

CHANGING POLITICAL ATTITUDES OF COSATU MEMBERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract: The challenge of globalization and increasing competition has signalled a range of ideas and reflections on whether national policy-makers and organisations are capable of meeting the challenge of enhancing representation of historically disadvantaged groups. One of such challenge is the extent to which equality of opportunity is afforded to members of increasingly diverse labour forces in the global economy. In South Africa, the reconstruction of the country since the end of apartheid has made the country to witness a rise of new political parties – all promising better standards for the labour sector and integration into political spaces. Indeed, the involvement of workers in community and political structures, coupled with their loyalty to the labour movement, provides the foundation for a set of interlocking organisational and political relationships that strengthen partnerships with like-minded allies to advance the interests of workers and the working class more broadly. This form of relationship and commitment with the labour unions in South Africa has sparked up debates and new perception of workers on every issue surrounding the politics and democratic practice of South Africa. This paper evaluates the relevance of these new political relationships and labour development in South Africa as it affects its trade union members, particularly COSATU.

Keywords: ANC; Apartheid; COSATU; Political Parties; South Africa; Trade Union

Introduction

The reconstruction of the country since the end of apartheid has made her witness a rise of the new political parties. Their relationship and commitment with the labour unions, has sparked up the debate and new perception of workers on the politics and democracy in South Africa, if the new political parties are significant or necessary in representing the interests of trade union members. Second, the challenge of globalization and increasing competition has also signalled a range of ideas and reflections on whether national policy-makers and organisations are capable of meeting the challenge of enhancing representation of historically disadvantaged groups in organisations. One such challenge is the extent to which equality of opportunity is afforded to members of increasingly diverse labour forces in the global economy (Webster & Omar, 2003). Third, The involvement of workers in community and political structures, coupled with their loyalty to the labour movement, provides the foundation for a set of interlocking organisational and political relationships that strengthen partnerships with like-minded allies to advance the interests of workers and the working class more broadly (Hirschsohn, 2007). But there has been some profound shift in the political composition of trade union membership, especially COSATU's membership.

This article builds on The COSATU workers' survey conceptualised in 1994 when South Africa was undergoing transition and preparing for its first democratic elections. The survey was initiated with the aim of understanding workers' conceptions of democracy in the unions and in the workplace and how that understanding extends to the broader political arena. The survey also sought to assess workers' political attitudes and their expectations of political parties and the government they intended to vote for. As a method, the longitudinal survey relating to the political attitudes of trade union members in South Africa is here adopted. The longitudinal research method has allowed us to study the shifts in COSATU members' attitudes and perceptions of democracy over a period of time.

The following question guide this research: Has trade union initiatives brought about change in the mindset of its members towards the general elections in the country? What are the views of the trade union members in relation to the democratic system that is in place? And what are the available organizational support structures that are in place that assist unionized members to achieve work related goals and satisfaction? Thus, the objectives of the study: First, is to investigate the participatory trends in democratic elections by unionized members since the inception of democratic dispensation of South Africa. Second, is to highlight the perceptions of COSATU members on the current performance of the ANC led government as a system for improving its members work related goals and satisfactions. Third is to analyze whether there is need for additional support mechanisms within the current trade unions' approach regarding its dealings with the Tripartite Alliance.

A Review Of The Literature

COSATU was established in November 1985 and is arguably the largest federation, with a membership of 20 trade union affiliates, representing more than two million members (COSATU 2013). COSATU plays an influential role in the direction of transformation and economic restructuring of South Africa, and it is argued that its power resides in the size of its affiliated unions' membership; capacity to mobilize employees; strong links with the government; as well as regional and international credibility (Finnemore, 2009). The federation (COSATU) is politically active by having made a pact with the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC) within the tripartite alliance, and by increasingly forging alliance with other organs of civil society. The other two federations are Federation of Trade Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA), the second largest union federation, and the third largest union federation is the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), the federation subscribed to the black consciousness ideologies and a socialist system where workers are in control (Bendix, 2010).

