A Functional explanation of poverty: the case study of informal settlements in South Africa

Ms. A. Lefatshe Moagi

University of South Africa

Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, Pretoria

P O Box 392, UNISA 0003

South Africa

Tel: +28-43-71-4787

Office: 012 429 4998

Email: moagial@unisa.ac.za

Abstract

This essay aims to problematise the issue of poverty in South Africa. The selected case study informal settlements include the genocidal platform for poverty in Diepsloot,Tembisa, and Abahlali BaseMjondolo. The essay will unpack the 'black' condition analysis in what is described as reducing the black community into the lowest class possible compared to the economic liberated class of the ANC elites who tolerate the conditions of poverty in the mentioned informal settlements. The ANC led government first priority was to rectify the apartheid policy of separation. This study will employ the functional explanation theory in theorising the rise of poverty in informal settlements. Functional explanations suggest a cause and effect ration analysis in two opposite approaches that are generally distinguished. Here, the essay will analyse the causes of poverty that assumes, if one is poor therefore you are automatically excluded from meaningful participation in society. In this regard, for example the mentioned community above, land is a means to address their plight of poverty. The study will discuss the dialectical distribution of resources and the perpetuated by the ANC within areas where is poverty stricken and the level poverty due to sociological factors is high. This study will evoke the "functional" explanation reasoning to understand the characteristic of poverty as experienced in informal settlements. Therefore functional explanation theory provides us with the solution to unravel this issue from a political and social point of view. The study will critique and evoke the policy methods employed by the ANC government of service delivery in the selected informal settlements. The study will evoke the précis argument offered by scholars who espouse the notion of the "black condition" in South Africa. The paper will provoke questions such as can poverty be eliminated?

Key terms: Functional explanation; poverty; informal settlements

Introduction

According to the literature the term 'Poverty' can then be defined as, 'an individual or household is said to be in a state of poverty when they have no income or have an income below the standard of living or are unable to meet their basic human needs' .

> Poverty is a relative term, a condition that can only be defined by comparing the circumstances of one group of people or an entire economy with another one. The problem of defining poverty arises since the measures one uses to compare populations will depend on a whole range of assumptions about adequate standards of living which some enjoy and some do not...... . Thus instead of being defined in terms of a shortfall in some national subsistence, poverty might be defined in terms of the degree to which people do not enjoy the basic standards of diet, living conditions, leisure activities and amenities which are socially perceived as "customary" (Webster 1984:16-19).

If poverty remains "functional" than it is difficult to think of a reason why there would be any desire to reduce or eliminate it in so much, that the government provided the masses with unattainable visions of being their votes and confidence. This overwhelming and ecstatic joy of liberation modelled areas of dissatisfaction. The paper will discuss urban poverty; we encounter (a) political and philosophical account of how poverty rises in informal settlements. The characteristics of poverty cause and effect is a situation where if one is poor, then automatically is isolated from the rest of society.

The ANC was delusion from a serious amputee of poverty within in the country and that it will grow to the extent that it increasing at this present moment. Indeed after the end of the Apartheid regime the South African government was confronted with issues of restitution and redistribution of resources denied to the black community during the apartheid era. The rectification of such resources enforced to destroy the black community. The judgment that historical materialism is indissolubly wedded to explanations of causes by their consequences naturally reflects my conception of the content of historical materialist theory. The consequences experienced by the South African government are set to explain poverty in informal settlements. The ANC led government are hiding behind a mask of service delivery whilst there exploitation of the masses who occupy areas those are marked as informal settlements. The issue of contestation here is why has the ANC government not thinking of eliminating poverty in informal settlements as a social security threat.

Poverty reduction projects have been long set out in the government's ten year review, Mbeki's government is committed to the Millennium Goals of halving poverty and unemployment before 2015" (Moller 2007: 186). Although there seems to insufficient concentration placed on implementing such poverty reduction projects since the beginning of the democracy in South Africa. The lack of proper housing (backyard shacks) and infrastructure, and high level s of unemployment illustrates the consequences (Kadoza 2009: 4-5). The intricacies concerning the high level of poverty in South Africa, is that the ANC led government has only been advocating for the reproduction of the black middle class, in a clandestine manner. Research indicates that is it approximate about 85 percent of black Africans are poor in South Africa and that is where the poverty is concentrated. Rather the concentration of the ANC policy is to reproduce the black elites whilst they fail to critically counter act and develop areas such as Tembisa and Diepsloot where is the majority of black Africans who live in impoverished conditioned. Functional explanation is the philosophical method which the basic principles of historical materialism are based (Agar 2003: 292).

