

'AN APT OR AN INAPT INTERVENTION?': THE POLITICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (ANC) IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

Based on the theoretical insights of desk research and critical analysis, respectively, this article interrogates and critically evaluates the political education program which the currently governing African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa launched and began implementing in 2019 through the OR Tambo School of Leadership. It raises questions and casts doubts about the program's pertinence, its potency for wider public buy in, and its chances of success within the presently volatile and adverse South African social, economic, and political climate. As well as teasing out the issue of whether the program represents what the country really needs at the present juncture of its democracy, it is also contended that there are many factors / hurdles that are both intrinsic and extrinsic which are highly likely to obviate the program's wider public buy in and the success thereof. It is further contended that the adoption and implementation of the said program has not only been an inapt, untimely, and a knee-jerk intervention but also that it is to all intents and purposes an exercise in red herring and clutching at straws, and therefore peripheral to the more pressing political and policy issues that lie at the heart of the problems which beset both the ANC as the governing party and the country at large. The article concludes by predicting the foundering of the said program and posits the notion of a broad-based, nationalistic-oriented, and inclusive civic education program, as opposed to a political party-driven one such as that of the ANC, as a viable alternative for the country going forward.

Keywords: Political education; civic education; cadre deployment; political renewal; African National Congress, Oliver Tambo School of Leadership.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Even though the vexed issue / topic of political education may not be an entirely new one within the ANC's political discourse context of the recent past, hence its sporadic featuring and mention in some of the party's public statements and pronouncements of the past few decades, it is, however, evident that it has since then taken a center stage within the party's contemporary context. The establishment and the subsequent launch of a political education program by the ANC under the umbrella and auspices of

the Oliver Tambo School of Leadership which officially opened its doors in 2019 and which was mandated to spearhead the party's political education program does not only bear a testimony to the above but also points to the seriousness and significance with which the issue of political education has come to be regarded within former's circles in recent times. Following its launch, the program in question has not only been widely greeted with an appreciable degree of zest and fanfare within many of the ANC's political circles but has also been touted within such circles to have the potency and potential of yielding a significant number of benefits for the party and others who may be pliable to its political creed or dogma.

The OR Tambo School of Leadership itself has, for instance, been touted, among other things, to be an autonomous educational institution that aims to "build the ideological, intellectual, and organizational capacity of the African National Congress, the broader progressive and democratic movement as well as interested members of the public" (ortamboschool.org.za/). By the same token, the school's political education program has also been touted to not only have the potency or potential of rebuilding the party's values (Masondo, cited in Sehloho, 2019) but of also representing "a significant step towards the renewal of the ANC" (Mothlante, cited in Essop, 2012). Elsewhere, political education has in the recent past been further touted within the ANC political circles by both its former and now expelled Secretary General, Ace Magashule (2018 cited in Duarte, 2018) and the now late Deputy Secretary General, Jessie Duarte (2018), to provide a viable tool and a platform that could help to reconnect the ANC with its grassroots.

Despite the above, however, whilst it could be duly conceded that either political education and / or civic education (whichever label one chooses to deploy) could be some of the noble interventions and panaceas which both members of the ANC and the country's citizenry at large need at this juncture of the country's democracy, and given also the plethora of disconcerting and troubling challenges which prevail within the country's societal and economic circles, political party-driven political education might not be a viable and a lasting solution if it is not part of or based on a broad, holistic, and inclusive nationalistic-based strategy. Whilst the sheer extent / levels of political illiteracy or nescience and ill-discipline within both the ANC and the country's citizenry at large as well as other factors combined all make political education an imperative, the evidently partisan / parochial, inward-looking, and party-oriented brand or type of political education which the ANC is currently implementing, and which somehow smacks of a considerable amount of sanctimony (especially, in terms of its portrayal by its proponents), unfortunately, make such an intervention both questionable and dubitable.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Except for a few sporadic efforts that were made by individuals such as Gill Marcus, the former Head of the ANC's Department of Information and Publicity desk (also former Governor of the South African Reserve Bank) and several others to train ANC media workers and voter educators during the early 1990s (South African History Online) in the run up to the landmark elections of 1994, political education did not seem to have been uppermost or featured prominently in the ANC's own policies and programs as well as in its political discourse and agenda at the time. In fact, most of the party's energies and efforts during the intervening period seemed to have been mainly directed towards the preparations for the then apparently looming or imminent holy-grail of assuming the reigns of political power within the country after the landmark elections of 1994. However, the revival and the tabling of the concept of Umrabulo in 1996 which had been deployed previously to inspire political discussions in Robben Island among political convicts of the liberation struggle during their incarceration could be deemed to have marked the initial signal through which the party showed a modicum sense of inclination towards mulling over the issue of political education.

In the inaugural edition of Umrabulo magazine which the ANC had subsequently launched, it was stated, for instance, that: "The journal's mission [was] "to encourage debate and rigorous discussions at all levels of the movement" (2019). The above was the case even though such a step by itself would not have necessarily amounted to political education in the true sense of such a label. However, following the publication of the Umrabulo journal, the subsequent period saw the party's launch of several media or communications platforms, which included its own website, and in the more recent past its web-based newsletter entitled ANC Today, all which had the main purpose of extending communications to the broader constituency and electorate of the party and to apprise them about various party activities, programs and projects that were going to be in the pipeline going forward. Within such a context, former President Mbeki of South Africa himself had become one of the regular contributors within the ANC to some of the platforms in question, especially Umrabulo journal, during his tenure in the country's highest office.

In the intervening period between President Mbeki's descent from the country's highest office in 2009 and that of President Zuma which ended in 2018, a significantly large number of unforeseen and morally reprehensible events took place under the ANC's leadership or governance. In the face of the events in question, most of which took place during what has since been dubbed by Magnus Hesystek (a renowned director and investment strategist) 'South Africa's 9 wasted years under Zuma', the party's political education plans and endeavors could be said to have taken a back seat or to have been somewhat, if not substantially or totally neglected. The party at the time was still basking in the glory

and celebratory ambience of the election victories which it had been continuing to enjoy after the 1994 landmark one, and during which the phrase 'hegemony of ANC' (which signaled a strong sense / spirit of bravado) featured pervasively in the party 's public discourses and public statements. It is also a slogan which also epitomized a 'cloud nine' mood and mentality that prevailed within the party at the time and which probably prompted the then President Jacob Zuma to say that the ANC was going to rule until Jesus returned.