The above discussed categorisation of trade unions has confined the role of trade unions in organising and representing workers interests in the workplace. However, trade unions' influence extends far beyond the borders of the workplace and impacts upon society as a whole, as Fick (2009) proclaims, unions fulfil a key role as the quintessential civil society organisation. Trade union emphasises on broader industry and socio-political objectives will further dictate its union approach or style, classified broadly as business unionism, social movement unionism, political unionism, welfare unionism and economically responsible unionism (Bendix, 2010).

How therefore are trade union members losing trusts in the unions' representatives at the political arena and even signalling the reduction of members at the general elections polling booth? Webster and Buhlungu (2004), pointed out that during the late 1980s COSATU was a real and effective leader of the internal anti-apartheid movement. However, the unbanning of the ANC in 1990 and then its success at the polls in 1994 and again in 1999, enabled the ANC to assert its dominance over both the SACP and COSATU (Webster and Buhlungu, 2004). Instead of COSATU and the SACP drawing the ANC into their redistributive politics, the ANC was increasingly drawn into orthodox economic policies, thus marginalising COSATU and the SACP's redistribute programmes (Adler & Webster, 2000).

According to Maree (1998), COSATU's strategy of mass mobilization combined with its engagement has been successful in achieving the objectives COSATU set itself. However, the campaigns have placed a stress on the relationship between COSATU and the ANC as well as on the Triple Alliance. COSATU and the ANC have also been at odds over the privatization of state-owned enterprises and the ANC-led government's unilateral revision of economic policy in mid-1996. Its macro-economic policy, entitled Growth, Employment and Reconstruction (GEAR), is aimed at achieving sustainable long-term economic growth, based on fiscal and monetary discipline as well as the reduction of government debt. The policy, which was praised by the International Monetary Fund, was criticized by COSATU which interpreted it as a weakening of the ANC's commitment to the RDP. This perception was strengthened by the closing of the RDP office under Minister Jay Naidoo, former General Secretary of COSATU. These differences have led commentators to predict that COSATU will end up withdrawing from the Alliance (Maree, 1998). This is in accordance with what Gall (1997) said, he stated that the South African Communist Party (SACP) plays a small but important role in the new government, cementing the relationship between COSATU and the ANC with its members being well represented on both executives. And it is to here that the most militant workers look for leadership (Philips, 1991). The trade unions could thus reasonably expect policies favourable to their membership from the government and some influence on/in the government. Yet despite this close historical relationship, there are already significant tensions between the ANC and its trade union supporters over the progress in meeting the election promises, particularly over industrial relations, strikes and wages (Gall, 1997).

According to Gall (1997), the likelihood of a failure to meet the election promises and the demands of black workers raises the possibility of major clashes between workers and the ANC and where union leaders are caught in an uncomfortable and unresolved contradiction. While the union leaders are under pressure to represent members interests and meet their high expectations they are also politically and organically linked to the ANC which imposes significant restraining influences (Gall, 1997). Given that the union leadership and leading left thinkers endorse, to varying degrees, corporatism and the social contract, the schism between those more radical workers and the union leaderships will only increase as they press for advances. A good example of this is the issue of privatisation. While many workers are against privatisation, COSATU was more angered by the ANC's lack of consultation on the issue of privatisation per se because it agreed with the ANC on the need to free up resources for the RDP (Gall, 1997).

Since its unbanning in February 1990, the African National Congress (ANC) has had to transform itself from an exiled South African liberation movement into a negotiating partner and government-in-waiting. This has wrought enormous changes on the organization and its policies (Nattrass, 1994). In addition, Nattrass (1994) acknowledged that amongst the more controversial of these has been economic policy, which not only evokes widespread reaction in government and business circles, but also raises major differences between various ANC constituencies. Economic policy has the potential to split the ANC and to place great strain on its alliance with the SACP and COSATU.

