Executive Summary

This paper examines the extent of democratic consolidation in South Africa by gauging citizen participation in and voter evaluation of this country’s second democratic election. The debate around identity documents raised public awareness of the need to acquire a bar-coded identity document in order to participate in the 1999 election. The results also showed the extent to which the Independent Electoral Commission established itself as a credible organisation fit to manage the election. Its credibility and its commitment to a confidential voting process were important indicators of the success of the 1999 election. The broad base of positive support for the IEC among the voting population translated into a relatively high voter turnout on 2 June 1999. Although some isolated administrative problems were recorded on Election Day, South African voters received, by all accounts, a free and fair election.

Although the election appears to have been largely free and fair, fieldworkers’ observations pointed to some gaps. First, there was a need for an equitable distribution of voters between voting districts to reduce the incidence of lengthy queues and voter frustration on the day of an election, particularly in densely populated areas. Second, there was a need for the wide publication of unambiguous information in the most feasible format about the location of registration and voting stations to avoid confusion and lack of motivation among the electorate, particularly in remote rural areas. Third, there was a need for more comprehensive training of local electoral officials, well in advance of an election to enable them to cope effectively with enquiries and logistical hiccups on Election Day.

Elections are potentially divisive processes, pitting contending parties with their respective policy platforms and organisational machinery against one another in a race for votes (Humphries, 1999). Viewed in this light, the 1999 South African election generated much less conflict than that which pervaded the founding democratic election in 1994. The role of the IEC in preparing the country for the election was an important reason for the diminished conflict. Although all political parties, large and small, had negative comments about aspects of the IEC’s handling of the election, they felt that the IEC had “done a good job under the circumstances”. Senior figures in each political party repeatedly noted that the 1999 election was conducted in a much better political and administrative environment than the 1994 election. They nevertheless pointed out that the IEC’s planning for the 2004 general election had to start soon and not shortly before the next election (Humphries, 1999).
By the time the IEC announced the final outcome of the 1999 general elections, there was acceptance that South Africa had set in place viable systems to promote democracy. Many political analysts were not surprised by the actual results. However, there was some surprise at the poor showing of the Pan-Africanist Congress and the performance of the United Democratic Movement (Humphries, 1999).

Even though the ANC was expected to emerge as the winner, those who voted indicated that voting was one of the key pillars of democratic societies. Therefore, casting a vote implied the voter’s acceptance of and participation in democratic consolidation and social transformation. The level of acceptance and participation varied across and within provinces, between rural and urban areas, and even within a single voting district. Before South Africa’s first democratic elections in 1994, women constituted a mere 2.3 percent of members of Parliament. Largely as a result of the ANC’s 30 percent quota for women in the elections, 111 out of 4000 National Assembly seats, or 27 percent of the total seats, were won by women. The outcome of the 1994 and 1999 elections are presented in Table 2.

Support for the 1999 election was extra-ordinary. For the majority who voted, the election affirmed that apartheid was dead and that a new democratic society had been born. According to one voter, voting was the ‘best tribute to Mandela who gave so much to us’. Most of those who chose not to vote did so either out of apathy or out of protest against what they saw as the snail pace of transformation. The success of the 1999 election, notwithstanding the onerous registration procedures, can be measured by the high voter turnout and the positive evaluation of voters of the voting process.
Introduction

Since South Africa’s first democratic election in 1994 the country witnessed a large-scale transformation from a racially exclusive apartheid regime to a democratic system premised on constitutionalism, the rule of law, the protection of individual and civil liberties, institutions of accountability, and the construction of a new state with both a transformative and developmental agenda. These gains can only be sustained and enhanced if elections are held regularly, in a free and fair manner, and within a legitimate electoral and political system. South Africa firmly embarked on the road of sustaining and enhancing its democracy by holding its second election in 1999 (Muthien, 1999).

Election studies generally elicit a variety of debates on public participation, political socialisation, shifting patterns of political support and the socioeconomic underpinnings of voting behaviour and party performance (Crewe, 1994). These debates produce varying foci on electoral politics, ranging from sociological insights into the nature of party systems, to the socio-psychological explanations of attachment to political parties and the forging of political identities, to economic analyses of democratic stability and economic discontent.

