the refusal, or unwillingness in policy communities to acknowledge such prejudices and move beyond them. For the reality of youth participation to match the rhetoric, there must be a clear and unambiguous recognition of the way young people's rights are denied, and how

that creates obstacles to engage in democratic practices. There must be commitment to clarity of thinking and honesty in the ways policy-makers use the language of participation. If the policy intent is to use 'youth participation' as a means to extend management of young people by governments; or to bring youth in 'legitimate' adult structures, then that needs to be clearly stated. Also, society has to move beyond the popular assumption that young people do not, and cannot make the grade as full citizens, because they are not fully developed human beings. Whilst arguing for young people's recognition and participation, it also is important to acknowledge that they are frequently more vulnerable than experienced adults, by virtue of their age and relative inexperience. For this reason, they require some protection and guardianship.

A number of research areas emerge from this study. However, investigating the youth voting behaviour as a generation is urgent, if we are to fully understand the reasons behind young people's disengagement. As stated in the text, this requires time series data that traces participation throughout the lifespan of a generation; informed by different experiences and challenges as they graduate from youth to adulthood. This is a massive project that requires partnerships with census bodies, research institutions and organisations of young people. Also, it seems important for youth development activists to further develop a strong theoretical basis for youth participation, as a strategy to ensure inclusion.

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