Gall (1997) asserts that prior 1994 many trade unionists raised the question of the likely dangers in a close relationship between labour and an ANC government. The central dangers, Gall said some argued, were that COSATU might become the labour wing of the GNUR and as a result loses its independence and strength and thus the ability to protect its members, and that the ANC could not be relied upon to implement any 'socialist' measures. Von Holdt (1993) stressed that "the working class movement seeks a good relationship with the ANC in order to influence it. This may make it difficult to challenge and contest policies for fear of rocking the boat." Finally a FAWU Regional Secretary Von Holdt (1991) commented, 'I am not too optimistic that the ANC will protect the interests of workers and that it will be in favour of socialism when it is in government.' In a different occasion, Gall (1997) stated that the tensions in the relationship between the unions and the ANC results from the ANC's social democratic-type politics of attempting to increase democracy, social peace and productivity within the free market framework (which it increasingly embraces), the dictates of domestic and international capital, and pressure from the trade unions for an increase in their members living standards and control in their workplaces and where the trade union leaders demur from pressing such demands, the actions of rank and file black workers (Gall, 1997).

A factor contributing to the changing political attitudes of COSATU membership is the level of corruption in the country. According to Hyslop (2005), since South Africa's 1994 political transition, a major feature of the country's new politics has been the centrality of issues of corruption in public controversy. From the embezzling of paltry pension payments by civil service clerks, to allegations of cabinet members' involvement in shady practices surrounding the procurement of multi-million dollar arms systems, charges and counter-charges concerning the extent of dishonesty in public administration have flown thick and fast (Hyslop, 2005). The Democratic Alliance (DA) has leaped on such issues to argue that the African National Congress (ANC) government is riddled with malpractice and systematically covers up for supporters who get caught with their hands in the till.

Attitudes toward corruption in the post-1994 political leadership were certainly affected by the ANC's 180-degree shift in ethos from advocacy of an austere socialism in the mid-1980s to celebration of the self-enrichment of new black elite by the mid-1990s (Hyslop, 2005). Under Mandela, and even more under Mbeki, government policy encouraged rent-seeking activity by black entrepreneurs through the economic preferences they were given through a whole gamut of policies, especially those relating to the awarding of state contracting and corporate ownership. The tendency of such policies, as Hyslop (2005) stated was to create a climate in which the line between legal forms of rent-seeking and outright corruption and cronyism became increasingly blurred. According to Hyslop (2005) senior ANC figures became increasingly comfortable with seeking material rewards for their past political contributions and old 'struggle' networks provided political connections that could be parlayed into economic leverage.

Many union movement and social movements are radicalizing and openly criticizing the ANC. Some keep calling their members for electoral abstention, as is the case for the Landless People's Movement since 2004, or for Abahlali since 2006 (Patel, 2010). Others are supporting alternative parties. From the Anti-Privatization Forum emerged the Operation Khanyisa Movement (OKM), which has managed to secure one OKM councilor in Johannesburg Council since the 2006 local elections. The leader of a Soweto branch of the Landless People's

Movement joined the DA, stood for election and called the branch members to support the DA in the 2011 elections (Sinwell, 2011).

However, very little of this vast range of work addresses the relationship between union membership or union movements and political parties – and in particular, with a mass party, well grounded in low income townships: the ANC and its allies (COSATU, the SACP and SANCO). While political studies of voting patterns have paid attention, mostly from a statistical and national perspective, to the relationships between levels of turnout, support for the ANC and protests, few social or anthropological studies of social movements focus on questioning union membership's voting behaviours and attitudes towards the ANC.

According to Maree (1998), during the month preceding the April 1994 elections a questionnaire survey was carried out among 643 COSATU worker members in the following five urban regions: Witwatersrand, Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London. The number of workers surveyed in each region was in proportion to total COSATU membership in the region. It is clear from the survey that COSATU workers held real economic and political expectations from the new government (Maree, 1998).

