



VOLUME 20 ISSUE 3

# Administratio Publica



**ASSADPAM**

Journal of the Association of  
Southern African Schools and Departments  
of Public Administration and Management

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ISSN 1015-4833

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Administratio Publica is a double blind, peer-reviewed journal accredited with the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DoHET) and produced four times a year and aims to promote academic scholarship in public administration and management and related fields. Analytical articles in the form of original theoretical and empirical articles, debates, research viewpoints, review articles and book reviews in English will be considered for publication (only contributions of paid-up members of ASSADPAM will be published).

## Page fees and Journal subscription

- Individual and institutional subscription 2012: Local R500.00 per volume (postage of R128.00 per volume excluded) or R125.00 per issue (postage excluded); Foreign – \$100.00; €77.00 (postage of \$45 or €35 per volume excluded).
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# Editorial

**N Holtzhausen**

Chief Editor

School of Public Administration and Management  
University of Pretoria

North West Premier Thandi Modise stated that "... universities are pivotal to developing a nation. They produce new knowledge, critique information and find new local and global applications of the existing knowledge. They also set norms and standards, ethics and philosophy underpinning a nation's knowledge capital". In this issue of *Administratio Publica* a wide range of topics are covered. Two of the articles contain aspects relating to research methodology and another stresses the importance of curriculum and argues for greater specialisation. One more article shares the importance of gender. We are reminded that the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill developed by the Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, will assist to enforce women employment compliance in both government and the private sector (Xingwana 2012). In the search for new knowledge one article explores nursing staff turnover in hospitals in Limpopo and another explores the actual challenges in Municipal Supply Chain management. The Kwanaloga Games of Kwazulu-Natal represents a case to illustrate lessons that can be learned for developmental local government. Keeping with municipalities, two of the articles in this issue focus on aspects relating to local government: transformation and the developmental state and the role of government in such a state. Premier Modise also stated that "Achieving a developmental state must be demonstrated through commitment to economic growth, eradication of poverty and reduction of inequality, creating jobs, and eradicating crime and corruption. The targets set in both the New Growth Path and the National Development Plan, however, can only be met if issues of good governance in general and corruption in particular are addressed successfully". It is imperative that researchers explore and find empirical answers to the issues at hand.

## **FACTORS CAUSING NURSING TURNOVER AT FOUR PUBLIC HOSPITALS WITHIN THE LIMPOPO SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT**

The article, "**Factors causing nursing turnover at four public hospitals within the Limpopo Sekhukhune District**" written by Daniel Matlala and Johan van

der Westhuizen focuses on the factors causing voluntary nursing turnover as manifested among professional nurses in four Sekhukhune District hospitals of the Limpopo Department of Health and Social Development. A qualitative study was conducted, using Lewin's theory of institutional change, with job dissatisfaction as the primary construct. The findings indicate that the following factors are identified as the root causes for turnover: poor working conditions, unhealthy relationships between managers and nursing, ineffectiveness of management support for training, and unsatisfactory performance appraisal and grievance handling (Matlala and van der Westhuizen 2012).

## **PHENOMENOLOGY AS A RESEARCH DESIGN IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: FITNESS FOR PURPOSE**

Xolile Thani aims to determine the importance of phenomenology as a credible research design in Public Administration research in her article titled **"Phenomenology as a research design in Public Administration: fitness for purpose"**. Thani states that the use of phenomenology in certain types of research is necessary. The article argues that consultative approaches and public participation have been encouraged since the first democratic elections in South Africa. Considering the nature of Public Administration, it is important to effect changes in the ways research is conducted to comply with practical policy requirements. Research conducted within a phenomenological framework will assist public administrators in solving societal problems. This article serves as a call to Public Administration researchers to use appropriate research methods with applicable research designs. Willis in Thani (2012) asserts that in phenomenological studies it is important to ask questions such as: "What was it like?" and "How did you feel and what did you make of the experience?"

## **THE PROMOTION OF DEVELOPMENTAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO FACILITATE A DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

Onkgopotse Madumo's article (2012) **"The promotion of developmental local government to facilitate a developmental state"** investigates the possibilities of utilising municipalities as efficient structures towards building a developmental state. It is argued that municipalities do indeed have a developmental role to play in the total construction of a developmental state. The article evaluates the policies instituted by the South African government since the introduction of a democratic dispensation, with the intention of fast-tracking the development

of the country, thus ensuring the creation of a developmental state. Madumo emphasises the extent to which these developmental policies have outlined the role to be played by the local sphere of government in a developmental state. Such policies include the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (1994), the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) initiative (1996), the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (AsgiSA) (2005), and the New Growth Path (NGP) (2010). Madumo identifies the following challenges facing municipalities (which resonates with the findings of Horn and Raga as well as Thornhill): corruption and maladministration; a lack of administrative capacity to deliver the required services; a lack of financial control systems to ensure transparency and accountability; and a lack of political stability, which has an impact on sustainable policy direction. According to Madumo (2012), public participation aims to achieve a developmental local government, thereby creating an environment that is conducive to growth. For growth to ensue, it is important for municipalities to understand the needs of the community and to create effective opportunities for participation.

