Social Cohesion as an External Factor Affecting Families: An Analysis of the White Paper on Families in South Africa

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Abstract

Social cohesion is beneficial to economic restructuring, social change, and political action. At its core, it involves building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities in wealth and income, and generally enabling people to have a sense of belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, and legitimacy. A family, as a major social institution, is central to the functioning of any society and is therefore potentially the bedrock of creating and maintaining social cohesion. This article draws inextricable links between the role of the family and the creation of social cohesion by evaluating South Africa's White Paper on Families. First, it defines and unpacks social cohesion and contextualises the family environment. This is done through an evaluation of the available literature on social cohesion in the family. Second, an evaluation of legislation and the White Paper on family is presented. Third, the aid of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is used to examine the various environments concerning social cohesion in the family. The White Paper on family recognises the family in aspects other than the concept of the family cycle, a key component of the developing individual who should be nurtured from infancy to adulthood. In addition, gaps in the policy are highlighted by looking at implementation challenges of the constitutional provisions and examining the way in which these gaps lead to social and economic exclusion and attendant poverty as the cardinal result.

Keywords: social cohesion, external factors, families, White Paper, South Africa

Introduction

This article reviews and evaluates the implications of South Africa's White Paper on Families (DSD 2013) in relation to social cohesion. To do so, this paper reviews and

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analyses the literature and legislation that are relevant to this study. This paper presents an evaluation through the investigation of the relevance of Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. It defines and unpacks the concept of social cohesion, and conducts a review of the White Paper on families, the legislative provisions, and the emerging practice of social cohesion in relation to the family setting. The evaluation of the position that the White Paper (DSD 2013) excludes the family thus affecting its role in the creation of social cohesion presents a number of challenges for the South African community. However, before focusing on these, it is first necessary to define the concept of "social cohesion".

Defining Social Cohesion

According to Jenson (1998), social cohesion offers a platform for discussions about economic restructuring, social change, and political action. This offers a wide amalgam of various factors that may point to the existence of social cohesion based on the platform that is offered. This is concerning the perspective that social cohesion "relates to the social relationships, their importance, proximity and strength in society and how these are embedded between individuals, groups, and place" (Mulunga and Yazdanifard 2014, 16). This definition, however, fails to provide insights into the existence of social cohesion and instead seems to point to the discussion that forms the conversation as the precursor for the lack of social cohesion. From such a definition, one may argue that the lack of economic restructuring, social change, or political action amounts to a lack of social cohesion. It is instructive here to look at other definitions that have been given.

The South African Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) states that social cohesion is the "degree of social integration and inclusion in communities and society at large, and the extent to which mutual solidarity finds expression among individuals and communities" (DAC 2015). Interestingly, this definition adds the concepts of "social integration" and "inclusion" as components of successful social cohesion. In line with this thinking, it follows that among the various characteristics which inform social cohesion, integration and inclusion are a requirement. Before a position is taken on the current definition, the explanatory notes that punctuate this definition ought to be placed into context.

The foregoing definition for this study therefore adds that:

> Social cohesion is a process of building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities in wealth and income, and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community. (DSD 2013, 4)

This definition borrows a negative approach in defining the existence of isolation as given in the first definition by Jenson (1998) as far as it equates social cohesion to the product of the mode in which a community deals with inequalities, exclusions, and

disparities based on propositions that fuel conflict, such as ethnicity. Although it leaves room for the contextualisation of social cohesion, it should position the role of the community or society in creating an enabling atmosphere for social cohesion. This leads one to look at the fabric of a community or society to establish from where this duty or role of obligation emanates. Questions that point to the social units of society are thus helpful in identifying the source of the duty of obligation.

Before unpacking the fabric of society, it is worth noting the definition of social cohesion by Maxwell. According to Maxwell (1996, 13), social cohesion "involves building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities in wealth and income, and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges." This definition highlights the instrumental role a community plays in the building of values that deal with social ills, such as inequalities, and in fostering togetherness, or summed up by the concept of ubuntu. This leads us to the explanation by Jenson (1998) who argues that social cohesion refers to the ongoing process that imbues the development of shared values, shared challenges, and equal opportunities based on trust, hope, and reciprocity among all.