Maree (1998), said that they will thus expect it to deliver and hold primarily the ANC responsible for two reasons: first, because of the COSATU alliance with the ANC; and, second, because the ANC has been the major party in government. To what extent has the ANC-led government been able to meet worker expectations in terms of material improvements? Although no decisive answer can be given to this question according to Maree (1998).

Unions have played an integral role in labour markets leading up to democracy in 1994 (Armstrong & Steenkamp, 2008) but are now no longer faced with the liberation of people. Instead they are focused on closing the inequality gap in South Africa. There is a need for a shift in focus of the debate about workers protection from regulation to protect workers' rights and flexibility to the benefit of employers to social justice as the new focal point. Labour legislation should be able to alleviate conditions of the poor and bridge the gap between the poor and the wealthy (Theron & Godfrey, 2002).

Political Attitudes Of Cosatu Members

The research was designed to evaluate political attitudes of COSATU memberships as regards to its relationship with ANC led government and the general elections, at workplaces from across five provinces in South Africa namely; Gauteng; Western Cape; Eastern Cape; KwaZulu-Natal, and North West. In the subsequent sections I categorize the data under the following sub-themes: COSATU members' perspective on the 1994, 1998, 2004 and 2008; The political programs and workers' expectations of the system delivery; Union involvement in policy making. The engagement with these different themes will draw on data from interviews with members of COSATU as a way of offering the perspectives that they have regarding ANC led government and the general elections.

COSATU Members' Perspective on Elections Since 1994

This theme looks into the union's perspective on the past elections from 1994 to 2008. Whether the party the union members think the party they intend to vote for has workers' interest at heart. Secondly, on what they think of the arrangement of COSATU's entrance into an alliance with the ANC and SACP to contest the 2008/2004/1998/1994 elections. Thirdly, whether members think that the alliance should continue and contest the election after 2008/2004/1998/1994. Fourthly, to know which political party, members intend to vote for in the forthcoming 1994/1998/2004/2008 national elections. And lastly, to know which party, members intend to vote for in the forthcoming 1994/1998/2004/2008 provincial elections.

Despite the enormous support for the ANC led government and the Tripartite Alliance by COSATU members, there has at the same been an indication of slowly changing perception of the ANC as a ruling party. Even though COSATU workers remain deeply located within the ANC camp, and there is minimal support for the formation of an independent workers' party. However, COSATU workers are increasingly critical of the ANC's performance in power, and simultaneously expect COSATU to continue to give loud voice to their interests within the Tripartite Alliance (Buhlungu, 2006).

Judging from the survey conducted before the 1994, 1998, 2004 and 2008 elections by Buhlungu et al (2006), it shows that COSATU workers' support for ANC has been remarkably consistent. The voting preference by the survey shows that in 1994, it was 75% and in 1998 it was 75%, and in 2004 it was 73%. So much has been written, talked, and debated about the considerable differences which have been witnessed between COSATU and the ANC

over various issues since 1994, but still when it comes to election time, remarkable majority of COSATU workers are prepared to deliver their support to the party of national liberation. So much so that the 65% of the respondents of the survey in 2004 are of the opinion that the government is achieving the goals of the RDP, and a significant number of them are of the opinion that the national government has been able to deliver a marked improvement in a quite number of services.

However, prior to the 1994, 1998, 2004 and 2008 elections, workers were asked if they think the party they intended to vote for has workers' interests at heart? 585 answered YES in 1994, 509 in 1998, 492 in 2004 and 473 in 2008 respectively. 45 said NO in 1994, 36 in 1998, while 86 said NO in 2004. 13 in 1994 said they do not know (meaning they have no idea) while 70 said they do not know in 1998 and 2004 respectively, while 79 do not know in 2008. This result shows that there is a decline in the number of workers who think the party they are voting for has workers' interest at heart. This simply shows that despite the enormous support for ANC by COSATU members, there remain consistent declines in the number of people who think the party really have the interests of workers at heart, and this may simply be in accordance with what Buhlungu et al. (2006) said, that, to put it bluntly, there is simply no other party in sight capable of attracting COSATU workers' votes. Only 5% in 1994 and 4% in 1998 of COSATU workers were able to be attracted by the New National Party, and the collapse of the New National Party and its merger into the ANC has obliterated the that option 2009, which of course may add marginally to the proportion of the workers' vote which ANC may easily call upon. Interestingly, no other political party can boast of the allegiance of more than 1% of the correspondents of the survey.