The Democracy and Governance research programme at the HSRC has since 1994 conducted a series of longitudinal surveys on a bi-annual basis to test shifting patterns of support and perceptions of social issues and democracy. These surveys are conducted on a randomly stratified national representative sample of 2 200 adults. The surveys test public perceptions of national priority issues, government performance, economic policy, service delivery, the state of democratisation, as well as party-political support.

In addition to the longitudinal surveys the Democracy and Governance research programme also conducts election studies. The 1999 election presented the us with a number of opportunities: first, to assist the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to ascertain the number of potential voters in possession of a bar-coded identity document for the purposes of election planning; second, to measure the shift in public perceptions and support in the run-up to the election; and third, to conduct the first ever exit poll, evaluating the freeness and fairness of the election as well as the efficiency of the electoral machinery.

This paper summarises the results of all this work, the details of which was published as a book in 1999 (Muthien, 1999). The paper further discusses the views of political parties towards various key policy and electoral machinery issues, including voter registration, voter education and state funding for political parties for election campaigning. Senior figures in each political party were interviewed after the election to elicit their views on these issues. A key component of the interviews was their perceptions of and comments on the IEC’s role in guiding the
country towards Election Day on 2 June 1999. Besides political parties, IEC personnel at national, provincial and local levels were also interviewed.

Finally we outline some strengths and weaknesses of the 1999 election as well as their potential policy implications. The paper reflects on the processes of voter education, registration, staffing, voting and electoral funding, and proposes nine policy guidelines emanating from the study.

**The Independent Electoral Commission**

The first Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which administered the 1994 election, was a temporary body that was established six months before the election. This was the first time that an election in South Africa was administered by an “independent” body (Olivier, 1999).

Chapter 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) makes provision for the establishment of a number of independent statutory agencies supporting democracy. The Independent Electoral Commission is entrusted with the legal responsibility to give effect to the following provisions in the bill of rights: “Every citizen has the right to free, fair, and regular elections for any legislative body established in terms of the Constitution” and “Every adult citizen has the right ... to vote in elections for any legislative body established in terms of the Constitution ...” [Sections 19(2) & 3(a)].

The second IEC was established in the middle of 1998, a year before the second democratic election. During this period the IEC had to establish itself as a credible institution and to put in place.

The drafters of the Electoral Act (No. 73 of 1998) enshrined the requirement that all voters should be in possession of a green bar-coded South African identity document (ID) in order to register as voters. Since there was uncertainty about the number of potential voters who would be disenfranchised, the IEC and the Department of Home Affairs requested Democracy and Governance to conduct a study in May 1998 to determine the extent to which potential voters were in possession of the various forms of South African identity documents. The results would then influence a final decision on the matter (Olivier, 1999).
The ID SAGA

The Democracy and Governance survey highlighted four key findings: Firstly, about one in five potential voters were not in possession of a green bar-coded ID, i.e., between 4.7 million and 5.3 million potential voters. Secondly, about nine per cent of potential voters did not have an ID of any kind, between 2.2 million and 2.4 million voters. The third finding revealed that distinct regional differences in the extent of possession of IDs existed. The fourth finding indicated that the vast majority of potential voters who did not have valid IDs were first-time voters, i.e., the 17-21 year age group (Olivier, 1999).

These results highlight the nature of the challenge that faced the IEC and the Department of Home Affairs in compiling a credible voters’ roll and in delivering a free and fair election. The significant improvement in the possession of bar-coded IDs by March 1999 demonstrated the success of ID drive.

The results of a HSRC survey conducted in March 1999 showed that more than 60% of individuals who did not register for the election were in possession of a bar-coded ID at the time (Olivier, 1999).

The strong belief in the secrecy of the ballot among the voting population was another factor that led to a high voter turnout. Any doubt about this crucial aspect of the electoral process would have impacted negatively on the registration process and the comprehensiveness of South Africa’s first common voters’ roll.

Public Perceptions of the IEC

The IEC had a relatively short time to establish itself as a credible institution. The HSRC survey gauged the extent of trust in the IEC, its neutrality and positive or negative perceptions of the IEC.

The HSRC survey found that nearly two-thirds of those interviewed (63%) indicated that they trusted the IEC. Less than one in five of the respondents (15%) indicated that they distrusted the IEC at the time. About 17% of the respondents were ambivalent and an additional five per cent did not have an opinion on the matter (Olivier, 1999).
Furthermore, about two-thirds (67%) of all the respondents indicated that they had a positive view of the IEC. Only ten per cent indicated that they had a negative perception of the IEC. The positive perception was more pronounced among those individuals who had registered to vote at the time of the survey. Seventy per cent of them had a positive view of the IEC. A negative view was held by less than one in ten (8%) of the registered voters.