The apparent stasis period (as it were) alluded to above in relation to political education has since been more aptly enunciated in the recent past by the ANC's late Acting Secretary General, Jessie Duarte, in an online article entitled 'Political education will reconnect the ANC with its roots' which was featured in the Daily Maverick edition of December 2, 2018. In the caption of the said article, Duarte begins by stating that the ANC, as the leader of South African society, must ensure that all its leaders are thoroughly educated politically while always remaining grounded within the people (p.1). In making the abovementioned call, Duarte was both echoing and amplifying the words of the then and now expelled Secretary General of the ANC, Ace Magashule, which the latter had uttered in a speech that he delivered at the ANC cadres' forum which had been hosted by the Dullah Omar Region (now known as the Cape Metropolitan). In the above-mentioned speech, Magashule is quoted by Duarte as having said that "If the ANC is not grounded, on the ground, and among people, it would be throttled".

Magashule is also quoted by Duarte as having proceeded and said that "being grounded and being among the people, "our people" as many in the ANC would articulate, is at the very heart of the existence of the ANC" (p.1). Further echoing and amplifying Magashule's comments referred to above, Duarte accordingly went on and said that: "At the same time, this cadre forum encapsulated the other side of the coin: political education" (2018). She continued and said that "...while being grounded among the people was important, one could only reflect upon the experiences of being among the people and the necessity to be with them through political education" (Ibid). Duarte went further and said that the "ANC had had a long history of theory where political education is emphasized and practiced, and where the work among the people is insisted upon. It is from this tradition that slogans such as 'mobilize, organize and educate' emerge". Duarte proceeded and lamented the fact that one of the greatest challenges for the ANC since 1994 had been to implement an effective and efficient political education program.

Duarte added that "many of the challenges faced by the ANC today, and as a result the rest of society, is the fact that many ANC members and even employees had not undergone a thorough political education program" (Ibid). Nothing can be further from the truth in Duarte's comments referred to above regarding the significance and the urgent need for either political education or civic education of some sort to be implemented across the country, especially when the above is viewed within the broader

context of some of the morally reprehensible and disconcerting events / developments that have taken place and continue to take place both within the ANC and within the country's broader society in recent times. The events and developments alluded to above include, inter alia, high levels of citizens' indifference to and lack of interest in participating in political activities such as elections and voting (as evidenced in the 2021 local government elections), political events, public meetings.

The events and developments referred to above also include an endemic culture of hero or cult worshipping which has been exemplified in recent times through the show of exaggerated admiration, veneration, and idolization of political leaders. The above has, in turn, been typified in the holding of the so called 'prayer meetings' and 'vigils' that have been held in the name of supporting either politically embattled or criminally accused politicians by their devout followers, and some of whom who have in the past been accused of being involved in various acts of malfeasance, graft, and corruption while serving in government; 'groupthink' mentality and attitudes; rampant increase in the spate of cases of politically motivated killings in some of the country's provinces; the sheer extent of factionalism and divisiveness within the ANC as well as high levels of ill-discipline among some of its members. Clearly, then, all the events and developments mentioned above combined starkly shine the spotlight on and buttress the exigency of the need for some form of either civic or political education (whichever label one opts to deploy) to be implemented within the ANC and the country at large.

Unfortunately, however, whilst the significance and value of the brand of political education intervention which Duarte envisages and talks about in South Africa (and which the ANC has now begun implementing) cannot, on the one hand, be looked down upon or totally discounted, the dire circumstances in which the country currently finds itself politically, socially, and economically, especially under the ANC's governance, on the other hand, begs two important questions. The first question is whether the ANC's brand of political education by itself, as opposed to broad, nationalistic-based, and inclusive civic-based education, structural, and political reforms, other things, could either possibly provide a viable and sustainable panacea for the ANC and the country's extant woes / challenges and its democracy or the situation as of now is just a matter of 'too little too late'. The second question is whether the ANC 's political education program constitutes what the country really needs at the current juncture of its democracy, or such an intervention would just be a drop in the bucket.

3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The methodological framework within which the online-based exploratory and miniature study that is discussed in the present article is situated entailed the combined use of desk research (also known as secondary research and which is commonly used in market research) alongside critical analysis. As

depicted by the name 'desk research', this type of research, on the one hand, is one which entails a technique in which data is mainly collected or acquired while sitting at a desk from existing sources and a variety of channels. It is also said to be a type of research in which a researcher finds, collects, and reviews the publicly available data about the research topic (Villegas, 2023). Desk research is also said to entail a detailed examination and evaluation of another person's ideas or work. In contrast to primary research in which participants are involved or engaged, desk research is said to rely heavily on existing data which is then carefully studied (Ibid). In the case of the research of study under discussion, online desk research during which the bulk of the data was collected via the internet, and thereafter critically analyzed and evaluated, was conducted.

Regarding critical analysis (also known as critical discourse analysis), on the other hand, this analytical and evaluation tool is said to entail an approach to research that investigates the relationship between language and power by examining how everyday "texts" create and reinforce social inequality and hierarchy. One of the key aspects or elements of critical analysis is that of critical thinking, which is said to be "that mode of thinking about any subject, content, or problem in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them" (Paul & Elder, 2004). Critical analysis is also said to refer to "the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action" (Ibid). The importance and benefits of critical analysis in any research study is evident from the notion of 'critical thinking' which is often embedded within such an analytical and evaluation stratagem, and which is, in turn, inferable from two comments proffered by an unnamed blogger in the Enago Academy website.

The first comment is that humans are better able to expand the body of knowledge in any field by challenging the status quo or existing conditions, which is what the study under discussion should be seen to have been aimed at doing or achieving. The second comment is that denying or challenging the veracity of commonly accepted "facts" or 'playing devil's advocate' with established rules and supports a necessary insurgency that drives future research (Enago Academy website, Tips for PhD, and Postdocs, 2021). Whist cognizance was duly taken during conceptualization of the study of the strengths and weaknesses that are inherent in both desktop research and critical analysis, respectively, the two were, however, expediently selected for their pertinence, their pliability, and potential usefulness in dealing with what had at the time been deemed to be an emergent or recently developing topic / issue that needed exploration, and around which virtually nothing or not much, at least to the researcher's knowledge, was known to have been done both in terms of research and critique.

4. DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

The questionable and / or dubitable nature of the ANC's political education program, its potential potency in attaining wider public appeal or buy in and the success thereof, it will be contended in the discussion that follows, are more likely to hinge or depend on a significant number of factors and / or hurdles that are more likely to militate or count against it during its roll-out and implementation stages going forward. Due, however, to the large number of the factors and hurdles in question vis-à-vis the limited scope of the present article, the discussion that follows will be restricted or limited to those factors and hurdles that have been deemed to be worth proffering or positing for further scrutiny and discussion. Whilst some of the factors and hurdles in question could, on the one hand, be regarded as intrinsic in the sense that they emanate from the environment and various circumstances within the ANC as a political party, others will, on the other hand, be shown to be extrinsic in the sense that they emanate from the environment or circumstances outside the party's operational domain or purview and control.

The first one of the intrinsic factors or hurdles in question pertains to the ANC's own predilection to deploy or use the label of 'political education' in characterizing its program rather than those of either 'civic education' or 'moral education' or 'citizenship education' or 'civics' or 'political literacy', among others. As may be conceded, in almost the same way that the choice of a brand name in either a business or in a marketing environment plays a critical role, hence potential customers / clients use it to identify one's business and what it has to offer, the choice of lexicon either in the form of words or terms or labels to characterize one's program is equally important. The above could / should be deemed to be the case because the choice of terms or labels that are used to characterize what one intends to offer (apart from the actual product or service itself) often has implications on how it could / would be possibly perceived by prospective or intended customers / clients, aside from the provider's credentials and other factors.

However, before proceeding and elaborating on the point briefly alluded to above, it is important to proffer two statements of elucidation regarding the issue of the choice of the title for any program, including the one under discussion. The first statement is that terms or labels such as 'political education' and 'civic education' (including the programs or the interventions which they signify) are not only inextricably connected but are sometimes also used interchangeably with other terms or labels such as 'moral education', 'citizenship education', 'political literacy', 'political-indoctrination', and 'nationalistic education' in different contexts (Thomas, 2005). The second statement pertains to the fact that political education as a phenomenon or form of political intervention, whether implemented by political parties or educational institutions or non-governmental organizations, is not inherently or immanently bad or odd by any means. For instance, political education is considered to have the potency of yielding many benefits for democracy.

The benefits in question include, among others, helping citizens to know their rights; preparing citizens for political life and participation; providing an understanding of the country's political parties and their activities; encouraging public participation; creating checks and balances, and distributing vital information throughout society (ScarlettOi, 2019). Unfortunately, however, the type of political education that is either driven or implemented by political parties for their own motives and gains is generally considered to have the potential of yielding a significant number of negative outcomes or sequels, something which necessitates that it should not only be treated with circumspection and skepticism but should also always be pre-emptively viewed with a jaundiced eye. The negative outcomes or sequels in question include, among others, abuse of power; encouraging polarization within society; putting or prioritizing personal and party-political interests over or above national interests and sacrificing individuality (Ibid). To the above, it could be added that all activities of political parties, including their political education programs, may often have the goal of either ascending to power if they are currently not in it or of maintaining their grip or stranglehold if they are already in it.

In the same breadth, and aside from the above, the adjective 'political' itself can at times not only refer to something that is controversial in the sense of being the subject of intense public debate, argument, disagreement, or disapproval but can also in another sense be associated with labels such as scheming (which refers to behavior or activities that involve making clever and secret plans intended to deceive people), scheming out or personal gain and dishonest behavior, being sly or deceptive or conniving; pandering to those in power (Oxford English Dictionary), and all which make it an odd choice. Therefore, it can only be unfortunate that the ANC does not seem to have been perceptive or astute enough in its conceptualization and choice of the title of / for its political education program whose syllabus and content appear to be not only about the party's own extant historical and epic achievements but to be also about its survival, self-interest, and renewal at a crisis moment of rapidly dwindling electoral public support.

Likewise, the ANC does not also seem to have at some point mulled over or toyed with the idea of a broad, nationalistic-based, and inclusive civic or citizenship-based type of education that would be able to cater for the country's national development agenda and goals, rather than narrow, blinkered, and parochial political party interests. The alternative program referred to above (including its title) is one that would have been congruous with the ANC's own claim or pretension of being the leader of society (to use Duarte's characterization), rather than one that seems to be about the party's self-perpetuation and longevity preservation in the country's highest political office occupancy. The view regarding the issue of the brand name for the program referred to above could be also deemed to be plausible if the issue of corporate image / brand image and perceived corporate identity as well as the importance thereof are considered. Whereas the brand / corporate image, on the hand, is said to refer to the image

that is generated in the mind of a user when he hears or sees something about the company or organization, perceived corporate identity, on the other hand, is said to refer to a set of statements that organization members perceive to be central, distinctive, and enduring to their organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985).

As an alternative to the above, it could be suggested that labels or terms such as 'moral education', 'political literacy' and 'citizenship education' (which are deemed to be synonymous with political education and civic education, and yet carry fewer or less negative connotations) would probably have been better options than the seemingly obnoxious or pejorative one of 'political education'. Towards the end of the present discussion, brief allusion will be made to one of the civic-oriented programs that operated under the name Street Law which was once rolled out in South Africa during the early 1990s, and which was not as manifestly political, blinkered, biased, and inward-looking as the political education program of the ANC under discussion. Regarding the civic-oriented program in question, some of the lessons which could possibly be gleaned or taken away from it will be both highlighted and accentuated. The issue of the status and credentials of the provider of the ANC's political program (namely, the OR Tambo School of Leadership) as well as the syllabus thereof, and both which could be deemed to also constitute intrinsic hurdles, are the next focal points of discussion within the next few paragraphs below, beginning with the former.

