

Constructing a democratic developmental state in South Africa

HSRC Press has launched a pioneering book for anyone interested in understanding the conditions for creating developmental state success, including political, social and economic reforms.

In this new book, edited by Omano Edigheji, a range of eminent scholars and researchers explore the possibilities and pitfalls facing the country in its quest for a developmental democracy. The debate around the developmental state in South Africa covers many issues, including that it is seen as a way of building the capacity of the state, and ultimately provide basic services to citizens. There is also some scepticism - including the argument that a developmental state can not take root because of South Africa's constitutional democracy. Then there are concerns about whether the state can simultaneously effect

policy reform and undertake institutional design. Also, that the developmental state is unlikely to succeed in a mineral-rich country such as South Africa, which are supposedly prone to the "Resource Curse".

The book engages with key issues, clearly elaborating the case for a democratic developmental state, with its central goal being an expansion of human capabilities - through investment in health, education and social welfare. In this regard, economic policy should be preoccupied with the same objective. For South Africa to become a developmental state, its macroeconomic policy needs to serve social objectives, and social policy needs to occupy a prime place in the hands of the state.

The structure of the book reflects key issues related to the potential for and challenges of constructing a democratic

developmental state in South Africa, with social and economic issues overlapping.

Part One covers the conceptual issues and comparative experiences from Africa, Asia and Northern Europe. Part Two addresses policy-making and economic governance in South Africa. Part Three deals with South Africa's macroeconomic policy and industrial policy landscapes. Part Four focuses on social policy and its institutional underpinnings in the democratic South Africa, while Part Five deals with the question of agrarian reform and its role in the context of a democratic developmental state.

Ultimately, the recognition of the importance of a democratic developmental state in addressing the economic, social and institutional deficits in South Africa is not enough. The litmus test is the desire and ability on the part of government to create

a competent administrative apparatus within the state. It is political leaders having the will to ensure that the necessary resources are deployed, and that policy and programmes are developed and implemented. It is having the political will to forge reciprocal relationships with trade unions, business, community organisation. In effect, democratic deliberations are essential to enhance state capacity to address developmental challenges.

Constructing a democratic developmental state: potentials and challenges (HSRC Press) raises interesting issues, accords praise where necessary, and points to policy and institutional deficits. As such, the volume makes an invaluable contribution to the debate. Finally, as pointed out, the current weak capacity of the state should not be an excuse to avoid building development-orientated institu-

tions; rather, it makes a compelling case for such institutions.

The book is available from www.hsrbpress.ac.za from R220 and is suitable for anyone interested in the political and economic future of South Africa.