South Africa has entered its second phase of democracy and 'good governance', since its proposed policy on Reconstructive Development Programme of 1994, and its major aim was to provide basic service delivery of material assets to previously disadvantaged communities. Indeed, this implied that housing infrastructure was a major priority. Although, according to recent report conducted on the issue of decreasing poverty, the Public Service Commission findings present that as part of the governments poverty alleviation programme. Their approach was to differentiate the major poverty types, such as income poverty versus assets poverty versus capability poverty versus social insurance. As a very attractive, since it would seem desirable to catogorise practice there would be some challenges to this approach. The main challenge is that it is quite difficult to categorize a number of actual poverty reduction initiatives; because one can rationalize that they address two or more types of poverty and there could raise a clash of systematic intervention of implementation of those types of poverty options.

There are several forces that contest the issue and rise of poverty in informal settlements. Such includes, migrants, where mostly illegal immigrants settle such areas, thus further increasing the mobility and economic structuralism of the community. In a situation like post-apartheid South Africa,

where the majority of nationals are yet to graduate into meaningful citizenship, the competition with migrants for the lowest-level jobs is keen (Nyamnjoh 2006:2). Here, "causes are to be understood in terms of constant conjunctions of events, and it is by virtue of this that functionalism is essentially an empirical account of how things are happening" (Agar 2003: 292). Although a factor of migration is another important element of poverty in informal settlement .this paper will critically address how the government over synthesis the issue of poverty and does insufficiently to curb out the problem. The government has demonstrated though introducing policy after policy dedicated to poverty alleviation since the dawn of democracy, although the fruit of that 'policy' has not been ripe.

 "The characters of the social relations and superstructure are explained by their effect in allowing for the further development of the "material" forces (Agar 2003: 293). The South African government policy recognises "recognizes the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, as evidenced by its attempts to address poverty in a number of different ways. The Public Service Commission has adopted and also recommends a working definition of poverty that is as broad and encompassing as possible.

The study deploys a thematically analysis in order to critically analyse the level of poverty that arise in areas such a as informal settlement, the major key role players here is that there takes into account the developmental aspects f informal settlements over time. Thematic analysis and grounded theory are methodologically similar analytical frameworks but the manner in which themes, concepts and categories are managed varies considerably between these approaches. They both attempt to represent a view of reality via systematically working through text to identify topics that are progressively integrated into higher order themes, via processes of de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation. Their procedures are more conceptually demanding than content analysis which employs a simpler ordering of data. This unit of analysis is able to offer the systematic element characteristic of content analysis, but also permits the researcher to combine analysis of the frequency of codes with analysis of their meaning in context, thus adding the advantages of the subtlety and complexity of a truly qualitative analysis (Yardley 2004: 2).

"The underlying precepts of poverty still have to be addressed in order to make society function, the factors underlying the causes of poverty have to be rectified and social security should be in place to correct these factors. That is, the causes of poverty have to be remedied" (Govender 2011: 48).

The issue of poverty in South Africa has been down played by the South African government for years. The end of the Apartheid government has done justice to the challenges that poverty has been escalated. Recent research has curved out the aspect of provocation the issue of how mostly informal settlements are the primary zones of this disturbing phenomenon. The question of contestation, is how has the South African government tackling the issue of poverty in South Africa? What issue is most apparent when speaking about poverty? Here the study will contest to the notion of how poverty has affected mostly people in the informal settlements areas, such as Diepsloot, Tembisa and AbahlalibaseMjondolo to name a few. Their plight is to receive land; the aspect that is more challenging is how the South African government has not been in the liberty of addressing the issue of land. To the mentioned communities, land implies the end to poverty. The reason is that there "have been inequalities in land holdings and the consequences of what effectively has been a persistent urban bias in development" (Bush 2007: 86). For the major informal settlements areas, people in areas such as Tembisa, Diepslot, and Abhahali Basemjondolo land implies that there will have adequate housing to be developed by the government. Hence, that is the problem as there are insufficient researchers to explore the key factors improves the lives and residents living in such areas where poverty is rife (Richards, O'Leary and Mutsoziwa 2007: 375). As for the AbahlalibaseMjondolo their key demand is for land and housing in the City' but it has also successfully politicized and fought for an end to forced removals and for access to education and the provision of water, electricity, sanitation, health care and refuse removal as well as bottom up popular democracy. To note, all these factors is believed to alleviate poverty to the community.