Whilst there might be nothing untoward or sinister about the ANC's candid declaration about the political nature or character of its program and the provider thereof, the program's political embeddedness and in-ward looking nature, especially in a politically and racially diverse as well as a highly polarized society that South Africa is widely deemed to be, and within which divisive discourses that are based on alterities are quite rife vis-à-vis the goal of achieving national unity and cohesion by the ANC might not, unfortunately, turn out be a salutary and a positive one. Following the line of thinking alluded to above, it will be further contended that the status and credentials of a provider could inadvertently become a potential source of either repulsion or rebuff to many prospective participants who could possibly view the provider of the program as being too partisan and lacking on the aspects of impartiality and objectivity, or even viewing it as bordering on being an equivalent of political dogma or indoctrination of some sort. In fact, especially upon scrutiny, the program itself does not seem to be too open or pliable to critical scrutiny and dissent, hence it appears to be only suitable for the so called 'like-minded' in terms of the ANC's own parlance and appears to be suitable for those who would be sycophantic to the party's dogma or creed.

Whilst for some, if not many, the issue referred to above may be regarded as either insignificant or impertinent given that the ANC has since ascending to power invariably made it its habit and practice to

deploy or use the game plan of following the trajectory of personality cult or cult personality mongering as part of its rhetorical and public communication strategies, for others it could be viewed with a jaundiced eye and suspicion. The personality cult / cult of personality referred to above refers to a group of people who are devoted to a charismatic leader and share common political, social, religious, or philosophical beliefs. Within such a context, 'groupthink mentality', which entails "a phenomenon that occurs when a group of well-intentioned people makes irrational or non-optimal decisions spurred by the urge to conform or the belief that dissent is impossible" (PsychologyToday.com), tends to be more prevalent. Accordingly, there have been many instances in the past in which the ANC has put its erstwhile, decorated, and highly esteemed leaders at center of its programs and activities. In some cases, some of the things mentioned above have, among other things, been done under the pretext of trying to epistemically stem the tide and reverse the legacy of past colonialist and apartheid practices by using the concept of decolonization as a tool.

In the pursuance of the above or within the same context, former / late ANC stalwarts have in many instances been masqueraded as paragons of moral rectitude and as people who belong to the pantheons of deified and all-time great leaders who ought to be venerated, emulated, and immortalized as well as aiming to resuscitate and reclaim historical identities that were decimated by both colonialism and apartheid. The ultimate rationale and hope in that regard, it could be presumed, is that the messages that the party proffers and the epic achievements which such messages proffer through such leaders will in the end resonate with the public and result in them unquestioningly endorsing or buying into the programs and activities which the party aims to market and implement. The use of the Mandela brand by the ANC in the past in many of its projects / programs and campaigns, something which it continues to do, including the OR Tambo School of Leadership which currently provides its political education program, are overt examples of such a practice.

The above, unfortunately, it could be argued, might not only amount to an almost archaic, hackneyed, and moribund political communication ploy or strategy but could also be deemed to be dubitable when deployed by any political party whose own moral and ideological integrity and rectitude have developed to be shrouded in many unpalatable questions, clouds of controversy, and qualms in recent times. Therefore, merely anchoring, or / and associating one's programs and activities within a particular renowned past leader may not offer any guarantee to pass the trick or to make the cut when it comes to the issue of wider appeal and acceptance, especially within the complex, politically savvy and astute contemporary society of South Africa. So, whether the location of the ANC's political education program within the OR Tambo School of Leadership is part of the above-mentioned modus operandi or whether such a strategy will in the end yield positive and desired outcomes is a moot question that only time, and the outcomes thereof can tell if it works.

A further point of discussion regarding the status of the provider of the ANC's political education program, namely, the OR Tambo School of Leadership, pertains to its own partisan and ideological bent or disposition. The school's candidly and evidently ideological bent and / or partisan or parochial nature and through which the ANC to has recently rolled out its program is unambiguously enunciated in the former's preamble that is found in its website. In the preamble in question, it is stated, for instance, that "This political school is an autonomous educational institution that builds the ideological, intellectual, and organizational capacity of the African National Congress, the broader progressive and democratic movement as well as interested members of the public" [emphasis added]. Even though a mention is made in the last part of the preamble referred to above that the program does also aim to accommodate those members of the public who may be interested in participating, the earlier part of the preamble is unequivocal. The penultimate part of the preamble in question explicitly states that the school and the program in question are entities that are primarily designed and intended for the bona fide cadres of the ANC, members of the so called progressive and democratic movement' who might include members of the Tripartite Alliance, those who may be 'like-minded' (to use the ANC's own lingo) and others who may be pliable to the party's political creed or dogma.

Viewed in the light of the above, therefore, bottom line is that the political education program under discussion should be regarded as a political party artefact that has no value and pertinence for the broader citizenry of the country. The syllabus of the program under discussion is itself equally questionable. For instance, in the same manner and spirit that is adumbrated in the Oliver Tambo School of Leadership's preamble as explained above, the syllabus of the program is also both candidly and evidently partisan (and by implication, biased) in its content, something that is evident from the list of compulsory prerequisite modules of which it comprises. The modules in question include, Module 1 entitled 'History of South Africa and the ANC; Module 2 entitled 'Building the ANC Organization; Module 3 entitled 'Government, and Module 4 entitled 'Economic Development'. The titles of both Modules 1 and 2 invoke and connote a very strong sense of condescension, self-referentiality and priggishness as the ANC as a political party or movement is messianically portrayed and pretentiously masqueraded as the cynosure of many of the epic deeds and achievements that have taken place within the country since 1912 when it was formed until the present time.

Whereas Module 3 deals with the history of the ANC and alliance partners in the form of the SACP and COSATU, Module 4 deals with what are said to be the ANC's values, principles and organizing principles.

Whether or not the said principles and values are consonant with those of the country and its constitution is once again a separate question for further scrutiny and debate. Accordingly, the fact that

the ANC's political education program is by and large a blinkered and parochial party 'camaraderie' political tool or instrument is apparent from above discussion and therefore requires no rocket science expertise to fathom what is at play, namely, trying to fix and salvage the party in the face of a multitude and a groundswell of debilitating challenges. In the end, whether or not many within the country's levelheaded and cultured citizenry (many of whom who have suffered immensely, discriminated against, excluded, marginalized / side lined, and alienated from the country's civil service and SOEs because of the ANC's implementation of cadre deployment and political patronage during the past twenty-nine years) will buy into the narrative of the party's political education program as described above is also another moot question.