The survey also found that seven out of every ten (70%) individuals interviewed, indicated that they considered the IEC to be a neutral body. Less than one in five (16%) were of the opinion that the IEC supported a particular political party, while an additional 14% were unsure. This belief in the neutrality of the IEC was also prevalent among those respondents who had not registered to vote. About six out of every ten (58%) unregistered respondents believed that the IEC was neutral, while about 18% were of the opinion that the IEC supported a particular political party. A significant proportion (24%) of the unregistered respondents indicated that they were unsure of this (Olivier, 1999).

All in all, these results suggest that the IEC had been able to establish its credibility among a broad cross-section of the South African population. This was remarkable given the short period in which this was accomplished.

**Election Day Exit Poll**

Exit polls were prohibited during the 1994 election. The HSRC exit poll was conducted at 214 voting stations, distributed across all provinces, stratified by metropolitan, urban and rural location, and yielded 11 140 respondents. The age, gender, race and educational distribution of the sample produced interesting results (O’Donovan, 1999).

The intention of the exit poll was to ascertain the degree to which voters felt that the poll had been conducted in a manner free and fair to all voters and political parties. Although a “free-and-fair” poll would depend on how the IEC and political parties conducted themselves throughout the electoral process, the perception of the voters in this regard would be more important (O’Donovan, 1999).
Secrecy of the Vote

When respondents were asked whether they believed anyone would know for which party they voted in the election, 85% indicated that they believed that their vote was secret. Twelve per cent did not believe that their vote was secret and three per cent were unsure (O'Donovan, 1999).

Perceptions of the secrecy of the vote varied by province. The provinces with the highest scores were the Free State (92%), Gauteng and the Western Cape (89%). The provinces with the lowest (though still high) levels of confidence in the secrecy of the vote were the Northern Cape (72%) and the Northern Province (70%). In KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape, where there were concerns about the potential for violence, the majority of the respondents, 87% and 89% respectively, believed in the secrecy of their votes (O'Donovan, 1999).

Ease of Understanding the Voting Procedures

An overwhelming majority of the respondents (96%) reported that the voting procedures were easy to understand. In every province more than 90% of the respondents classified the process as “easy to understand”. Although there was a tendency for better educated respondents to be more at ease with the procedures, 93% of the least educated (those who classified themselves as having no formal education) nevertheless classified the procedures as “easy to understand” (O'Donovan, 1999).

Force and Intimidation

The survey also examined the extent to which voters felt that they could exercise their voting choice free of any duress. The overwhelming majority of the respondents nationally (99%) confirmed that they had not been “forced” to support a particular political party, and more than 97% of the respondents in all the provinces indicated the same. There was no meaningful distinction between the respondents by population group or gender. In excess of 98% of the male and female respondents of all the population groups considered their voting choice to be free of any intimidation (O'Donovan, 1999).

Among the 1,2% of respondents who reported being forced or intimidated to vote for a party, most reported that this occurred prior to going to vote. Only 0,3% of the respondents said that they were subjected to such influence while waiting to vote. Most respondents who reported being “forced” to vote for a particular party identified “family and friends” as the antagonists (59%). Another one-quarter indicated party workers as the antagonists (O'Donovan, 1999).
The majority of focus group and workshop participants confirmed that political tolerance was high during the political campaigns and on Election Day (Khosa, 1999). In contrast to 1994, political intimidation was almost absent. Even in those areas where there had been political contestation and political hostility in 1994, intimidation either did not exist, or was a mere drop in the ocean in the 1999 election.

**Problems Experienced**

More than two-thirds (68%) of the respondents experienced no problems with the management of the 1999 election. Among those identifying problems, the most frequently mentioned were long queues (6%), the need to register (5%), delays at the Department of Home Affairs (3%), perceived inefficiencies during the registration process (2%), and the omission of names from the voters’ roll (2%) (O’Donovan, 1999).