Unpacking Social Cohesion

Unpacking the concept of social cohesion requires an evaluation of the aspects of belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, and legitimacy. With regard to the aspect of "belonging," one has to interrogate the way in which families share similar values within a household or structure (Chidester, Dexter, and James 2003). Another viewpoint is that each person seeks to know the way in which his/her personal life enables him/her to fit into the grand scheme of things to make sense of life (Masolo 2002). This position, however, is from a Kenyan perspective, a very different context to South Africa's violent past. This shows that identity emanates from the beholder who is able to see his/her worth from the bigger perspective of the community. As such, identity relates to one's attachment to a place, its people, experiences, ideas and culture (Mulunga and Yazdanifard 2014, 16). This poses a need to evaluate social cohesion at the macro and micro levels in social relationships. It is for this reason that a nation aspires to include persons from different international ethnicities as a conglomerate of diversity in terms of ethnicity and occupations in life. It is correct to state that belonging inculcates a spirit of commitment and the feeling that individuals are part of the same community as far as they share norms, attitudes, and values (Pillay 2017). This paper, however, places more emphasis on the church as a successful historical tool that transformed, developed, and changed society. It does not place emphasis on other contemporary factors, such as the family that might play a key role in the changing of society. Consequently, if belonging is missing, isolation may emanate as a result (Button, Moore, and Seekings 2018; Pitonyak 2006).

Another key aspect is inclusion, often referred to as the link between social cohesion and economic institutions in a community (Chidester, Dexter, and James 2003). In this vein, social inclusion engages belonging, acceptance, and recognition, on the one hand, and the realisation of the full and equal participation of an individual in economic, social, cultural, and political institutions on the other (Jones et al. 2011). As such, social inclusion should lead to improvements in the dignity, ability, and opportunity of every player regardless of his/her identity in a community (Mulunga and Yazdanifard 2014). It follows that if market practices threaten inclusion, the presentation of exclusion or inaccessibility renders a threat to social cohesion.

To this end, participation is instructive in ensuring that there is an optimum and basic level of involvement from all players concerned, in which the obligation is to ensure the betterment of the common people (Chidester, Dexter, and James 2003). This suggests that participation should be evident at the level of political administration for the betterment of the common people (Child 1976). If policymakers are not able to reconcile the challenges from diversity such as the participation process, the decision-making process may seldom be collectively owned by the community, a necessary component of the buy-in for social cohesion (Dekker and Van Kempen 2009).

With regard to recognition, society recognises that people are different and that these differences should be acknowledged. This is based on the position that institutions should nurture and use the differences as a source of strength rather than as a source of incongruity and rejection. Juul (2010) indicated that recognition builds solidarity in a community. Writing from a European context, this author's research is based on the argument that contemporary society is greatly individualised and culturally diverse. While this is true, it has to be tested against the South African society.

Finally, shared challenges obtain validity from the fact that social cohesion is a collective construction of juxtaposed individuals or individuals with various standpoints (Chidester, Dexter, and James 2003; DSD 2013). It is stated that Bernard's (1999) typology of social cohesion requires that every community illuminates the maintenance of both public and private institutions which act as mediators in times of conflict. These bodies function to ensure that, despite the presence of a pluralism of positions that embrace diversity, this constructs a collective identity and a sense of belonging. It would be good to state that if legitimacy is questioned, it may be interpreted as illegitimacy, and thus a sham link in the balancing of diversities in a society (Acket et al. 2011). The question at this point is, what is social cohesion within the meaning of a family and in which way is it presented in the family policy of South Africa?

Contextualising the Family

This section seeks to define the concept of "family." The definition accorded to a family is important as it attaches significant consequences to the lives of individuals. In this regard, governments usually define a family to determine the benefits and gains of later

programmes, such as in the contexts of the development of zoning and housing regulations, resources for health, life insurance, social grants, and educational, recreational, and mental health services (DSD 2013).

