

WHEN LEADERSHIP IS UNDER LITMUS TEST

The cruel ambush of South Africans by the Covid-19 coronavirus has exposed the cadre deployment policy of the ANC and its capacity to rise to the occasion. This is surely a litmus test for the ANC leadership in government as the country battles to combat the spread of this novel virus.

Over the past decade, branded as state capture, we made relentless calls for the ANC to prioritise capacity and skills when deploying leaders to influential government positions. The deployment process within the ANC was, in the public opinion, nothing more than a dispensation of patronage to reward cadres with blind loyalty to the leaders.

Contrary to its predecessor with reprehensible trial and error tendencies, President Cyril Ramaphosa's sixth administration has ushered in a science-based approach to decision-making processes in government and civil society. We are now reaping the benefits of a leadership that frowns at rhetoric and populism in favour of tried and tested methods of governance.

The skilful and scientific approach through which Ramaphosa is managing our response to the current global health crisis bears testament to the capacity of his leadership. These developments signify that his leadership has both the political will and capacity to use scientific facts, projections and trajectories to combat the spread of Covid-19.

As Ramaphosa steers the country through difficult times, we should applaud his deployment of capable and highly skilled cadres in key sectors such as health. We should particularly pay tribute to the deployment of medical doctors to lead the health departments. The minister proficiently managing our health response to

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Covid-19, Zweli Mkhize, is an excellent example of strategic deployment to enhance capacity within government. The MEC of health, in the calibre of Phophi Ramathuba in Limpopo, is a capable deployee whose medical acumen is proving useful in the fight against Covid-19 among our communities.

The system through which government is coordinating a spectrum of scientists, researchers and institutions to provide scientific data to inform its decisions and guide public behaviour is a masterpiece.

This well-masterminded assignment projects South

Africa as a virtual laboratory of safety as we navigate the unknown Covid-19 territory.

Strategic deployment of capacity has also been extended to the private sector by the appointment of a world-class scientist, Salim Abdool Karim, to lead our research programme on Covid-19.

The strategy of placing the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) at the helm of data collection, analysis and information dissemination empowers our medical experts to play a pivotal role in the war against this virus. The NICD, which for many years was unknown to many of us, has now shot to prominence, owing to the leadership which values expertise and knowledge.

Unfortunately, we have a fraction of our society which believes in untested propaganda and unorthodox responses to this outbreak. Some of them are now blatantly putting pressure on Ramaphosa to relax the Covid-19 regulations without due regard for the consequences of their spurious demands.

While we are under a constitutional democracy, we must accept that government ought to take decisions based on national and public interests. This is the time for all of us to accept the command of those with scientific and technical capabilities required to overcome this virus.

Whether or not the Ramaphosa administration passes this litmus test will depend on our collective success in defeating the Covid-19 pandemic. For now, we are all obliged to embrace the new era of science while we are locked down at home and abide by the regulations.

Matsila is a member of the ANC in good standing