Another significant decline was noticed from the respondents of the survey, when they were asked that COSATU has entered into an alliance with the ANC and SACP to contest the 1994/1998/2004 elections, what do you think of this arrangement? 527 in 1994 said it is the best way of serving workers' interests in the parliament, while 446 said so in 1998, 427 in 2004 and 348 in 2008. This shows that there is a decline in the number of workers who think that is the best way of serving workers' interests in the parliament.

Additionally, there is an increase in the number of respondent who think workers' interest in the parliament should be represented by the SACP alone, 13 in 1994 are of the opinion, while 22 in 1998 and 23 in 2004 share the same view. 97 respondent in 1994 said COSATU should not be aligned with any political party, while 85 in 1998, 114 in 2004 and 130 in 2008 agreed. 6 respondents in 1998 believed that another party could better serve workers' interest and 14 in 2004 shared the view but the question initially not introduced in 1994. In 1998, 22 thought workers' should form their own political party, while 39 thought so too, but the question was not asked in 1994, this also shows an increase, while 55 in 1998 do not know, 34 in 2004 and 55 in 2008 do not know too, but the question was also not introduced in 1994. From the result of this section of the survey, it shows that there is a significant decrease in the number of workers who think that the arrangement of COSATU entering into an alliance with the ANC and SACP to contest the 1994/1998/2004/2008 elections is a good idea.

They were at the same time asked if they think the alliance should continue and contest the elections after 1994/1998/2004/2008. 489 people said YES to that in 1994, by 1998 the number has reduced to 407, but increased again to 417 in 2004 and reduced to 390 in 2008. 19 in 1998 said NO that COSATU should not be aligned to any political party and a high increased number of 98 in 2004 and 123 in 2008 shared the same view. In 1994, 90 felt that COSATU would be better off forming its own party, but by 1998 that number has since reduced to 62, 42 in 2004 and 26 in 2008. 27 felt that COSATU should maintain its alliance with the SACP in 1998, 26 in 2004 and 11 in 2008, but the question was not asked in 1994. 76 in 1998 do not know, 42 in 2004 and 59 in 2008 do not know. 5 said COSATU should form an alliance with another party or parties in 1994, the question was not asked in the subsequent elections.

When asked which party will they vote for in the forthcoming 1994/1998/2004 national elections? There is evident that the majority are going to vote for ANC compared to other political parties, but then a small difference was noticed from 1994 to 2008. In 1994, 481 said they will vote for ANC, but that number was slightly reduced to 474 in 1998 and 472 in 2004 and 357 in 2008. But for other political parties, only 6 said they will vote for AZAPO in 1994, 1 in 1998 and 1 in 2004 but 2 in 2008. For Democratic Alliance it was 6 in 1994, 3 in 1998 and 6 in 2004. Inkatha Freedom Party was only able to record 0 in 1994, but in 1998 and 8 in 2004. 31 in 1994 said they will vote for The New National Party, while in 1998 the number reduced to 25 and further reduced 8 in 2004 and 2 in 2008, the reduction in number of people that said they will vote for the New National Party could evidently be linked to the eventual collapse of the party and its merger with the ANC (Buhlungu, 2006).