"Meeting these challenges requires a plan for security of tenure and affordable access to land, basic services and housing finance. This target is daunting but attainable. It can be reached by ensuring that the urban poor are the main actors (and not objects) of development, by improving governance, supporting and enacting local pro-poor policies, mobilizing resources and investments, empowering local action and monitoring target attainment (Millenium Project 2005: 3). Land, to such informal settlements will answer to the key features of overcrowding at the informal settlements, land where they can grow crops food production, therefore food production is key eradicating the level of poverty. "identified as being important, such as standards of living and employment, housing and basic services,

migration, physical health, subjective well-being including sense of belonging and social connectivity, access to public amenities, social problems and effective governance (2007: 387)

Structural violence and its nexus versus the cause of poverty in informal settlements

This is structural violence par excellence; the township is full of poverty as it is a construction of a colonial world. Structural violence raise interesting questions about intentionality and motivationsSome scholars argue to ways of solutions to this phenomenon, in areas such as informal settlements, is to increase the supply of housing for the people. This will imply that the government should look at speeding the process of acquiring land in order to build such houses. We have noticed in the surrounding areas of Johannesburg, housing projects system have been created in order to allow individuals with low income who would other not initially afford or rather qualify to buy houses are now capable of living in houses. Thus reducing more people who would settle in areas that are subjected to certain measures of poverty and proper services also such as overcrowding in spaces as it is the issue of Diepslot, Tembisa and the likes.

The conditions of poverty in informal settlement are something that is a challenge for the South African government. The recent research conducted indicates that several theories have been employed to address this issue, although not on all social. The key challenging theory is what drives poverty the issue of poverty. The contested question here is whether or not such key factors, unemployment, is major driver of poverty. The primary contends aspect in this regard is that education plays a role in the level of education that individuals receive. Although, this study contest that the issue of economic, aspects such as witnessed within the South African contest is that since the end of the apartheid regime, in 1994, such as the escalation of the economic middle class between the black communities has increased, if not reproduced itself from the leverage of the ANC government and its bohemons. Niemietz (2011), proposes a "new entirely way of measuring poverty. The author measures were applied, public policy towards creating conditions that allowed the poor to become better off. There had been no change in the measurement of poverty, the mainstream interpretation today would be that poverty as social phenomenon disappearance for good during the 1960s or there about (Niemanietz 2011: 27). But most analyses which model poverty rates as a function of economic, poverty policy-related and socio economic-demographic variables are based on relative indicators (Niemietz 2011: 73).

"Relative poverty usually compares a certain segment of the population with the rest of the population to classify them as poor for some threshold. For example ten percent of the lowest income earners can be classified as poor. Hence if their income rises together with that to the rest of society and the same factor, they will still be classified as poor (Govender 2011: 45). According to the research compiled by Kadozo (2009: 2), Tembisa and the surrounding areas of Ekurhuleni community, is recorded as having a high level of unemployment of 34% and approximately underemployment and 30%of the local population live in poverty. In the latest research conducted on the living conditions of people in Alexandra Township. It is reported that people there also dissatisfied with life as it is largely attributed to unemployment and poverty (Richards, O'Leary and Motsonziwa 2007: 381). Therefore the people have no desire to want to uplift their community as there is a poor service delivery of quality service such as water and sanitation. Neely (2010: 882), concludes that 'during the first decade of the twenty-first century scientists have been studying things that fit into the poverty relief agenda; their findings are either ephemeral nor impractical, but rather tangible solutions that are often linked to other non-scientific governmental priorities like poverty relief. Because the dimensions of poverty especially in informal settlement is a matter of lack of material resources that give rise to insecurity and helplessness. What the current research on poverty demonstrates is that poverty does not emerge because of exclusion, but because of poor people's 'differential incorporation (Bush 2007: 1).

Conclusion

To conclude, according to the Report by the Public service commission conducted on the governments poverty reduction projects in 2007, (see Public Service Commission), the report illustrate that the aim of the poverty reduction project is aimed at achieving a decrease in the number of individuals or households that are unable to meet his/her basic needs. Although the report itself has insufficient data on how that government plans to implements poverty reduction projects especially in semi-urban areas where informal settlements is a major issue. "The poverty line is a measure of the minimum requirement that is necessary to sustain an essential standard of living. Income that is sufficient to purchase the basic food and other essential goods and services necessary for survival. The poverty line has to be adjusted as the cost of goods that form its components (inflation) rises over time" (Govender 2011: 45).

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