Six out of every ten respondents who complained about the omission of their names from the voters’ roll came from the Eastern Cape. Black voters were more inclined to have experienced problems than members of the other population groups: 74% of those respondents who complained about long queues were black, as were 96% of those who complained about the omission of their names (O’Donovan, 1999).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population group</th>
<th>Long Queues</th>
<th>Need to register</th>
<th>Home Affairs delays</th>
<th>Inefficient registration process</th>
<th>Name not on list</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0,4%</td>
<td>0,3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of identity documents were processed in time (O’Donovan, 1999). In order to accommodate those who might not receive their bar-coded identity documents in time, the Department of Home Affairs issued temporary registration cards. Therefore the complaint by participants in the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Province imply that not everyone took advantage of this.
In an attempt to speed up delivery, some political parties themselves apparently delivered identity documents at some voting stations in North West and the Eastern Cape. This created confusion and insecurity because voters were seen collecting their identity documents from a particular political party (Humphries, 1999).

Security at the polling stations was one of the major problems facing the IEC, voters and observers. Security in the majority of voting stations was generally tight and police and security officials were visible throughout. Police and security officials were not stationed at all the voting stations and where they were stationed, there seemed to be an uneven distribution (Rule, 1999).

Comparing the 1994 and the 1999 Elections

The exit poll also probed the attitudes of the respondents to the organisational efficiency of South Africa’s two democratic elections. The poll showed that the overwhelming majority of the respondents (84%) believed that the 1999 election was better organised than the 1994 election. Just under ten per cent of the respondents believed that the hastily arranged 1994 election was better organised. Six per cent indicated they did not know whether there was a difference while one per cent indicated that there was no difference (O'Donovan, 1999).

The 1999 election (unlike the 1994 election) involved a far more cumbersome procedure in terms of registration, verification, and proof of identity and citizenship (. Given this and the difficulties surrounding the reliance on volunteers and late changes to the voting regulations, the favourable perception of this election is rather remarkable. In both 1994 and 1999 women turned up in their millions to cast their votes during the national and provincial elections. IEC figures show that for the 1999 elections, over 1.8 million more women than men registered to vote.

Voting day: the verdict?

An overwhelming 96% of the respondents declared the election “free and fair” regardless of region, gender or race. The significance of this pioneering exit poll is that the voters themselves pronounced on the freeness and fairness of the election, as well as the efficiency of the electoral machinery. This complements and does not replace the more qualitative observations of teams of international and national election observers. It remains important to have an impartial international verdict on national elections (O'Donovan, 1999).

Voting in Action
This section presents the findings of the workshops and focus group discussions held on the election throughout South Africa during July 1999.

**Voter Education**

Voter education is critical in informing the electorate about the importance of voting and voting procedures. After all, an informed electorate is an important pillar in the promotion and consolidation of democracy.

There appeared to be variations in the nature of, and also the extent to which voter education was conducted during the 1999 election. For example, the Soweto focus group revealed that voters were exposed to voter education of various types. Several methods were used to educate people about voting: television, drama, announcements by teachers, and workshops by church groups.

In almost all provinces indications were that voter education only took place during the two weeks directly before Election Day. However, others indicated that voter education started earlier, although the resources allocated for voter education were inadequate.

Another frequent complaint was that those conducting voter education ‘did not have all the information’ and ‘were not adequately trained’ (Eastern Cape workshop). Others indicated that there was no transport to get people to the workshops in rural areas, and that the transport did not cater for people with disabilities.

The Umsinga focus group generally confirmed lack of voter education in that area. When asked whether voter education took place, one participant said, ‘None were organised. People had to find out for themselves.’ According to another participant, ‘[t]here was no voter education’. Several other rural districts similar to Umsinga relied on the radio for voter education, or on information from political parties, tribal chiefs and family members. Such information could hardly be neutral. Apparently more urban than rural areas were reached by voter education. In the words of a female workshop participant in Mpumalanga, ‘[voter educators] only concentrated here on the urban areas … [where] they’ve got access to the media and everything’ (Khosa, 1999).

Given the limited time and inadequate resources for voter education, it is not surprising that voter education did not take place throughout the country. Moreover, in some areas where voter education did take place, voter apathy prevailed. Some of the voter educators were alarmed at the lack of interest among young people in attending voter education workshops:
"… for instance there was an assumption that only the black people needed it. We also experienced a need amongst white voters. They also need to be educated around voter education (KwaZulu-Natal)."

Some segments of society did not understand why, unlike the 1994 election, they were required to register as voters. Young people showed reluctance to register; some claimed they did not see any benefit in registration. Poor attendance could also be attributed to the fact that most second-time voters had attended voter education in 1994. Some eligible voters may have equated voter education with choosing whom to vote for. Thus, as many voters had already made up their minds as to whom to vote for, they did not see fit to attend voter education.