Similarly, some authors present the family as a small structure that may emanate from a household. To this end, Amoateng and Richter (2004) view a household as a tool that helps one to understand what a family is. They state that a household is a basic social, consumption, and production unit in which most people spend the majority of their lives. While they do not allude to the household as a family, they hasten to recognise that most families are separated due to migrant labour and what is left is a household headed by women or children. It is postulated that this attempt to problematise households and families presents the contextualisation of a family as a social construction that is informed by external factors such as the migration for greener pastures.

Reflecting on contemporary society's social constructions of family, Siqwana-Ndulo (2019) uses a parallel example to illustrate different understandings of family. In her first example, she characterises an African American family as "disorganised," "deviant," and "pathological" in the context of American society, which she then contrasts with the African context in which culture plays a key role in informing Africa's philosophical view of the extended family as a suitable concept of family. This is an indication that the Western nuclear family is informed by individualism whereas the extended family concept is based on a value system that embraces collectivity and interdependence.

Other authors suggest that the definition attached to a family may be as a result of socio-economic characteristics with regard to education and income (Leonard, Hughes, and Pruitt 2017); or family structure – this definition takes into account diverse forms of the family, which may include couples, single parents, adoptive, foster, nuclear, or extended families (Wagner et al. 2010); or the family cycle stages with regard to the existence of toddlers, children, and adolescents (Dobson 2018; Roman et al. 2016); or the contexts of the families such as ethnicity, racial, cultural, religious, informal social networks, or rural/urban families (Platt 2010). The effect of the adopted definition denotes the societal belief of a family that is "normal" and "acceptable," and thus, by implication, what is "deviant" or socially sanctioned (DSD 2018, 18; Rabe and Naidoo 2015).

The danger with this definition is the lack of appreciation of the realities of family life in terms of its cycles from childhood to adulthood. As a result, the interpretation pushes for a restricted interpretation of what families should be like, other than what they are (Rabe 2017). Family diversity is acknowledged but aspects of professional diversity in which a limited section of caretakers is recognised, leads to the promotion of narrow ideals of family life as simply a middle-class heterosexual component of society.

Following the definition, other aspects of the family have to be engaged to get a clear picture. This calls for a holistic approach that embraces family functioning, satisfaction, and resilience.

Family functioning relates the organisational properties and interpersonal interactions among family members such as communication, problem-solving skills, control of behaviour, affective involvement, and responses (Berge et al. 2013; Roman et al. 2016). This speaks to the extent to which the families can manage crises or display affection for one another (Ferro and Boyle 2015; Gorman-Smith, Henry, and Tolan 2004). It indicates that a family that satisfactorily solves problems has effective communication, allocates appropriate roles to each member with affective responses and empathy, and is functioning well (Davids at al. 2016).

The extent to which there is optimum family functioning may inform the level of family satisfaction (Davids et al. 2016). Empirical studies show that satisfaction is not an indication of complacency with the current state of the family (Roman et al. 2016) or the condition or the environment that the family is in (Newland et al. 2013). This engagement re-ignites the context of participation within the meaning of the family setting (Chidester, Dexter, and James 2003; Child 1976). The 2017 General Household Survey (GHS) highlights a number of aspects that affect a family. With regard to housing, approximately 80.1 per cent of South African households lived in formal dwellings in 2017, followed by 13.6 per cent in informal dwellings, and 5.5 per cent in traditional dwellings (Stats SA 2018). The survey does not question the nature of family functioning in the light of the different housing conditions. In terms of access to water, the survey revealed that 3.7 per cent of households fetched water from external sources, such as rivers, streams, and dams (Stats SA 2017). Despite the low number, the detail of where this small percentage is located and how it fares in family functioning and satisfaction is important to investigate.