## **THE KWANALOGA GAMES OF KWAZULU-NATAL: A CASE STUDY OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND LESSONS FOR DEVELOPMENTAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Zandile Nhlabathi and Betty Mubangizi explore the Kwanaloga Games that take place annually under the aegis of the KwaZulu-Natal Local Government Association (KWANALOGA). Based on interviews conducted with a range of stakeholders associated with the Games, their article **“The Kwanaloga Games of Kwazulu-Natal: A case study of intergovernmental relations and lessons for developmental local government”** examines processes, procedures and collaboration between the different spheres of government and sports bodies associated with the staging and management of the Kwanaloga Games. The findings are analysed in relation to a theoretical framework of intergovernmental relations and multi-level governance. The Kwanaloga Games are an example of successful collaboration between different spheres of government. The article concludes with suggestions on how lessons drawn from the collaborative running and management of the Kwanaloga Games can guide the same governmental participants to align their objectives, processes and resources in a comparable way. This should allow the delivery of more extended developmental outcomes for local government. It is suggested, among others, that this be done by sharing of leadership skills, facilitation and capacity building – combined with organisational and management development (Nhlabathi and Mubangizi 2012).

## **MUNICIPAL SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY**

The major practical challenges identified by Gideon Horn and Kishore Raga in their article, “**Municipal supply chain management: challenges and solutions: An empirical study**” offers a practical perspective on Municipal Supply Chain Management”. The identified factors are: political interference; the appointment of inexperienced and unqualified officials and contractors; qualified technical and professional experts not being members of the respective bid committees; ignorance and lack of understanding of the Municipal SCM policy; and non-compliance of the Municipal Supply Chain Management policy. The objectives of this article were to identify the main practical challenges and problems experienced with the execution of Municipal Supply Chain Management policy, and to propose practical solutions to address the identified challenges and problems (Horn and Raga 2012).

## **CONTEMPLATING THE BIG FIVE QUESTIONS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT CURRICULATION**

Gerrit van der Waldt makes use of the principles of Complexity Theory, to facilitate curriculum endeavors in Public Administration and Management by means of five ‘big’ questions that should be contemplated by all those involved in curriculum decisions. These five questions are: What is the nature of the (South African) state? What is the nature of a (South African) university? What is the nature of the discipline? What is the nature of paradigmatic developments in the discipline? What is the nature of the content of the discipline? The article, “**Contemplating the big five questions in Public Administration and Management curriculum**” does not attempt to provide answers to these questions, but rather serves as guide to stimulate a curriculum discourse by posing the ‘right’ questions. It is argued that these questions will contextualise any decisions regarding curriculum and could contribute to the discourse on relevancy regarding Public Administration and Management teaching at tertiary institutions in South Africa. The aim of these questions is to assist role-players in their curriculum efforts. It is argued that such questions will contextualise any decisions regarding curriculum and could contribute to the discourse on relevancy regarding Public Administration and Management teaching at tertiary institutions in South Africa. Van der Waldt argued that South Africa will only benefit if universities offering Public Administration and Management could decide on their particular niche focuses based on the expertise of their particular staff

compliment. This would provide students with wider choices to specialise in and enable them to choose a specific university that offers their preferred choice. The developmental state will benefit from having future public administrators, managers and leaders who are generalists (with knowledge of the discipline), but also specialists (with knowledge of certain applications or functional areas within the discipline) (Van der Waldt 2012).

## **RESHAPING POWER – SOUTH AFRICA’S GENDER MACHINERY REVIEWED**

In the 2012 State of the Nation Address, the President acknowledged “women as one of the groups that suffer under the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality, but this does not translate into a plan that will substantively improve the lives of women” (Hendrickse 2012). This article adopts a descriptive research approach to evaluate the main achievements and limitations of the mechanisms and processes that were established to promote greater gender equity and women’s empowerment in governance in South Africa in the period since 1994. In her article, **“Reshaping power – South Africa’s gender machinery reviewed”** Rozenda Hendrickse uses the analytical model designed by Stetson and Mazur (in Hendrickse 2012) to test, whether, what they call ‘national policy machineries’ contribute to gender equality. These dimensions are:

- State capacity: to what extent do women’s policy machineries influence policy-making from a gender perspective?
- State-society relations: “to what extent do women’s policy machineries develop opportunities for society-based actors – feminist and women’s advocacy organisations – to access the policy process”? (Stetson and Mazur in Hendrickse 2012).

Hendrickse argues that a perpetual lack of human resource capacity and inadequate financial resources continue to undermine the work of the Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality branch of the Ministry. She also calls for a more coordinated approach and better reporting mechanisms.

## **IMPROVING LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

In his article **“Improving Local Government Transformation in South Africa”**, Chris Thornhill focuses on the transformational developments in South Africa

by identifying needs and supporting governmental interventions. These new demands add a new dimension to the concept of governance in the local sphere, as all governmental actions have a local implication. This article makes use of African and South African examples to illustrate the need for a better quality leadership that will enable more efficient and effective service delivery. The article aims to consider governmental structures' capacity to deliver public services effectively and efficiently and the factors that inhibit their efforts. The article discusses the local government system in South Africa in order to explain the extent of the concept in delivering services of a local nature. Selected phenomena, such as financial capacity, human capital, service delivery and corruption in the African state and in particular in South Africa, are discussed to illustrate the challenges faced by the elected representatives as well as the appointed managers (Thornhill 2012).