With the above having been said about the intrinsic factors / hurdles which could possibly create impediments to / for the success of the political education program under discussion, the focus hereafter will be on the issue that pertains to the adoption and implementation of cadre deployment and political patronage within the country's civil service or public sector by ANC-led governments during the past thirty years. Within the context of the present discussion, it will be contended that the implementation of cadre deployment and political patronage within the country's civil service during the past three decades or so cannot be ignored in the face of its largely muted magnitude or extent of the negative emotional, psychological, social, and economic hurt and impact which these have had on those that have been on their receiving end. The same issue will also be touted to be one of the many extrinsic factors / hurdles that could possibly constitute a source of rebuff or repulsion when it comes to people's (especially within the enlightened segments of society) decisions about enrolling for the political education program under discussion.

Extant literature and opinion abound to the effect that the bulk of South Africa's current problems, notwithstanding past colonial and apartheid legacies, among other things, stem mainly from the ANC's adoption and implementation of the policy cadre deployment practices and political patronage within the country's civil service or public sector since 1994 (e.g., Erasmus, 2014; Franks, 2014; Shava, 2018; Steenhuisen, cited in Njilo, 2021; Msimango, cited in Magubane 2021; Harvey, 2021, Swanepoel, 2021), and the list in that regard is a dizzying array. The above has been the case, despite the ANC's evidently blasé and nonchalant attitude as well as its defensive and combative stance on the issue. As far as back as 2003, Mafunisa of the University of Pretoria's Department of Public Management at the time had sounded caution about the potential dangers of the ANC's cadre deployment strategy and political patronage in his subsequently published paper entitled 'Separation of Politics from the South African Public Service: Rhetoric or Reality?'

In the paper in question, Mafunisa elaborately discussed various bureaucratic models that are used in different parts of today's world, including the 'politicized bureaucratic model' under or within which ANC-

led governments in post 1994 South Africa have been operating. According to him (2007), the 'politicized bureaucracy model' posits that elected office-bearers have a mandate to control the public service, and he states that the ANC's cadre deployment policy is a prime example of such a model. Under the said model, there is said to be no distinction between politics and administration and between party and state, hence party-political structures impose administrative decisions on administrators. The politicized bureaucratic model in South Africa's case is said to imply that rewards and appointments are made based on blind allegiance to the ruling party by public servants, and not based on the merit system. In the above-mentioned case also, elements of the Cadre Policy are said to include recruitment and promotion of accountability and emphasis is placed on recruitment from within the party and potential recruits are made to understand and accept the basic policies and program of the party (Ibid).

Even though Mafunisa touted the politized bureaucratic model to have been justifiable and recommendable in South Africa at the time, following the ANC's ascent to power in 1994, he did, however, sound a word of admonition and made a dissenting recommendation in that regard. He argued, for instance, that cadre deployment was justifiable at the time due to the then perceived existential threat of sabotage from the functionaries of the former apartheid regime and many of whom the newly elected government had since inherited and retained as public service employees. Mafunisa also cited as another justification for the implementation of cadre deployment the need to redress the imbalances of the apartheid era. Regarding his word of admonition, Mafunisa stated that the ANC's racial policies (especially cadre deployment) had led to unsuitable people being promoted, capable individuals side-lined and incentives for performance undermined as race, and political connections, became the over-riding criteria for appointments and promotions (2007). Mafunisa went on to say that the situation described above indicated that politicizing the public service contributes to the promotion of political patronage, nepotism, and racism in the public service.

To the above, the issue of corruption with the country's civil service could also be added. The problem with the politicized model, Mafunisa further pointed out, is that it is subject to abuse by corrupt politicians and senior public servants, a phenomenon that has been glaringly evident within the country's civil service during the past thirty years. Mafunisa's recommendation was that after the threat of political sabotage had diminished, subsequent ANC-led governments should move to the complementarity model which places more emphasis on the merit principle, and which is more emphasized within both the British permanent and the American hybrid models, respectively (Ibid). Paradoxically, though, despite the inordinate groundswell of criticisms that have been levelled against the ANC's use of the cadre deployment policy and political patronage within the civil service in South

Africa, the party has unfortunately, and by and large, been both equivocal / evasive and candidly combative and defensive about the issue.

Over the years, for instance, there have been numerous ripostes (some of them verbal and others in writing) from some of the prominent leaders within the ANC and its government who have vociferously defended the adoption and implementation of cadre deployment, and three of the ripostes in question are worth mentioning. The first one is that of a clip that used to be repeatedly broadcast or aired by the etv news television channel some years ago about Fikile Mbalula, former Deputy Minister of Police, former Minister of Sport and Recreation, and former Minister of Transport and now ANC's Secretary General. In the clip in question, Mbalula is captured talking down and denigratingly / disparagingly lambasting a member of the opposition party inside the parliamentary chambers and asking him (to paraphrase him) "What do you know or what is it that you know about cadre deployment?". The second riposte pertains to a comment that was made by Gwede Mantashe, the current Chairperson of the ANC and the country's Minister of Minerals and Energy Affairs in which said that "There is nothing wrong with the highly criticized system of cadre deployment which gives black people operational exposure" (2011). The third and more recent one involved Paul Mashatile, the former Treasurer General of the ANC and now Deputy President of the country, and which is one of several articles about cadre deployment that had been featured in the Business Day newspaper before. In his response to the findings and recommendations of the Zondo Commission of Inquiry during or in which President Ramaphosa was a respondent on behalf of the ANC, Mashatile is quoted as having said in defense of cadre development that is not unique to South Africa since is also practiced under various guises in many democracies worldwide, and added that the ANC's approach in that regard is anchored on the notion that cadre skills and training are important considerations when cadres are deployed. Mashatile continued and said that "Our cadres are encouraged to acquire the necessary training and equip themselves with the skills that will enable them to be effective in their deployment (2021). A counterargument to the respective ripostes of Mantashe and Mashatile alluded to above would be apt at this point.