Closely related to the above is family resilience that deals with the ability of the family to make meaning of adversity in the context of sharing challenges (Roman et al. 2016, Sixbey 2005; Walsh 2012). This brings inclusion to the fore at the family level as far as issues of acceptance and recognition are balanced in times of adversity from various angles (Jones et al. 2011) with the recognition of the dignity, ability, and opportunity of every one (Mulunga and Yazdanifard 2014). Thus, taking the White Paper into account, the family for the purpose of this paper is defined as a societal group that is related by blood (kinship), adoption, foster care, or the ties of marriage (civil, customary or religious), civil union or cohabitation, and go beyond a particular physical residence.

Legislation and the White Paper on Families in South Africa

This section adds voice to legislation and the White Paper on families. Whereas the legislative framework provides a blueprint that illuminates the aspirations of the ideal family, the White Paper accords the practical application of the legislation with regard

to social cohesion. As such, the discussion starts with the legislative framework and then the White Paper. The main piece of legislation that offers guidance to the family and the society at large is the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa 1996). It is the overarching legislative framework that can be used to guide the implementation of the White Paper on families in South Africa (DSD 2013). The aim of this section is to establish if the provisions of the Constitution present social cohesion which may be useful in the family setting. This is greatly influenced by the human rights approach as a strategy that may be useful for the development of families (DSD 2013).

With regard to housing, section 26 of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996) states that everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing, and the government is mandated to take reasonable legislative and other steps with the available resources to realise this right (Republic of South Africa 1996). While the government has taken political steps through the use of what is referred to as reconstruction and development programme (RDP) housing, a lot still needs to be done. What should be noted here is that the process at times presents discrimination and inequality as far as it does not embrace all persons, for instance, the White Paper on families requires that similar help to obtain housing may not receive it. In addition, there are arguments that the quality of houses given is dependent on the racial classification of an individual. For instance, persons in mixed-race areas are seen to obtain better houses than their black counterparts (Knijn and Patel 2018; Marx 1998). Hall (2018) argues that whereas social cohesion has become an ideal tool for social change in post-apartheid South Africa as envisioned in the White Paper, inequality and poverty is on the increase, especially among the majority black families. It is also argued that with high levels of poverty and inequality, commodification of basic services, and mounting social protests, it is difficult to deploy ideas of social cohesion (Desai 2015).

However, these authors fail to provide a detailed account of social cohesion in relation to the White Paper. In this context, the article argues that whereas the concept of social cohesion has presumed increasing significance, the ills of the past seem to continue to have a negative impact on families. For example, the recent GHS shows that the housing projects by the government are not reducing the percentage of households in informal dwellings (Stats SA 2018). The survey shows that 81.1 per cent of all households resided in informal dwellings in 2018, despite the increase in access to housing from 5.6 per cent in 2002 to 13.6 per cent by 2018 (Stats SA 2018). As such, these statistics paint a grim picture of achieving belongingness with regard to social cohesion. Furthermore, one's identity is affected by the kind of support he/she receives from the government, despite the legislative provision.

With regard to the right to healthcare, food, water, and social security, section 27 of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996) states that everyone has the right to have access to healthcare services, including reproductive healthcare, sufficient food and water, and social security. Central to this is the guarantee that no one may be refused

medical treatment. Unfortunately, South Africa's medical regime is contoured by medical insurance where the best treatment goes to those who can afford medical treatment in a private hospital (Grobler, Marais, and Mabunda 2015). While participation remains central to social cohesion, it unfortunately fails to recognise that everyone, regardless of economic status, is entitled to the same socio-economic benefits. As such, despite the constitutional guarantees, the implementation of the latter remains a challenge.