**Voter Registration**

There were three rounds of registration in South Africa to ensure that the largest possible number of eligible voters would be able to vote on 2 June 1999. In general, there was widespread acknowledgement of the effort and energy devoted to getting a maximum number of people to register. With a few exceptions, there was consensus that, on the whole, voter registration went remarkably well.

Registration was easy compared to the verification process. For example, an Eastern Cape woman said it was easy to go and register but that to check up on whether her name appeared on the voters’ roll was extremely difficult: ‘To try and get into the computer [Internet] to check if your name was on the list was a nightmare. It was so jammed.’ She suggested that there should be more time between registration and the election so those mistakes could be corrected in time (Khosa, 1999).

Questions around designated registration days were also raised. In the Eastern Cape, members of the community suggested that one of the registration days should have been a public holiday to match the fact that Election Day was a public holiday and to emphasise the importance of registration. (Registration was designated for weekends, including Fridays.)

Those who chose not to register did so for various reasons. A member of a Mpumalanga organisation for unemployed graduates related lack of enthusiasm to register to disillusionment and ‘political disengagement’:

“They promised us we were going to get jobs, and then, afterwards, we never got any — I mean people never get any jobs … so we don’t care because even if you go and register, nothing is going to happen for us people.”
In the Free State and Gauteng, workshop participants also indicated that registration apathy was due to was the perception that once you registered, the government would be able to trace your whereabouts. This was confirmed by a Soweto focus group participant who said, 'I know some of my friends who are involved in crime and definitely avoided registering, in case the police trace them' (Khosa, 1999).

**Electioneering**

Party political electioneering was largely conducted through rallies, and through the electronic and print media. Electioneering was generally effective in raising political consciousness. Some political parties avoided areas where there was political hostility to them. There were interesting concerns raised that party campaigns were simply ‘vote-catching’, ignoring fundamental issues, such as poverty alleviation and failing to debate grassroots issues (Humphries, 1999).

Political parties quibbled about the magnitude of funding and electioneering available to them, which could partly be attributed to the fact that, in line with the current Electoral Act, funding was disbursed proportionally and parties not represented in parliament did not receive any funding to contest the 1999 election.

This situation was severely criticised by smaller parties who argued that party political election funding should have been allocated more equitably. It was argued that small parties should be nourished and funded adequately in order to secure the future of multi-party democracy. Furthermore, smaller parties felt prejudiced by the requirement of R100 000 deposit to contest the national election and R20 000 for a provincial election. Some parties criticised the ruling that 60% of the election funds awarded had to be spent in 1998, which left too little in the run-up to the June 1999 election.
Campaigns and Rallies

Some local election observers claimed that some political parties did not plan their election campaigns in time, which prevented observers from being present at their rallies. Others suggested that political parties should give their election campaign programmes to election observers by a specified date to facilitate monitoring. They added that this should be made compulsory by the IEC. However, some community representatives claimed that rallies were mainly for registered party members and party sympathisers, and not for any person who wished to get more information about the policies and manifestoes of particular political parties.

In some parts of South Africa, less political hostility occurred in the 1999 election than in the 1994 election. For example, ‘hard no-go boundaries’ which existed in 1994 in KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and Gauteng softened in 1999. Political contestation nevertheless continued in some pockets in KwaZulu-Natal. In order to canvass votes, rival political parties in KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape agreed on a peace pact. But, in some areas, such pacts only lasted until the media left the relevant community. Thereafter rival political parties would shred the posters of their political opponents. There were also instances where political parties were explicitly ‘intolerant of other views’, although not on a large scale.

Respondents in several provinces, especially the Western Cape, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal, claimed that they evidenced a war of political posters. In the words of a Western Cape workshop participant, ‘it was like a sitcom, one enjoyed the drama, the events, the political theatre of our time, the never-ending war’. The political contestation manifested itself in several ways: pulling down posters of rival political parties; putting up posters that defame rivals; and disrupting rallies of opponents. Nonetheless, these incidents were few, relatively violence-free, and did not substantially alter the nature and direction of political campaigns in South Africa.

Special Votes

Specific days were set aside for special votes. However, it appears that some of those who qualified for special votes did not get adequate information to make arrangements in due time. Those who fell ill on Election Day or had just been hospitalised were also not accommodated.