5 said they will vote for PAC in 1994, 4 said so in 1998 and 5 in 2004. No one said they will vote for UDM in 1994, but in 1998, 19 said they will, and that number was seen to have reduced to 3 in 2004 and 5 in 2008. None said they will vote for Independent Democrats in both 1994 and 1998 but 3 said they will vote for that party in 2004. Inconsistently, 12 said they do not intend to vote in 1994 but increased to 68 in 1998, and reduced back again in 2004 to 30 and 40 in 2008. 96 in 1994 would rather not say which party they will vote for while 104 would rather not say which party they will vote in 1998 and 2004 respectively, and 114 in 2008.

When asked which party they will vote in the forthcoming 1994/1998/2004/2008 provincial elections? Yet again, a remarkable number of respondents in the survey chose to vote for ANC. 469 chooses to vote for ANC in the provincial elections in 1994, while 468 said so in 1998 and 2004 respectively, and 353 in 2008. 0 number of respondent chooses to vote for AZAPO in the 1994 provincial elections but in 1 chooses to in 1998 and 2004 respectively, and 4 in 2008. Democratic Alliance recorded 6 in 1994 for provincial elections, 7 in 1998 and 9 in 2004. Inkatha Freedom Party had 6 of the respondents chooses to vote for them in 1994, 7 in 1998 and 9 in 2004 and 4 in 2008. 31 of the respondents will vote for the New National Party in 1994, while 22 will in 1998 and 8 in 2004 and none said so in 2008. 5 of the respondent said they will vote for PAC in 1994, 4 said so in 1998, and 6 in 2004 and 3 in 2008. UDM recorded none in 1994, 24 in 1998 and that number reduced to 3 in 2004. No one said they will vote for Independent Democrats in both 1994 and 1998 provincial elections but only 5 said they will do so in 2004 and 6 in 2008. 19 respondents do not intend to vote in 1994, 70 in 1998 30 in 2004. 96 would rather not say in 1994, 26 and 99 would rather not say in 1998 and 2004 respectively and 149 in 2008.

The statistics from the section of this survey has shown that there is evidently a huge amount of support for ANC and its tripartite alliance by COSATU members, even though there constantly remains a tension between the two, due to as some has observed, of the ANC's domination of COSATU as becoming increasingly abusive. This is in accordance to what Buhlungu (2006) said, that there is no other party in sight that is capable of attracting COSATU workers' vote. May be if there was another political party that was able to attract a larger number of votes of COSATU workers, they could have succeeded in enhancing the separation of the union from the alliance as seen by 38% of workers who felt that workers should form an alternative party if the government fails to deliver on promised benefits. The analysis in this theme corresponds with the reviews in the literatures in chapter two with acknowledged changes in the political attitudes of COSATU membership.

Political Programmes & Workers' Expectations

This theme looks at the structures that are available within the government's system and the expectations of workers in terms of service delivery. Whether any of the services outlined in the survey has been provided or improved in respondents communities since 1998/2008 elections; in which areas would the respondents like to see improvement after elections; what workers intend to do if the government elected fails to deliver; what they think the primary goal of the black economic empowerment should be; and lastly which leader in South Africa represents workers' interest best.

The outlined programmes eliciting responses, whether they have been provided or improved in respondents communities since the 1994/2008 elections are; better housing, higher wages, access to land, access to clean water, access to electricity, access to a telephone, better public transport, enough nutritional food, access better health care access to education and training, a clean and healthy working and living environment, jobs, provision of HIV/AIDS treatment, education and support. Respondent were asked if better housing has been provided or improved in their communities and 91 said there has been in 1994, 59 in 1998 and 61 in 2004 and 57 in 2008.