## **CONCEPTUALISING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH THROUGH A SPIRAL OF MEANING-MAKING**

This article concerns the conceptualisation of qualitative research. A researcher uses methods, tools and techniques to creatively stitch, edit, and put slices of reality together with the aim to create new understanding. In this process, the qualitative researcher is constantly reflecting, interpreting and comparing new information to what is already known and understood. This article, **“Conceptualising qualitative research through a spiral of meaning-making”** stresses the meaningful interrelationship between concepts, theory, practice and experience, in the process of meaning-making in qualitative research. The importance of existing knowledge, the researcher's background and stance (ontology and epistemology) and the conscious engagement of the researcher with him/herself in a critical reflexive process to develop new knowledge and direction to act upon are discussed. The article written by Christelle Auriacombe and Evanthe Schurink attempts to unravel the dynamic spiral of meaning-making when developing a conceptual framework. The article focuses on answering the following questions: What are the different ways in which qualitative research is conceptualised? Which analytical tools are used in the inductive reasoning process? What are the 'tricks of the trade' of conceptualisation? How does a researcher's own ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions influence meaning-making? What is the role of previous knowledge and theory in meaning-making in order to create new knowledge and theory? How does a researcher 'size up' existing literature and improve on it? What is the role of reflexivity in developing a conceptual framework? Of great importance is the exploration of the meaning of "reflexivity". Reflexivity

means conceptualising, organising, continuously questioning your understanding of the phenomenon, constantly comparing incidents to new incidents, making abstract connections, visualising, synthesising the data by identifying patterns, theorising by developing explanations that fit the data and re-contextualising by relating emergent theory to established knowledge. The process of continuous reflexivity should help researchers to understand why they frame questions in particular ways; why they investigate them in a certain manner; how they gain an understanding of the meanings research participants give to their real world; how they gather sufficient data to make their research credible; and how such approaches lead them to interpret the data the way they do (Johnson and Cassell in Auriacombe and Schurink 2012).

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# Factors causing nursing turnover at four public hospitals within the Limpopo Sekhukhune District

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First received 18/01/12

Accepted for publication 14/08/12

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study was to determine the factors causing voluntary nursing turnover (hereafter referred to as 'turnover') as manifested among professional nurses in four Sekhukhune District hospitals of the Limpopo Department of Health and Social Development. A qualitative study was done, using Lewin's theory of institutional change, with job dissatisfaction as the primary construct.

A proportional stratified sample of 270 professional nurses was obtained. Data was obtained through a semi-structured interview questionnaire by means of focus groups. The research findings indicate that factors such as poor working conditions, unhealthy relationships between managers and nursing staff, ineffectiveness of management support for training, and unsatisfactory performance appraisal and grievance handling as the main reasons causing turnover. These findings are consistent with predictions in the literature (literature control) that there are a number of driving forces contributing to turnover, and by identifying these forces through this empirical study in the health sector, can be classified as new knowledge in the extant turnover literature. Hence, this article contributes to the existing levels of scholarship by providing a more inclusive and integrated view of turnover in the health sector, enriching the broader Public Administration context. In addition, the findings do provide some insights and better understanding of turnover matters in Limpopo and may be expanded to other hospitals.

## INTRODUCTION

Turnover is often highlighted as one of the most significant factors having a negative effect on the country's nursing shortages (Stanz and Greyling 2010:1). This phenomenon appears to occur globally and received interest as early as 1913 with the first comprehensive empirical analysis and measurement of the costs involved in turnover at General Electric (Bruce 2005:494). Many authors are of the opinion that the nursing profession is in a crises, since scores of professional nurses either migrate within the national health care system, or emigrate to other countries, playing a major part in the high turnover rate of South African professional nurses. It is predicted that this exodus of nurses will have ruinous effects on the successful delivery of health care in the future (Mokoka, Oosthuizen and Ehlers 2010:1–2; Stanz and Greyling 2010:1–2; Pillay 2009:40–41; Solidarity Research Institute 2009:6). According to the Health Systems Trust there was an average of 40.3% of professional nurses' posts vacant in South Africa during 2008, of which Limpopo is the province with the third highest percentage (43.7%) of vacancies (Solidarity Research Institute 2009:internet). The vacancies for the four Sekhukhune District hospitals of the Limpopo Department of Health and Social Development, which was the locus of this study, were as follows: Hospital A (32%); Hospital B (38%); Hospital C (42%); Hospital D (35%) [Republic of South Africa 2001].

Given the above vacancy rates, one could conclude that the average vacancy rate amongst the four hospitals during the time of the study was 37%. Without insisting on any ideal vacancy rate, it is obvious that 37% is too high which point to the fact that there is an appalling necessity to retain the currently employed professional nurses. Although turnover was considered to be important in early Public Administration writing (Simon 1976:16-18; Stahl 1976:390–394), more recent scholars (Clingermayer and Feiock 1997:232; Meier and Hicklin 2007:573–590; Selden and Moynihan 2000:63–64) are of the opinion that turnover is a neglected topic in the existing literature of the field. For example, one of the leading international public human resource management texts touches only briefly on turnover in reference to the Volcker Commission Report (Nigro, Nigro and Kellough 2007:43). In addition, a search of the archives since 1980 in the *Public Administration Review*, the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* and the *Review of Public Administration* yielded a total of only five full articles addressing the topic and 34 articles that mentioned the word 'turnover' (Meier and Hicklin 2007:573). In the South African Public Administration journals the focus on turnover is also noticeably low. For example, it appears that there is a continuing absence of articles on 'turnover' in, for example, the *Journal of Association of Southern African Schools and Departments of Public Administration and Management (Administratio Publica)* and the *Journal of the South African Association of Public*