The procedures and rules around special voting were also a problem. The flow of information on special voting was uneven or voting officials were unfamiliar with the specifications for casting special votes.
Party Agents, Presiding Officers and Observers

The relationship between party agents, presiding officers and observers is assessed in this section against the Electoral Act, which stipulates that political parties have to desist from campaigning near polling stations. Besides, on Election Day, active political campaigns are banned by legislation, although this has a downside: It ‘removed the excitement and the jovial atmosphere’ and ‘basically every citizen goes by himself’ (Eastern Cape workshop).

The problems of the presiding officers and the voting officers were exacerbated by the number of people whose names were absent from the voters’ roll and the consequent sorting out and explanations. The inadequate skills and training of the presiding officers and voting officers seemed to be a significant problem. In some cases the presiding officers apparently effectively employed the observers as their advisors. In other cases the presiding officers and voting officers were exhausted, as they had been involved in the preceding three days of special voting and, on election day, they had to be up at 04:30.

In KwaZulu-Natal, strong feelings were expressed regarding the training and ability of both the presiding officers and the voting officers:

"We were trained the previous night and the election was the following day. And then the problem is that we just saw it on the board. We did not do it practically. But the following day we had to open the boxes and see them open for the first time. For me I was totally confused. I mean that we were not allowed to touch the (ballot) box(es)."

Other issues raised included the inability to deal with the legal powers vested in presiding officers, as well as the lack of preparation to deal with bottlenecks through contingency staff.

There was some animosity at certain voting stations between presiding officers and party agents. An Ikageng focus group participant remarked:

"In our district the party agents were saying that we should take money and buy food for them. We told them that we were not given any allowance either for meals or transport. We were just taken to the stations and the party agents were just controlling the presiding officers. Even if you were doing a small thing they would come and check what is it that you are writing."

Although the rules of the game were generally spelt out in the Electoral Act, unwritten rules and power relations were operative at different voting stations. Because power relations pre-suppose
unequal access to and use of power, the roles of specific officers require clarification in order to avoid confusion.

**Registration and Ballot Papers**

Although the IEC claimed that the voting districts were properly demarcated and the voting stations were well distributed, some voters claimed otherwise. A KwaZulu-Natal election observer asserted the following:

"I think really they never studied the voters’ roll properly … If they know they have got about four thousand people who have registered like Amatikulu, then they were supposed to make about four polling stations there and they never provided properly. Some of the stations did not have people properly trained there and there was a lack of security."

There were also a few incidents of registered people being denied their right to vote. A KwaZulu-Natal election monitor said the following:

"I know of some instances where people actually did not vote. They did not know that they had to complete the declaration form and the question of queues affected them … Some of the voters were not actually registered, so it was a question of training of those officers."

**Vote Counting**

The manner in which vote counting took place was generally commended. Counting the votes at the polling stations was seen to limit the possibility of fraud during the transfer of ballot boxes to a central counting place. Apart from some glitches here and there, the counting system was regarded as effective and fast.

As some of the voting stations did not have access to electricity, they had to rely on candles and gaslights. Some of the respondents intimated that this might have affected several rural voting stations during the counting process.

All in all, the 1999 vote counting was a major improvement compared to the 1994 vote counting. The problems detected by the participants should however be eliminated as far as possible in the future.
Table 2: Comparison of votes received by political party: 1994 and 1999 elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Number of votes received</th>
<th>% of total votes received</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AITU</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10,611</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACDP</td>
<td>88 104</td>
<td>228,975</td>
<td>2,60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>12 237,655</td>
<td>10,601,330</td>
<td>0,87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEB</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46,292</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AZAP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27,257</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>338 426</td>
<td>1,527,337</td>
<td>4,51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>86,704</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFP</td>
<td>2 058 294</td>
<td>1,371,477</td>
<td>0,67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MF</td>
<td>13 433</td>
<td>48,277</td>
<td>3,59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNP</td>
<td>3 983 690</td>
<td>1,098,215</td>
<td>0,28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>243 478</td>
<td>113,125</td>
<td>0,46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPGP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9,193</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOPA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9,062</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCDP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>125,280</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDM</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>546,790</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VF/FF</td>
<td>424 555</td>
<td>127,217</td>
<td>0,30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>143 869</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>19 533 498</td>
<td>15,977,142</td>
<td>0,82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