The South African Department of Labour (1999) notes that white people have a 104 per cent wage premium over Africans and that men earn approximately 43 per cent higher wages than similarly qualified women in similar industrial sectors and occupations. The perception of the respondent on the survey doesn't show that there is consistent improvement in wages dues to the reduction of people who saw it as improved over the years. In 1994, 72 said there has been higher wages while 45 said so in 1998 and 39 were of the same opinion in 2004. This shows that higher wages has not seen to have improved. 81 in 1994 agreed that there has been access to land, 60 shared the same view in 1998 and 58 said the same in 2004 and 43 in 2008. 82 agreed to have access to clean water in 1994, 87 ticked yes in 1998, while the same number of 87 respondents shared the same view in 2004 and 84 in 2008. Better public transport was not part of the question covered in the 1994 survey, but was introduced in 1998 and 2004. 63 agreed that better public transport has been provided or improved in 1998, while 61 though so too in 2004 and 57 in 2008. 77 people that were asked if there has been provision of nutritional food in 1994 said yes and 62 in 1998 believe so while 54 is in accordance in 2004 and 46 in 2008. According to Buhlungu (2006) workers will generally

participate more enthusiastically in national elections if they have confidence in the party they choose, and feel that it will represent their interest effectively in the parliament. This does not necessarily entail voting for a party with an explicit worker identity. Generally, workers are willing to continue to give their allegiance to the ANC despite being critical of some of its policies, notably the government's shift from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RPD) to the more market friendly Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme (GEAR), which many within COSATU leadership deemed to be neoliberal (Buhlungu, 2006).

Mills et al. (2012), stated that South Africa has a long history of private insurance covering mainly high-income formal sector employees. Enrolment is voluntary and on an individual basis. The premiums paid vary widely depending on the benefits option chosen and the number of dependents enrolled. Each private insurance scheme is required to cover a prescribed minimum benefits package, which includes certain chronic diseases and inpatient services. Although private insurance accounts for 44% of total health-care financing in South Africa, it covers only 16% of the population. The rest of the population according to Mills et al. (2012) is dependent largely on tax-funded public sector services, particularly for specialist and inpatient care, although there are no user fees at primary care facilities, there are income-related graduate fees at public hospitals, with some provision for exemption of poor people. Out-of-pocket payments are a small share of total health-care funding (13%), and most is in the form of co-payment by people with private insurance cover. The South African Department of Health has recently released a green paper to introduce a national health insurance, which aims at achieving universal coverage. The Department of health proposes a publicly funded system, which will purchase a comprehensive package of services from accredited public and private providers for all citizens. However, the number of respondents in the survey that believe there has been an improvement in the health-care has reduced from 87 in 1994 to 71 in 1998, 58 in 2004 and 56 in 2008. This shows that the access to better health-care in the communities of the respondents has not met the workers' expectations of the system delivering.

The potential for meaningful participation which the democratic elections of 1994 made apparent to the majority of South Africans, heralded a new era of possibilities for inclusiveness in the process of developing social and educational transformation (Loebenstein, 2005). It is clear that educational policy change can be best described as a strategy for the achievement of broad political symbolism to mark the shift from apartheid to post-apartheid society (Jansen, 2001). The core concept of access, equity, redress and quality which underpin educational policies and which against the background of the constitution, are often presented as having self-evident meaning, have however led to unanticipated ambiguities. Huge disparities still exist between former advantaged schools for white children and former disadvantaged schools, especially those in the rural areas where poverty in all its manifestations can be singled out as the most important characteristics of the communities in which these schools are situated. Lack of resources and lack of institutional capacity, both in administrative system and in suitably trained teachers, constrain the successful implementation of new education policies. Thus, developing the relevant infrastructure and capacity to support the transformation of education, has become a primary challenge (Biersteker & Robinson, 2000). Evidently so, as it was shown in the survey, as at 1994 the percentage of interviewed who thought there was provision or improved access to education and training was high to 90%, but in 1998 and 2004 the percentage has significantly reduced to 68%, while a further reduction was recorded in 2008 with 60%. Access to education and training was not seen to have improved by respondents.

It's a similar trend in the view of whether respondents have witnessed provision or improvement in the access to a clean and healthy working and living environment. 86% felt so in 1994, but in 1998 it has reduced to 71% and 63 in 2004 and 2008. Less than four in every 10 adult South Africans (38%) are employed on either a full-time or a part-time basis, and almost three in every 10 (28%) are unemployed and looking for work (Ipsos, 2003). In all surveys conducted since 1994 addressing these issues, unemployment and the slow process of job creation are mentioned as some of the biggest problems in South Africa.