For Mantashe, on the one hand, to claim that cadre deployment serves to afford citizens professional exposure and access to the wherewithal or empowerment (both political and economic) which was previously denied to them through the exclusionary practices of the apartheid era is, unfortunately, not only untrue but also a crude piece of blatant fib that borders on being utter claptrap. The truth / reality is that in many, if not in most instances, all people who are not the so called 'cadres' or who have no political credentials or connections or history have never been and are still not able to make the cut when it comes to top and plum jobs within the country's civil service, save for some of the affirmative action and racial demographics based-appointments that have sporadically taken place across the civil service countywide. Mashatile, on the other hand, could be admittedly somewhat correct in saying that

cadre deployment is widely practiced in various guises in many countries around the world, including in advanced democracies.

In fact, it must be noted and conceded that cadre deployment in South Africa is not without precedent, hence it was also widely implemented by different administrations during the apartheid era (Mafunisa, 2003). The above being the case, though, the reality regarding the implementation of cadre deployment and political patronage under the ANC's leadership in South Africa is that the situation in that regard is neither comparable (as Mashatile would wish people to believe) to that of Britain's permanent bureaucratic model which encourages complementarity, nor is it comparable to that of the United States of America which is based on the mixed model of bureaucracy. The British civil service, on the one hand, is said to be characterized by its adherence to specific key precepts. It is also said to be a permanent service in the sense that it remains in place on a change of government. Ministers in its case are normally expected to work with the civil servants that have served the previous administration (Mafunisa, 2003). According to Frye (1985, cited in Mafunisa, 2003), the British civil servants remain non-political in the sense that they normally receive their appointment independently of ministers, are not allowed an overt political allegiance and are not required to perform politically on the floor of either House of Parliament.

Closely associated with the concept of permanency in Britain is that of neutrality. Because all civil servants are expected to serve ministers of any political complexion, senior civil servants are said to be required to be scrupulously neutral. Senior civil servants in the case referred to above also cannot hold party office, canvass for candidates or express views in public if any of these are associated with the politics of the United Kingdom or European Parliament (Pyper, 1995, cited in Mafunisa, 2003). In the case of the American Hybrid Model, on the other hand, civil servants are not only said to be recruited and hired based on merit but are also said to be evaluated periodically as to their job performance and are promoted based on their efficiency ratings and have job security. In a similar vein with the American national government, the civil service is said to include all civilian employees who are part of the "classified civil service". What is referred to as 'Classified Service' within such a context is said to be a bureaucracy in which personnel operate in a merit system under the jurisdiction of a civil service agency.

According to Kettl et al (1996, cited in Mafunisa, 2003), the United States' civil service system was intended to forever abandon the practice of political patronage, - the so-called "spoils" system-for all, but a few senior positions. In terms of the American Hybrid Model, great value is said to be place on neutral competence in service of the "government of the day" and upon selection on merit, the most central characteristic of the civil service (Ibid). As may therefore be acknowledged or conceded based on the

above, the ANC's 'politicized bureaucratic model', of which cadre deployment is a prime example, is clearly a far cry from the two bureaucratic models briefly discussed above, especially when it comes to the merit principle because loyalty and allegiance in its case matter more or above the former. In hindsight and viewed against the above, therefore, it should not require a rocket scientist to vicariously imagine, fathom, appreciate, and understand the extent of the emotional and psychological harm which the implementation of cadre deployment within the South African civil service has retrospectively inflicted on those that have been on the receiving end of it, and many of whom who are native and bona fide citizens who are qualified and deserving.

The issue of many Black teachers within the country's Black schools which fall under the Department of Basic Education countrywide provides an egregious example when it comes to the negative impact and effects of cadre deployment and political patronage on some of the country's civil servants in the persons of teachers. In the case referred to above, many of them have been unable to make it or scale up the traditional and normal career path or ladder of progression which includes ascending to positions of HoDs, Deputy Principals and Principals as well as other higher-level positions. The positions in question are widely alleged to be either sold or reserved / earmarked for politically connected individuals through the abetment of a well-known ruling party-aligned teachers union whose vehicles are often seen during the electioneering season being driven around and bearing the writing 'Taliban (alias) votes ANC'. The above, in turn, raises questions regarding the purpose and meaning of improving one's qualifications on the part these victimized teachers if this is not going to yield any long-term and material benefits for them as civil servants and which could potentially accrue from such academic upgrades.

Another question that could also be raised within the same context described above is that of who would blindly jump on to a bandwagon of a political education program whose *raison d'être* mainly and exclusively entails catering for the needs of a political party when proper, nationally recognized, and accredited qualifications have not made it feasible for these teachers to progress career wise? Perhaps only utter despondence and cretin / numbskull mentality could possibly impel people to do so. The fact that the ANC's program is NQF-aligned, and presumably accredited, does not make any a difference, nor it does it matter anyhow. In fact, the ANC seems to have gone into an 'autopilot mode' when it comes to the appreciation and an understanding of the extent of the emotional and psychological harm which the party's unconscionable and repugnant actions have inflicted on those who have been on the receiving end of its cadre deployment policy and political patronage.

The reality, therefore, is that cadre deployment under the ANC in South Africa has not only been an incubator and a nurturer of corruption and malfeasance, among other things, but has also been an abettor / enabler and a propagator thereof. Cadre deployment, in fact, and unfortunately so, it has consequently earned or delivered the country the pariah status of being a kleptocracy, a kakistocracy,

and a 'democracy' rather than a democracy. Thus, whilst the objectives and goals of the ANC regarding its political education program may at glance appear to have some semblance of nobility about them, the invidious and inescapable reality remains. The reality in question is that it is always not feasible to bring about genuine organizational transformation and renewal of whatever sort without massive structural and policy reforms, including electoral reforms, all which lie at heart of the many problems which South Africa as a country currently faces. The above should be deemed to the case because it is the same afore mentioned structures and policies which ceaselessly reproduce, sustain, and perpetuate certain cultures and practices within organizations, including within the ANC.

In his speech which he delivered at the 'Defend Our Democracy's Conference For Democratic Renewal and Change' in Johannesburg on the 1st of July 2022, the former Deputy Minister of Finance, and now Chairperson of the MTN group, Mcebisi Jonas, made an important call for a national referendum on the electoral system 'to define the way forward' for the country by 'turn[ing] the political system on its head and liberate the country from the clutches of party barons' (Daily Maverick, 2022). Upon scrutiny, the above makes sense because the current system is one that does not only give too much power to politicians but is also one which allows for a small and an unrepresentative bunch of dubious figures / people of about five thousand or so through a conference to decide on behalf of the bulk of the country's approximately sixty million population or more on who becomes the President of the country. More poignantly, the above subsists in a political environment that is almost completely devoid of cultures of due diligence, accountability, and consequence management. In cases where deviant or culprit office bearers are supposedly censured, for instance, they are only molly-coddled and often given a slap on their wrists instead of a hammer blow by the ANC and its President.