Nine policy guidelines for future elections emerge from this research. They are presented below as a framework for future elections in South Africa (Muthien and Khosa, 1999). The first policy guideline relates to the importance of voter education. It arose from the perception of the focus group and workshop participants that voter education had not been conducted widely enough. This problem was attributable to inadequate resources and lack of, or inadequately trained, personnel. Hence voter education should be a central objective in the total electoral process, and should be conducted under the broad management of the IEC. It should be funded appropriately and timely and should be particularly targeted at rural and illiterate people. It should be
introduced well ahead of an election or, better still, be continuously presented as part of more general “democracy education”. Experienced voter education trainers should be employed for this task, but the co-operation of non-governmental organisations and the Department of Education should be sought in this regard. Voter education materials should also be translated into the prevailing local languages.

The second policy guideline relates to the importance of registration and the effective maintenance of voters’ rolls. Registration proved to be an important step in counteracting fraud, which could have jeopardised the outcome of the election. Despite the success of the 1999 registration, streamlining is still required. Voters’ rolls should be updated continually and by various actors, the IEC, political parties, the Department of Home Affairs, local authorities and voters themselves, when listed addresses are changed. Alternatively, a large number of temporary officials should be recruited to conduct door-to-door registration shortly before an election. In any event, registration of non-registered voters for the up-coming local government elections should start now. The actual address of voting stations should also be provided in time to avoid confusion on Election Day. The IEC should also consider a special programme of registering the elderly and the disabled.

The third policy guideline relates to the importance of providing relevant, thorough and timely training to electoral staff, especially those to be deployed at the local voting stations. This is crucial to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and understanding to be effective as election observers or presiding officers, and to avoid role confusion. The certification of trained officials would simplify recruitment during subsequent elections.

The fourth policy guideline relates to the need to reconsider voting district demarcation. In 1999, voting stations in black townships, informal settlement areas and inner city areas tended to experience overcrowding and very long queues. It is essential that the limitation on the number of voters per voting district be limited to manageable numbers. The IEC should therefore bring the demarcation of voting districts in line with the number of registered voters per voting district, but to limit changes to a minimum as voters are easily confused by such changes.

The fifth policy guideline relates to the counting of votes. Evidence shows that many of the officials on duty at the voting stations on Election Day were too exhausted to count votes. Appointing a fresh team to handle the counting process could solve this problem.

The sixth policy guideline relates to the clarification and streamlining of the procedures and requirements for declaration and special votes. Most importantly, communication about these to voters and officials well in advance of an election in order to avoid the confusion that occurred
in June 1999 is essential. Declaration and special votes should only be permitted under the most stringent conditions, otherwise the quality of voters’ rolls might be compromised and the number of votes cast would be suspect.

The seventh policy guideline underscores the importance of collaboration, partnership and joint ventures in working on large-scale projects such as an election. The mammoth task given to the IEC was generally executed through the collaboration of government, the private sector and civil society. The challenge is to cultivate a spirit of collaboration among all levels of society to enhance the electoral process in the future.

The eighth policy guideline relates to electoral funding. Political parties with adequate funding were able to reach larger numbers of voters than small political parties with less funding. The existing legislative framework around electoral funding requires a fundamental review, with due regard being given to international practice and the promotion of multi-party democracy and competition.

The independent evaluation of the election process constitutes the ninth policy guideline. Electioneering was conducted through the media, rallies, poster adverts and billboards on major streets. Apart from the monitoring of media reports on election events by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), the election process was also monitored by several non-governmental organisations. Indeed, the IEC harnessed its resources well to monitor the election process in order to protect the credibility of the election. The degree to which monitors of the election campaign were representative of the spectrum of parties involved in the election differed from place to place, though.

This paper has illustrated the state of citizen participation in and voter evaluation of the 1999 election. Not only have the key statutory institutions that buttress democracy been established under the constitution, but also public support for these institutions is substantial. The extent of habituation to, or institutionalisation of, participation in both public and civil society institutions augurs well for the consolidation of democracy in South Africa. Furthermore, the confidence of the electorate in the ability of the IEC to deliver a free and fair election, and its satisfaction with the IEC’s administration of the election process are noteworthy. However, the distribution of voter concentration, queuing time, electoral administration, planning and logistics will have to be attended to before the forthcoming local government elections.
References