It is also one of the 26 policy areas on which government delivery is measured on a six-monthly basis in the Government Performance Barometer, published by Ipsos. The question asked is whether the government is doing very well, fairly well, not really well or not at all well on "reducing unemployment by creating jobs". In November 2012, only a third (33%) of adults in SA have indicated that the government is doing "very well" or "fairly well" in addressing this issue (Ipsos, 2003). Although the supporters of the ruling party are prepared to give the government more credit for addressing this issue, it is still a relatively low score at 40%. DA supporters display more criticism of the government's performance in this area. However, it is clear this is not only a burning issue for those looking for work, as there is virtually no difference in the scores received from those South Africans who are working 34% say the government is doing very or fairly well on this issue and those not working, 32% of this group say the

government is doing very or fairly well on this issue (Ipsos, 2003). Similarly in the survey by (Buhlungu & Tshoaedi, 2012), the question of whether respondents have witnessed provision or improvement of job creation was not included in the survey in 1994 and 1998, but was introduced in 2004 and 2008. Interestingly, 17% said to the improvement of jobs creation while 29% said so in 2008, which means that there has increase the number of people who think that the government well in that area.

Better housing, high wages, and jobs seems to be area in which people feel they will like to see improvement after elections in the survey of 2004 and 2008. In 2004, 154 desired to see improvement in better housing and 89 were recorded in 2008 for better housing. 106 were of the opinion that they would desire to see improvement in higher wages in 2004, while the rose to 162 in 2008. 203 express their desire to see improvement in jobs creation in 2004 and 120 said so in 2008. This shows that more desired to see improvement in better housing, jobs creation and higher wages compared to those who want to see improvement in access to land, access to clean water, access to electricity, access to telephone better public transport, enough nutritional food and access to better health care. Another similar figure close to the aforementioned is those people who desire to witness improvement in provision of HIV/AIDS treatment, education, and support. 83 of them said so in 2004 while 75 shared the same view in 2008.

Union Involvement in Policy Making

This theme brings out the views of union members in relation their involvement in policy making. 322 strongly agree that workers cannot rely on political parties to protect their interest while 77 were neutral about it and 238 strongly disagree in 1994. In 1998, 318 agreed, 52 were neutral while 183 disagree. 346 agree to it in 2004, 63 were neutral and 228 disagreed. While in 2008, 369 of respondents agreed that union members cannot rely on political to protect their interest, 40 of them were neutral, and 213 disagreed. When asked which of the elected political institution best serve worker interest, 262 felt that all of National Parliament, Provincial Parliament, Local government, National and Local government, National and Provincial government are of equal importance in 2004 and 232 felt the same in 2008. Compare to the 122 in 2004 and 105 in 2008 who felt that National Parliament alone best serve workers' interest. 117 of the respondents felt that none of the political institution best serve workers' interest in 2004 and 101 thought so too in 2008.

Conclusion

The article evaluates the understanding of workers' conceptions of democracy in the unions and how that understanding extends to the broader political arena. To investigate the participation trends in democratic elections by unionized members since the inception of democratic dispensation of South Africa. To highlight the perceptions of COSATU members on the current performance of the union as a system for improving its members work related goals and satisfactions. To analyze whether there is need for additional support mechanisms within the current trade unions' approach regarding its dealings with the Tripartite Alliance.

Based on the evidence collected and data analysed, the following conclusions are drawn: COSATU members still pledge their allegiance to the ANC led government and Tripartite Alliance, but still disagrees with a number of issues with the government, such issue as the economic policy, which the federation feel very strongly about, including the government's wage subsidy policy. The membership strength and capacity of the union and COSATU as a whole will be a major determinant of what happens to the Alliance in the future.

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