*Administration and Management Public Administration (JOPA)*. From 2006 only one article on turnover appeared in these journals (*Administratio Publica* 2006 to 2010:internet; *Journal of Public Administration* 2006 to 2010:internet). In order to put the above arguments into perspective, a central assumption is that authors do not publish enough in local research journals on turnover to ensure that the field becomes aware of the problem. In light of the above, the main research problem pertains to the high turnover rate amongst professional nurses in the four Sekhukhune District hospitals of the Limpopo Department of Health and Social Development. The main problem was further analysed in terms of the following sub-problem, namely, the apparent fact that the scope of available knowledge relating to nurse turnover is limited in the field.

The locus of this article is Limpopo and reflects on an investigation into the factors causing turnover in four Sekhukhune District hospitals. No previous research has been done on turnover in these four hospitals. Hence, the findings, which highlight the causes for professional nurses leaving the hospitals, can assist in identifying turnover problems and rectifying them whenever possible. The primary aim of the study was to explore and address the factors causing (voluntary) turnover among the professional nurses in these four hospitals. The secondary objectives of this article, resulting from the research aim, were the following, to:

- Provide an overview of the theoretical framework of turnover (Lewin's theory of institutional change).
- Outline the research design and method.
- Present the findings and do the interpretations.
- Identify limitations and make appropriate recommendations in this field of study.

This article is structured as follows: First, a literature review is provided to serve as a framework for the discussions that are offered. The following sections present the research design and methodology, findings, interpretations, limitations and recommendations. The article concludes with a discussion of the practical and theoretical implications of turnover.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This part of the article is divided into three components: definition; theory and nurse turnover factors; literature control.

### **Definition of turnover**

Definitions of turnover vary considerably. Hayes O'Brien-Pallas, Duffield, Shamian, Buchan, Hughes, Spence Laschinger, North and Stone (2006:238), for example,

defined turnover as any job move, while Baumann (2010:7) conceptualised it as the quantity of the population that leaves an institution in a given year. In addition, Mobley (1981) in Stanz and Greyling (2010:2), who is a well-known author on this topic, described turnover as the ‘... cessation of membership in an organization by an individual who received monetary compensation from the organization.’ Despite these differences, most authors, however, are in agreement that turnover is related to the termination of an employee’s services within an institution, referring to both internal and external movement, that can be categorised as involuntary or voluntary (Gillies 2004:13; Zweni 2005:3; Hayes *et al.* 2006:238; Hayajneh, AbuAlRub, Athamneh and Almahzomy 2009:303; Mrara 2010:18). Internal turnover refers to job changes within an institution, whereas external turnover is generally a numerical value assigned to the number of employees who leave an institution for different reasons. Involuntary turnover (for example, retirement, incapacity, misconduct and poor performance) occurs when employees are forced to leave the institution and the action is normally initiated by the employer. Conversely, voluntary turnover (for example, retirement at employee’s request, poor pay, voluntary severance package, job dissatisfaction) involves a turnover action initiated by the employee. In light of the above definitions, one may infer, that although turnover is about entering and leaving institutions (termination of employment services), it can be argued that there are various cognitive factors influencing an employee’s behavioural decision to stay or to leave an institution. It was, therefore, decided to concentrate more holistically on turnover by focusing on the different studies offered in the literature, to get a broader perspective on the problem, and simultaneously concentrating on the focus of this study (factors causing turnover).

## **Lewin’s theory of institutional change**

The core concept of turnover is confirmed in Lewin’s theory of institutional change. This theory identifies driving forces for turnover that might be required, to bring about a perfect balance within the workplace to reduce turnover rates among employees (Lewin 1952 in Mokoka, Oosthuizen and Ehlers 2010:1–2). The theory further describes that many factors could lead to turnover, and in this regard it has been found that job dissatisfaction is one of the major factors related to turnover. Building on Lewin’s theory, Hayes *et al.* (2006:239–244) established that job dissatisfaction can be regarded as a so-called “push factor”, driving people in a voluntary (see definition above) manner away from institutions. Many studies have identified a variety of push factors that are related to dissatisfaction among nurses. These are, among others: selection mistakes; inadequate job specifications; unhealthy working environments; unclear work assignments; lack of orientation; promotion difficulties; labour market variables

(greener pastures); excessive workloads; inadequate staffing levels (Mateus 2007:16; Baumann 2010:16; Stanz and Greyling 2010:2).

In light of the above, job dissatisfaction was regarded as the primary construct for this study. Within the context of the primary construct of job dissatisfaction, other secondary constructs were included to support predictions about the influence of public human resource management practices on turnover, which gives the model an integrative feature. The secondary constructs include selection problems, inadequate job specifications, failure to document selection mistakes, an unhealthy work environment, unclear responsibilities and work assignments, lack of orientation, promotion difficulties, labour market variables and heavy workloads. These constructs are highlighted comprehensively in the literature (Armstrong 1995:761; Gillies 2004:247; Rousell, Swansburg, and Swansburg 2006:188; Smith and Licari 2006:236; Matlala 2010:23–32; Locke, Leach, Kitsell and Griffith 2011:178), and are indicative of the need to establish common ground when it comes to the development of intervention programmes that are geared towards the reduction of turnover in the four Sekhukhune District hospitals.