In the light of the above, a discussion of the White Paper is imperative in establishing whether it aids or limits the realisation of the available legislation on the family. It is important to note that the adoption of the White Paper on families in 2013 was South Africa's attempt to construct a working definition of families (DSD 2013). Various definitions were evaluated before adopting the current definition. As such, a literature review of the various definitions will not be repeated here. The White Paper on Families instils three priorities, namely: (1) the promotion of a healthy family life; (2) the strengthening of the family; and (3) the preservation of the family (DSD 2013; Hall 2018; Rabe 2017). For the purpose of this article, the authors adopted the definition provided in the White Paper. This definition considers the family's socio-economic characteristics, structure, and context, without paying attention to other aspects such as the family cycle, yet it proposes a life cycle strategy as a response to family challenges.

To this end, it should be noted that the White Paper promotes family life using the human rights approach through the engagement of sections 26, 27, 28 and 29 of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996). It is argued that for the realisation of the implementation of the White Paper, the government should prioritise the enjoyment of the rights to adequate housing (section 26), healthcare (section 27), children's rights (section 28), and education (section 29). A closer look at these sections in the context of social cohesion is instructive. This section looks at the implementation challenges and the practical realities of the right to housing, health, and education to depict the lack of social cohesion. For Hall (2018), a number of social policies related to family life seem to focus on individual members rather than the promotion of the family as a unit. Hence, providing fewer opportunities and limiting the realisation of positive changes to the lives of many South Africans.

It is important to question the place of social cohesion in relation to the White Paper on families. The question at this point is, what is social cohesion within the meaning of a family and in which way is it downplayed in the White Paper on families? To appreciate this question, it is important to understand the position of the family within the South African context.

The White Paper acknowledges the historical context and contemporary factors that have negatively affected families in the country (DSD 2013; Patel, Hochfeld, and Englert 2018). These include the apartheid migrant labour system, which separated families, massive unemployment, persistently high poverty rates and income inequality,

the HIV epidemic, and high levels of interpersonal violence. It is reiterated that this embraces the issue of belonging as a tool that adds identity to the South African society (Chidester, Dexter, and James 2003). The attachment that South Africans accord to their community, experiences, ideas, and culture (Mulunga and Yazdanifard 2014, 16) is thus very important. The arising danger, however, is the way in which the communities use the realities of social ills, such as high levels of poverty and income inequality, the HIV epidemic, and the high levels of interpersonal violence, to define themselves.

The White Paper also seeks to engage wide family support through the state welfare system and non-governmental services to ensure that their well-being is promoted (DSD 2013). This is evident through the application of the use of grants as a tool to redistribute resources between the rich and the poor. This may be interpreted as inclusion as far as the government pushes for belonging, acceptance, and recognition of all persons in society, despite their socio-economic status. The danger is the failure of the persons who benefit from this approach to appreciate and realise that they need to participate in the economic, social, cultural, and political institutions (Jones et al. 2011). In other words, their participation has to be channelled through steps taken to ensure that the benefits that accrue from the government are slowly and strategically put in viable projects that promote entrepreneurial skills. Whereas this is so, studies have shown that grants are insufficient, transformation is too limited to rectify inequalities in access to care, and does not distinguish between family types in the eligibility criteria (Hall 2018; Rabe 2017). As a result, widespread poverty among children and women continues to exist (Hall 2018).

Another danger that the White Paper illuminates is the skewed family structure along the contours of heterosexual, nuclear, and marriage-based family norms (DSD 2013). This is exacerbated by the vague formulations that do not place the family cycle in perspective (DSD 2013), which makes it difficult to implement the policy. It is rightly argued as such that there is limited recognition of the various aspects of family life that are presented through the family cycle of family members from childhood to adulthood. It should be recalled that the tenet of recognition in social cohesion demands that people be recognised on account of their differences, through the use of institutions that nurture and engage these difference as a source of strength rather than incongruity and rejection (Juul 2010). The White Paper's failure to heed the family cycle as a key component with regard to continuing challenges that face the South African child in the wake of single parenthood and extended families is unfortunate. Family forums, for instance, are a key tool for policy engagement (DSD 2013). There is a need to have standardised reporting methods that can be audited to access their outputs and outcomes. The continued lack of coordination from a technical position affects the engagement of the White Paper.