By the same token, because elected office bearers are not elected based on the real will of the constituencies on the ground, once they are elected and launched through the ballot paper during elections, the constituencies have no say about them thereafter. If they get involved in devious or nefarious activities, they have, in some, if not many, cases, been surreptitiously seconded or moved to different positions elsewhere by the ruling party either as ambassadors or are relocated to somewhere within the vast labyrinth of the country's bureaucracy, something which obviates any kind of scrutiny on them. Excepting the above, the issue of the current structure of the United Nations Security Council (one of the former's six principal organs) whose primary responsibility entails the maintenance of international peace and security should, hopefully, also provide a pertinent illustration in relation to the issue referred to in the foregoing paragraphs. In its current form, for instance, the Security Council comprises five permanent members and fifteen non-permanent members (Wikipedia, p.1). The situation emanating from the above is that even if steps could be or were to be taken to include several

other non-permanent member states as permanent members with the goal of transforming or overhauling the Security Council, this would be both futile and inconsequential.

The above would be the case because the extant and institutionalized structure of the Security Council would remain intact, hence the same practices and privileges (mainly, the veto power) would continue to be perpetuated using veto powers over which permanent members have a monopoly. Granted the above, therefore, any new member state or new members states would be automatically bound and circumscribed by the existing institutional status quo under which they would have to operate. Accordingly, an ideal solution to bringing about genuine transformation or renewal of the Security Council, it could be suggested, would either be to tamper significantly / drastically or do away with the currently existing structure. Applying the insights briefly discussed above to the issue of the ANC in general and that of its political education program in particular, a particular line of argument could be proffered. The line of argument in question is that apart from the many other elephants in the ANC's own room that could potentially impede genuine transformation, radical and wide-ranging policy, and structural reforms both within the party and the state would need to be implemented to bring about the desired changes or outcomes.

Under the circumstances referred to above, political education would become a peripheral and a paltry issue that also borders being an ineffectual red herring exercise in the face of the many problems that face both the governing party and the country. Thus viewed, scrutiny would seem to suggest that the implementation of the ANC's political education program has been both untimely, inapt, and even impertinent. Regarding the aspect of untimeliness, the ANC (as pointed out earlier) ignored the issue of implementing political education among its members for a considerable length of time, despite its own allusion on many occasions to the dearth thereof during the past thirty years of its leadership. In doing the above, the ANC obviously slipped into a state of a slumber and a 'drone mentality', the latter which entails "a pattern of going through the motions, paying little or no attention to what is going around you, and during which everything goes into autopilot as well as when critical thinking skills get pushed to the wayside" (Critical Thinking Secrets.com).

As has been the case with the issue of electricity which has been neglected by previous ANC-led governments in South Africa and who kept kicking the can down the road until it reached the crisis proportions or levels that it has in recent times, political education has equally been largely neglected by the party for a considerable length of time. It has only been upon / after recognizing and acknowledging the high levels of ill-discipline, factionalism, corruption among its cadres as well as the rapidly dwindling support for the party during elections of the recent past, among other things, that it has suddenly seen and realized the exigency of the need to speed up the process of implementing political education within its ranks. The above, in turn, points to a knee-jerk and a reactive type of approach to handling the

challenges of an organization. Regarding the inaptness of the ANC's political education program as a tool for achieving the goal of renewal as the party often claims, this is somewhat comparable to an act of clutching at straws and an exercise in red herring, especially given the enormity of the challenges that currently face both the party and the country.

Whereas clutching at straws, on the one hand, means being in such a desperate situation as to resort to even the most unlikely means of salvation, red herring, on the other hand, refers to something which draws attention away from the main issue. In terms of the line of thinking alluded to above, political education by itself can neither be a quick fix solution or panacea that will effectively and sustainably ameliorate the bigger problems of a beleaguered ANC and the country at large. Instead, radical as well as far-reaching structural, political and policy reforms within both the party (including abandonment the 'politicized bureaucratic model') and the state hold the key to resolving the problems that confront the two institutions going forward. To date, the ANC remains steadfastly obdurate / obstinate and unwavering when it comes to the topic of scrapping cadre deployment and political patronage, despite the publication of the draft bill on the National Implementation Framework towards the Professionalization of the Public Service which President Ramaphosa promulgated in 2021.

In reference to the afore mentioned draft bill, the President stated that the intervention in question "aims to build a state that better serves our people, that is insulated from undue political interference and where appointments are made on merit" (2021). The above, in turn, followed on the heels of Ramaphosa's appointment of Dr Somadoda Fikeni for a first five-year term of office as Commissioner of the Public Service Commission in 2021 as well as that of a high-level task team in 2020 whose mandate pertained to steering the professionalization framework under the leadership of the then Minister of Public Service and Administration, Senzo Mchunu, and which was, in turn, going to be led by Professor Mashupye Maserumule as convenor and Priscilla Mdlalose as its Deputy Convenor. Ineluctably, the ANC's 's push back referred to above does not only cast doubts and makes a mockery or flies in the face of President Ramaphosa 's efforts of renewing the party and transforming the country's public service but also points to a paradox, a certain degree of ambivalence, and 'double standards' on the part of its President himself.

For instance, whilst the President, on the one hand, might appear to have zealously advocated for the professionalization of the country's civil service, he has, on the other hand, simultaneously continued to support and defend the continued implementation of cadre deployment by the ANC within the country's public service sector. In response to the court action launched by the DA to abolish cadre deployment corruption, for instance, President Ramaphosa is said to have confirmed under oath that he intends to defy the Zondo Commission's finding that the African National Congress' (ANC) cadre deployment is

unconstitutional and illegal (Scheiber, 2022). Accordingly, the above, in turn, bears a testimony to the fact that the ANC will not stop at anything in order defend and protect its implementation of cadre deployment and political patronage within the country's civil service. The reason for the above, it could be argued, is because cadre deployment for the ANC represents a trump card or a currency or a bait that provides an irresistible form of allure for the ANC to its followers, both extant and prospective.