## **Literature control**

The function of literature control is to put the findings within the milieu of what is accepted knowledge about the particular theme and verify themes and sub-themes that could support existing literature or claim a new contribution (Streubert and Carpenter 1995:25). In this study, Lewin's theory of institutional change was used as a basis for the analysis of the data to determine whether there is support for established knowledge or if new turnover knowledge has been added to the existing literature. The researchers had already ascertained that no study had been conducted on turnover in the four hospitals of the Sekhukhune District; therefore, new research data generated through this study, compared with existing literature, could be regarded as a new knowledge on turnover.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

For this study, the researchers used a qualitative research design with a descriptive, exploratory and contextual approach. Qualitative research is a field of inquiry that cuts across disciplines and has to do with the nature of a phenomenon and deals with data that is mainly verbal (De Vos 2001:15). By following the verbal approach, it was possible to describe, explore and contextualise the factors that are causing turnover among the professional nurses, qualitatively. Descriptive research responds to standard questions to ascertain the existing characteristics of the real world relative to the specific problem (Polit and Hungler 1995:14).

It is for this reason that the researchers recorded the experiences of the professional nurses while the focus group discussions were in progress so that they could concentrate on what was being said by the participants. Exploratory research attempts to expose and explore the relationships and dimensions of a phenomenon, obtaining new insights into the problem under investigation (Talbot 1994 in Toni 2007:20). It was mentioned above that there was no data available on the factors causing turnover in the four hospitals and fairly little information accessible in the Public Administration literature. So it was decided to gain an increased understanding into this area by exploring the nature of the professional nurses' experiences through a semi-structured interview questionnaire by using focus group discussions. Contextual research points to an explicit act of a phenomenon, which focuses on the incidents in the direct location of the participants (Polit and Hungler 1995:15). In this study, professional nurses who were in the employment of the four Sekhukhune District hospitals, explained in a contextual way how they had experienced their jobs.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method employed in this study will be discussed in the part below.

### **Population and sampling**

In this study the population consisted of 2 015 employees (N=2 015), which was the total number of staff members in the four Sekhukhune District hospitals in Limpopo. Two sampling methods were used, namely the probability method and the non-probability method. A smaller sample with stratified random sampling was used than with simple random sampling in order to ensure that important strata were represented in the sample. The sample group comprised 270 experienced professional nurses (n=270) who had been employed in the four Sekhukhune District hospitals for five years or more. While the purpose of the qualitative design was not to accomplish representation, it was essential to consult a fairly diverse group of professional nurses in terms of the respective ranks. The sample included professional nurses, senior professional nurses and chief professional nurses. The selection of the sample was also based on a single variable, namely gender (male and female).

### **Data collection**

The data collection instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview questionnaire (hereafter referred to as 'the questionnaire'). The questions asked

in the questionnaire emanated from the literature review conducted in this study. The questionnaire comprised both fixed and follow-up questions. The questions were organised to collect data on the following broad areas: root causes, working conditions, role of nursing managers, responsibilities and work assignments, orientation, praise for excellent performance, complaints and grievances, participation in decision-making processes, workshops and seminars and health conditions.

## **Pilot testing**

As a pre-test control measure, the questionnaire was distributed among four sample members employed in the four Sekhukhune District hospitals, in order to determine if the questionnaire would achieve the objectives of the study. A few amendments were made and the questionnaire was adapted accordingly. This approach seemed to enhance the trustworthiness of the questionnaire for this particular study.

## **Data analysis**

In general, data analysis refers to the administration of the unprocessed data so that it assists in the interpretation thereof (Polit and Hungler 1995:227). As was already mentioned, the qualitative data was analysed descriptively, exploratory and contextually. This approach enabled the researchers to condense the data to controllable quantities (content analysis) by summarising and organising the qualitative information in such a way that it is presentable for interpretation.

## **Research process**

The procedure that was followed was as follows:

- Step one entailed the distribution of the questionnaires to all the participants (sample) and personal interviews were conducted five days later. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter which explained all the instructions. In addition, the covering letter indicated that the responses would be treated with confidentiality and that they would remain anonymous.
- Step two involved the formulation of appropriate questions for professional nurses so that they could share their experiences of the topic.
- Additional dates for follow-up interviews were identified during step three, where the impressions of the researchers were also noted and the information collected was properly recorded in a logical manner.
- During step four, the transcripts were read and notes were made of general themes in order to enable the researchers to focus more on the data.

- The reading of transcripts was repeated in step five, during which time the central themes were identified and suitable headings were noted.
- In step six, relevant themes were grouped together, explained and discussed under the main themes, and notes from previous interviews were also taken into consideration and included.
- Academic writing began in step seven, and abridged versions of interviews were also presented under specific themes.

## **FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

Findings from the qualitative data are discussed in this section. Although the questionnaire was linked to 13 items, it was deemed best to group the general assessments of the participants' views under five themes in the article. Items with similar themes were grouped together.