The White Paper urges the use of various approaches in dealing with issues that affect families such as the rights-based, the life cycle, the systems, the strengths, and the social development approaches (DSD 2013). This contribution places emphasis on the use of the rights-based approach owing to the transition of South Africa from the apartheid era

to the democratic dispensation which upholds human rights as a cornerstone of society. The rights-based approach envisages, "human development [to be] normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights" (DSD 2013, 36). As such, the goals include "achieving social justice, a minimum standard of living, equitable access and equal opportunity to services and benefits, and a commitment to meeting the needs of all South Africans, with a special emphasis on the needs of the most disadvantaged in the society" (DSD 2013, 36). It is true that judicial bodies are provided for in the Constitution to adjudicate matters (Republic of South Africa 1996). This connotes legitimacy as far as these institutions act as mediators in times of conflict and through the continued balancing of diversity (Bernard 1999; Hall 2018). The preceding challenges of identity, belonging, and participation collectively affect the legitimacy of these institutions as long as these aspects of the family are not embraced (Acket et al. 2011).

Meanwhile, the White Paper as the key policy document on families does not adequately complement the legislative framework. While the legislative frameworks depict the ideal society that can be formed upon following the law, it would be expected that the White Paper adds a practical application of the law to the family and other stakeholders. This is unfortunately not the case, especially with regard to social cohesion, as the two frameworks do not speak to each other. With regard to the White Paper, the non-recognition and non-development of the concept of the family cycle eludes the engagement of the realities of family life in terms of its cycles from childhood to adulthood. As a result, the concretisation of social cohesion through the recognition and development of the family cycle is not emphasised.

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is used to inform social cohesion. This arises from the context of belonging as a precursor to the identity of an individual in various settings such as the family (Mulunga and Yazdanifard 2014). This places an individual as part of the family in a position that relates to various macro and micro levels in social relationships. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory states that a child is affected by various environments such as the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystem (Kaakinen et al. 2013). The use of the child as the centre of attention is important as far as it relates to the need to place an emphasis on the aspect of a family that speaks to perpetuity and the continued existence of a family. The microsystem is the closest environment, such as the family, and includes the relationships, interactions, and structures with which a child can uphold direct interactions and contact (Berk 2000). It underpins the need to uphold the identity of the child as a key aspect of the life cycle, regardless of the nature of the environment he/she is born into. It follows that the mesosystem and microsystem have the most direct influence on the developing child through the interrelations they present (Bronfenbrenner 1979), with the active participation of the child. In this regard, the participation of the child is seen through the lens of the participation of his/her family. The attempts of exclusion on the basis of

undertones from the family cycle are an obstruction to social cohesion in the family setting (Chidester, Dexter, and James 2003).

The exosystem, an environment which refers to the larger community in which a family functions, highlights that children – as the vulnerable members of the community – are affected by the interactions in this environment (Donald, Dawes, and Louw 2000). As a result, the participation of the family as a tool to recognition is very important (Chidester, Dexter, and James 2003). This statement is an indication that children are affected by other environments that they do not experience directly. According to Berk (2000), the structures in this layer influence children's development by interacting with some structure in their microsystem. This definition takes the concept further by clarifying the effect of other environments that affect persons in children's lives. For example, parent workplace schedules, community-based family resources, and parents' relationships with their colleagues, may affect children's development (Kaakinen et al. 2010; Wilmshurst 2013).

The macrosystem refers to the political and cultural level of influence on the other levels of the system (Donald, Dawes, and Louw 2000) in which the child is the point of focus in the family. This adds credibility to the recognition of the macrosystem as the "social blueprint" of a given culture, subculture, or broad social context that is governed by a pattern of embedded values, beliefs, lifestyles, and customs (Johnson 2008). It is true to assert that the cultural, political, social, and economic perceptions of a given society affect interaction with and in the family. In this regard, inclusion is key to ensuring that the macrosystem is the link between belonging, acceptance, and recognition of a family, on the one hand, and the realisation of the full and equal participation of the family in the wider ambit of the economic, social, cultural, and political institutions on the other (Jones et al. 2011). As a consequence, the chronosystem denotes the dimension of time in an individual's environment (Kaakinen et al. 2010; Wilmshurst 2013). A well-functioning micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystem will ultimately over time in a space that cultivates belonging, participation, recognition and legitimacy lead to social cohesion in the chronosystem (Chidester, Dexter, and James 2003).