The above is obviously due to the cadre deployment's entailment of a culture of sinecure benefits and handouts as well as easy access to material resources and wealth through the sacrifice and oath of loyalty and allegiance without any meritocratic-based reward or compensation. The above, in turn, shines the spotlight into and explains why the party is so hysterical and intransigent / recalcitrant when it comes to the scrapping or banning of cadre deployment in South Africa. By the same token, the above also points to the fact that not unless the ANC is compelled to completely scrap cadre deployment through legislative and statutory means, it will remain unwilling to change the status quo in that regard. More importantly, the above further points to the fact that the ANC is obstinately prepared to continue with a policy that is widely deemed to have discriminated, marginalized, side lined, and alienated many of the country's rightful, bon fide, and capable citizens (Human Science Research Council, 2012). In the case of cadre deployment and political patronage, party membership and the pledge of one's allegiance and loyalty to the party hold the promise of providing a facile and quick conduit or vehicle to climbing the social and economic ladder and being swiftly catapulted into economic heights as well as accessing the material benefits that are known to be certain to accrue in that regard.

The above, in turn, also explains why there have been so many political killings that have continued unabatedly to this day among the ANC's party members, namely, the scramble over access to power and wealth resources rather than the goal of serving the indigent and the wretched bulk of the country's populace as the party often flauntingly and persistently claims. The unwavering insistence by the ANC on retaining and continuing with cadre deployment, despite the groundswell and plenitude of evidence regarding its adverse / pernicious impact and effects on the country's state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and on many of its citizens, is itself antithetical to the notion of renewal because the same adverse and nefarious practices which have undergirded the extant policies will be allowed to continue as long as the ANC continues to maintain its stranglehold on country's political reins of power. In the main, therefore, it cannot be just and be the case that state institutions such as SOEs and the civil service should out of nowhere be turned into or be treated like a private property of a political party as if this is something that is either God ordained or based on some queer / quaint feudal law of primogeniture.

Accordingly, the ANC needs to be always reminded and to bear in mind that they were elected to provide leadership and to look after the affairs of the state / polity on behalf of the country's citizenry, not to own it. The above, in turn, raise serious doubts regarding the pertinence of the political program

under discussion and its fitness for the ANC's renewal project and that of the country's national unity. Finally, the issue of a civic-based educational program that has been touted by some to have been one of the most successful implementations in South Africa during the mid-1990s, despite its short life span of existence at the time, is one that will be briefly discussed at this point. The program in question is that or one which went under the name Democracy for All and which was run by Street Law, a democracy and human rights organization that was then housed at the University of Natal's Centre for Socio-Legal Studies (in what is now known as UKZN Main Campus) in Durban, South Africa. Given that the Democracy for All program received some of its support from the USAID, it is said to have been decided that it was going to focus on students who had been trained in this program as well as students who received normal civics training from their regular high school teachers.

Since the early 1990s, Street Law is said to have operated the Democracy for All civic education program in South African high schools as part of an effort that aimed to institutionalize and implement democracy and human rights education in formal school education in the post-apartheid era. It is said to have provided training in democracy education for student volunteers from law, social work, and education faculties in various South African colleges. (For a more detailed account on the said program, the reader is referred to the articles of Finkel, 2005). However, against the background of the doubts that have been cast and the questions have been raised previously regarding the pertinence of the ANC's political education, its potential to achieve wide public reach and success, it is contended that there are some lessons and takeaways that can be extrapolated from the civic-based education program briefly discussed above.

Despite there being nothing inherently wrong, anomalous, and illicit about political parties rolling out or implementing political education, political education programs conducted by such parties are, unfortunately, always reputed for being prone to being partisan, biased, politically-party oriented as well as inward turning. Therefore, especially in South Africa's case under the ANC, a broad based, inclusive, less-politically embedded, more neutral, and nationalistic-oriented type of civic education that will aim to cater for the needs of the country's broader kindergarten (advocated by people such as Astuto, & Ruck, 2010; Mitra & Sierrire, 2015; Bayta et al, 2021, among others). its semi-adult, and adult citizenry such as the one offered by the Street Law program referred to above would probably be a more salutary intervention for the country than the political party-driven one of the ANC. In fact, a civic-based educational program offered by formal educational institutions, civic organizations and non-governmental organizations in South Africa should be considered to not only provide a viable alternative but also to be on a potentially good stead when it comes to the test of neutrality / impartiality and non-partisanship.

CONCLUSION

The present article set out to critically interrogate and evaluate the African National Congress's political education program which it launched in 2019 and started implementing thereafter under the auspices of the Oliver Tambo School of Leadership by questioning the program's pertinence as well as its potential potency in achieving a wider public buy in and success within the country's highly volatile social, political, and economic climate of the present times. As well as raising questions and casting doubts about the capability of the program in question in its pursuance and attainment of the objectives and goals that it has been purported to be aimed at, it has been argued that the program is more likely than not to contend with a significant number of challenges and hurdles which are, in turn, likely to militate against its success in achieving its intended goals. The factors and hurdles in question have been touted to entail those that are likely to emanate not only from the environment within the ANC as a political party and the program itself but also from other external / extrinsic factors / hurdles and over which it has little or no control.

Whereas those factors that intrinsic have been touted include the program's title, the status and credentials of the provider, and syllabus contents, one extrinsic factor / hurdle in the form of cadre deployment and political patronage has been posited. It has also been contended that the ANC's political education program is not what the country requires at the current juncture of its democracy, especially given its apparent inclination and propensity of pandering too much to the interests and needs of the party in what is a racially diverse and profoundly polarized society that the country is. Instead, it has been contended that a broad-based, nationalistic oriented and inclusive type of civic education that would be aimed at attempting to unite what is undoubtedly a racially diverse and polarized populace country is what is needed. The program has been further touted to be not only untimely, inapt, and reactive but also to be impertinent given the current political, social, and economic climate within the country, and accordingly declared to be a deeply divisive non-starter that is that is highly likely to fizzle out and end in a fiasco or in the dustbin of history.

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