### **Items 1 and 13: General factors causing turnover and hygienic conditions**

In Items 1 and 13 the intention was to determine how professional nurses viewed their general experiences regarding turnover (general factors causing turnover, including the hygienic conditions in the respective hospitals). Although similar in many respects, the situation was somewhat different regarding the findings of Item 1 and 13. It was found, that in general, participants of all four hospitals recorded an extended list of factors causing turnover. This in itself indicated that participants were overwhelmingly negative about these items. In addition, it was clear that the professional nurses in Hospital B were slightly more negative than nurses in the other hospitals (they listed three more factors). In summary, the following most common observations were noted regarding the factors causing turnover: performance of non-nursing duties, inadequate medical equipment, lack of management support, low morale, poor communication between management and professional nurses, and unpleasant health conditions (unhygienic conditions).

The brief review provided above in terms of Items 1 and 13 underscores the many complexities involved in the associations professional nurses at the four hospitals in the Sekhukhune District may have in terms of the factors causing turnover. What is apparent, however, is that this study demonstrates that there are a number of factors contributing to professional nurses' intentions to quit the services of the hospitals. This is not a revelation, as several other studies have supported this notion (Hayes *et al.* 2006:244; Toni 2007:39–59; Pillay 2009:45–51). In recent research, Stanz and Greyling (2010:5) also identified 24 factors as reasons why professional nurses resign or leave the nursing

profession, ranging from poor pay and benefits to lack of challenges. Thus, the current findings support the extant literature regarding the general factors causing turnover.

## **Items 2 and 5: Working conditions**

Under Item 2 and 5 the primary aim was to ascertain how the participants perceived their working conditions and whether or not the participants knew exactly what their responsibilities and their work assignments were in their working environment in the four Sekhukhune District hospitals. There were striking similarities between the responses of all four hospitals to these two items. All the participants confirmed that they had to work overtime without being paid to do so due to a shortage of nursing. Moreover, the participants overwhelmingly indicated that this state of affairs had resulted in a situation where the workload had become unbearable. A further prominent response from the participants of Hospital D was the way that ineffective team work affected turnover. Although the findings reported here suggest that the vast majority of the participants had similar views on the working conditions, it is evident that participants from Hospital A were slightly more negative than the other participants. This observation can be attributed to the fact that participants from Hospital A mentioned three more factors that negatively affected working conditions in this hospital. An important finding (positive) with regard to Item 5 was that all the participants confirmed that the nursing staff knew their role expectations (responsibilities and work assignments). The above positive account illustrates that participants considered responsibilities and work assignments to be valuable and of benefit in serving as members of their respective hospitals. However, despite these positive views, the interviewees from Hospital A, Hospital B and Hospital C expressed dissatisfaction about their responsibilities and work assignments in terms of the following: work overload, shortage of nursing, lack of nursing management support and criticism by the community (poor service because of work overload).

The above findings substantiate those from the literature that working conditions and workload are key determinants in retaining employees, more particularly from a management point of view. In this regard, Maitland's (2007:16) research concluded that 'employees have continual conversations with supervisors and team members regarding their specific needs ...' He is further of the opinion that these conversations should be encouraged so that employees can choose from a menu of workload options, ranging from a full workload to a reduced workload. In addition, research conducted by Munsamy and Venter (2009:187) indicated that role clarity (clear work assignments) and the relevant responsibilities are two important retainers of staff. The Segal

Sibson study (2006:online) is in agreement with this view, highlighting work content (meaningfulness of work assignments) as a priority factor to keep employees to remain employed with the institution. This study demonstrates that there is definitely growing evidence that unpleasant working conditions, more particularly dissatisfaction with responsibilities and work assignments, are associated with turnover. The findings in this study, therefore, support the existing literature.

### **Items 3, 4, 6, 8 and 11: Role of nursing managers**

The above items focused on the general role that should be played by nursing managers in an attempt to reduce turnover in the four Sekhukhune District hospitals. More particularly, responses were given on the working relationships between nursing managers and their subordinate nursing. Examination of the qualitative data revealed that there was unanimous agreement among the professional nurses that the relationships between nursing managers and nursing were very poor. Other prominent responses cited during the interviews which could be meaningful to the efficient management of turnover (pro-active) are the following:

My experience tells me that turnover can be reduced if the nurses receive less verbal abuse from the nursing managers.

Promoting a healthy environment – this can be achieved through prohibition of discrimination of any kind in the workplace.

I can say they do not invite us for decision making. There is a lot of nepotism. Hospital management does not give praise where it is due. I observe poor interpersonal relationships between nursing management and nursing.

Oh well, I can say that the relationship is poor, because the management's word is always final. There is a lot of nepotism. Management harasses nurses.

Favouritism is the leading cause for nurses leaving the hospital. Management duties are not properly done. Some nurses are treated unfairly. I am of the opinion that management is not up to scratch. There is unequal treatment.

In other words, participative management is not fully practised. In my view, I believe that inclusion of the nursing in the decision-making processes may reduce the rate of turnover. Decisions are taken by management and come to us as an instruction from above.