In the interim, the theoretical framework places emphasis on the way in which the child is affected by the various environments that he/she operates in, whereas the fact that social cohesion requires an individual to know his/her identity adds value to the relevance of the article. It should be recalled that a child is seen as a developing person who is affected by the contemporary realities of his/her environment. This is in tandem with the concept of the need to pay heed to the family cycle which involves the growth and development of individuals. The use of social cohesion creates guidance on the way in which the family should engage the issues of belonging, participation, recognition, and legitimacy in the various environments for the betterment of everyone therein.

Recommendations

The participation of families has to be channelled through steps taken to ensure that the benefits that accrue from the government are slowly and strategically put in viable projects that promote entrepreneurial skills. This would require that the government puts in place institutions that recognise and value diversity in all its forms in which any level of participation from an individual is interpreted as a step of improving the family in the wider context. This will deal with issues of exclusion and inaccessibility on grounds of lack of practical support from the government.

The White Paper has to be aligned with the realities of the everyday lives of families, in which the continued single parenthood and extended families are the dominant family forms. Issues such as the blank cheque affect the social cohesion that otherwise arises out of a beautiful system.

Furthermore, the White Paper needs to focus on the integration of services to avoid duplicity of services, especially by aligned and sister agencies. The implementation of the White Paper should cut across all departments, with monitoring and evaluating other papers that speak to social cohesion. Otherwise, the operation of these erstwhile beautiful policies silos while leading society to the continued shrinking space of social cohesion.

Other gaps that need to be filled include the need for training of the implementers of the White Paper policy from the national to local government levels and non-governmental service agencies. Such training will create areas for empirical studies in various provinces premised on building social cohesion in the family setting. This will be instructive to inform the necessary and practical amendments to the White Paper on families.

Finally, there are interesting and informative national statistics that point to limits and benefits to the family. The identified limits should be engaged to improve the well-being of the family. For instance, the right to adequate housing should be a reminder to the government to improve the enjoyment of the right to housing by uncovering the trends in the statistics on the distribution of houses to the different races and making sure it is carried out in a manner that embraces social cohesion. On another note, positive results, such as the improvement in the numbers of children going to school, or the improvement in the provision of water and sanitation (Stats SA 2018), should be used as a learning curve to replicate similar successes elsewhere. Conversely, the statistics should inform further research that questions the details in the figures, such as the extent to which the improvement in sanitation is a holistic representation of disadvantaged areas. This will be instructive to inform the need to improve the policies on families.

Conclusion

With regard to the main argument, it is concluded that the White Paper on families recognises the family in aspects other than the concept of the family cycle, a key component of the developing individual who should be nurtured right from infancy to adulthood. On the basis of this skewed perception of a family, the foundation of the sense of belonging, participation, recognition, and legitimacy is shaky ground. The danger in failing to ensure that these constitutional provisions are followed to the letter creates a lack of social cohesion. The gaps in the White Paper coupled with implementation challenges of the constitutional provisions that otherwise guarantee the development of social cohesion, lead to social and economic exclusion and attendant poverty as the cardinal result. This continues to be the product of inequality produced in a society in which wealth is concentrated in the hands of a minority. Some of the other dangers have been seen in the continued inequalities and discrimination in South Africa. The poor are excluded from actual or meaningful participation in the mainstream economic, social, and cultural life of a society. Other than occasional maiming of the individual's dignity, it restricts personal development. The chronosystem becomes the product of a dysfunctional micro, meso, exo, and macro family environment that requires social cohesion to thrive.

Acknowledgements

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