The above responses highlight how various professional nurses perceived the role of management within the four Sekhukhune District hospitals. The overall analysis reveals that the participants were very negative towards

the role of management. A further analysis of the data disclosed that the participants from Hospital A, in general, were more negative than those from the other hospitals on the role of nursing managers in decreasing turnover. A summary of the responses shows that they mentioned seven points of criticism (five more than the participants from the other three hospitals) regarding poor management relationships between nursing managers and professional nursing. These findings are consistent with the observations of Ingham (2006:20) who is of the opinion that managers play an important role in retaining employees for an institution. In fact, in further exploring the turnover literature it became clear that the role of managers is central to decreasing employees' desire to leave. In this regard, Munsamy and Venter (2009:193) cite the difficulty of retaining talented people as one of the critical challenges facing management, hence the adoption of a pro-active (rather than re-active) management approach to ensure that employees remain employed in the institution. The qualitative data in this study clearly shows that management plays a key role when it comes to the turnover levels of professional nurses. The findings in this study (role of managers), therefore, are consistent with contemporary literature on turnover.

## **Items 7 and 12: Training**

Item 7 was included to determine if newly appointed professional nurses underwent orientation training, and if the manner in which this type of training was done, had any effect on turnover. As was the case with Item 7, in Item 12 the focus was on training. However, in Item 12 the aim was to find out whether the participants had the opportunity to attend workshops and seminars to improve their skills and at the same time be encouraged to stay longer at their respective hospitals. With the exception of Hospital B (which was positive about orientation), participants generally perceived the four hospitals in the Sekhukhune District to be broadly non-supportive of the orientation of nursing. There were specific examples of this lack of support, as is evident from the following accounts:

I feel that I have been discriminated against because I was never subjected to any orientation course. Lack of orientation may as a result cause medico-legal hazards.

I don't think I would be wrong to contend that orientation is done, but not properly. It further implies orientation is not done according to the national policy on development of staff ... orientation and re-orientation must be offered on a regular basis ...

No, it is not effectively done. I think that this ineffectiveness accelerates the rate of turnover in the hospital.

The qualitative data under Item 12 revealed that participants perceived that they were afforded sufficient opportunities to attend workshops, short courses and seminars. However, an additional issue worth noting is that one respondent's comment (although it is little evidence) alluded to the fact that no opportunities are afforded to share and implement what they have learned at the workshops and seminars.

From the above accounts there is clearly strong evidence to indicate that although the four hospitals were involved in training, they were mostly ineffective in doing so. This illuminates the need to focus on the extent of management support in training to positively affect turnover levels. An analysis of the turnover literature affirmed the importance of training (including orientation) as a factor of considerable importance in retaining professional nurses. This view is also in line with Flaherty's (2005:63–64) research that views training as an essential approach to retaining employees and keeping them committed not to leave the institution. Consequently, the findings in this study are in agreement with the extant literature as far as the influence of training on turnover goes.

## **Items 9 and 10: Performance appraisal and grievances**

Items 9 and 10 were added to determine if the performance appraisal system and the grievance procedure, as it is currently applied, could result in turnover. Interestingly, all the participants reported that no praise was given for good work and that grievances were not resolved. This is evident in qualitative responses such as the following:

I did not hear about excellent awards ceremonies. Maybe praise is given in secret but not in public. When it comes to the issue of work well done, there is no one who praises you. The nurses are always harassed, even for minor mistakes.

No, most of the nurses opt to resign or apply for transfers to other hospitals, because their grievances are not resolved promptly. The nurses complain of the same issue day after day, and report it to management, but nothing is done, until they eventually give up. For instance, we always complain of not being afforded study leave ... but our concerns are never addressed.

These negative accounts indicate that the participants considered the application of the performance appraisal system and the handling of grievances to be meaningless and of no value. Overall, the lack of proper performance appraisal and grievance handling is an important concern in terms of how participants perceived the management of these matters. Consistent with the above-mentioned findings, turnover studies generally find that improper performance appraisal and grievance handling could increase the desirability of movement. Research has revealed that these two items play a key role in

retention for the institution (Llorens and Stazyk 2011:113-114; Shahzad, Hussain, Bashir, Chisti and Nasir 2011:46–48). Since the present findings indicate that performance appraisal and grievance handling play a key role in the dissatisfaction levels of professional nurses it can be said that this study confirms the support of the existing literature.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The findings need to be read in light of the limitations of this study. However, the limitations do not in any way suggest that the research is incomplete, but rather that they are a forecast of potential problems. Thus, the following were regarded as possible limitations of this study:

- Leading questions: Leading questions may depend upon the level of comprehension of the researched subject by the participant.
- Misinformation: Misinformation is sometimes possible due to the ego of the researcher or any other factors that may make him/her withhold true information for whatever ethical reasons.
- Interview questionnaire: The semi-structured interview questionnaire may not have suited the participants.
- Small sample: Findings from the small number of participants need be interpreted with care and are only applicable to this particular study.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Overall, the findings of this study show that all participants were overwhelmingly negative towards all 13 items included in the questionnaire. In view of these research findings, certain recommendations can be made pertaining to the management of turnover in the four Sekhukhune District hospitals. The purpose of these recommendations is to draw the attention to current turnover challenges, with the intention of finding appropriate solutions.

In light of the above, two general recommendations can be made from this study. The first of these recommendations deals with the reasons for turnover. Findings suggest that participants perceived the following factors as the major drivers behind the exodus of professional nurses: root causes such as performance of non-nursing duties, inadequate medical equipment, lack of management support, low morale, poor communication between management and professional nurses, unpleasant health conditions, poor working conditions, unhealthy relationships between managers and nursing, ineffectiveness of management support for training, and unsatisfactory

performance appraisal and grievance handling. From the aforementioned it is clear that turnover is a complex issue. This indicates that one study, with a limited scope as in this case, cannot respond to all the questions. Hence, a further extensive investigation in the broader Limpopo, including hospitals in other districts, could help to provide more scientific findings on the factors causing turnover among professional nurses. Finally, although it falls outside the borders of this study, the researchers have indicated that management has an important role to play in convincing professional nurses to remain employed in the four Sekhukhune hospitals. Future research needs to be done to investigate the role of management in ensuring the attractiveness of the employer. Research on this theme would be useful in the struggle to retain professional nurses in the Sekhukhune District.

## **CONCLUSION**

Through applying Lewin's theory of institutional change as a framework for this article, professional nurses' views on the factors causing turnover among professional nurses in the four Sekhukhune District hospitals, were considered. In the absence of adequate knowledge and reported empirical data an investigation on voluntary turnover was necessary to determine the factors causing professional nurses for leaving their respective hospitals. In general, the study revealed that the average views of all the participants were predominantly negative. The findings bring to light the most significant factors of voluntary turnover among a host of public human resource practices. In this regard, it maybe hypothesised that the following factors were identified as the root causes for turnover: poor working conditions, unhealthy relationships between managers and nursing, ineffectiveness of management support for training, and unsatisfactory performance appraisal and grievance handling. These findings are applicable to the four Sekhukhune District hospitals and a potential limitation may be found when applied to other public health institutions. The question remains: What are the four hospitals going to do about the findings of this study? It is, therefore, recommended that further research into the factors causing turnover be undertaken in the broader Limpopo, to generalise the findings. From an academic perspective, the findings of the study confirm what the literature notes about the factors causing turnover. These findings are consistent with the basic constructs drawn from the literature, which indicate that there are a number of driving forces that contribute to the final choice by an employee to leave the institution. Researchers into this issue contend that perceived attractiveness of movement in the institution is mostly determined by job dissatisfaction. This article contributes to the literature by providing a

more complete and integrated view of turnover and its determinants in a public service context (health sector), more particularly in Limpopo.

## **NOTE:**

The names of the hospitals have been withheld for scientific reasons.

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# Phenomenology as a research design in Public Administration

## Fitness for purpose

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First received 2011

Accepted for publication 04/09/12

### ABSTRACT

In recent times research in Public Administration has been dominated by popular research methodologies and designs. Phenomenology as a research design has received limited exposure in the discipline. Therefore the purpose of this article is to determine the importance of phenomenology as a credible research design in Public Administration research. This article first provides an extensive literature overview of the popular research methods in South African Public Administration. A brief history of the origin of phenomenology as a research method and a work definition of phenomenology are given. Subsequently, a case for phenomenology is critically discussed to highlight the importance and application of this research design based on a theoretical foundation. The literature consists of published articles, books and phenomenological journals. The article concludes that a justification for the use of phenomenology in certain types of research is necessary.

The article also argues that consultative approaches and public participation have been encouraged since the first democratic elections in South Africa. Considering the nature of this discipline, it is important to effect changes in the ways research is conducted to comply with practical policy requirements. Research within a phenomenological framework will assist public administrators in solving many societal problems.

### INTRODUCTION

Research can be used as a reflective tool to improve scholarship in any discipline. There are various research designs that can be applied when conducting research.

Cameron (2008:62) writes that the Public Administration field has not progressed intellectually since the early 1990s. In addition Cameron and Milne (2009:391) criticise Public Administration scholars for their reliance on what they call "desktop research and/or secondary research". One can assume that the lack of progress is due to non-applicable methodologies and research designs used by Public Administration researchers. It is necessary to acknowledge that there are various research designs used by Public Administration researchers. Such research designs can employ either quantitative or qualitative research methodologies. In the context of qualitative research methodologies, the German philosopher Husserl coined the concept *phenomenology*. Some scholars deem phenomenology to be more applicable to philosophical disciplines. The phenomenological method of deriving knowledge forms a central part of transcendental phenomenology, which is concerned with the world as it presents itself to us as humans (Willig 2008:57). Husserl (in Willig 2008:53) suggests that it is "possible to transcend presuppositions and biases and to experience a state of pre-reflective consciousness, which allows us to describe phenomena as they present themselves to us". Morcol (2005:1) stipulates that Public Administration theorists "should include the embodiment of human knowledge in their theories". The embodiment of such knowledge requires the use of phenomenology. In the South African context, Auriacombe (2006) acknowledges phenomenology as one of the research designs within the qualitative research paradigm. The failure of Auriacombe and Mouton (2007) to expand on the importance of phenomenology emphasises the importance of further critical research. While Schurink's (2009) contribution to the subject is fundamental, he discusses phenomenology without providing a clear outline of how this research design can be applied to Public Administration research. The types of research topics chosen by Public Administration researchers evidently prove the importance of phenomenology.

Quantitative and qualitative research methodologies are promoted in the Public Administration discipline, and researchers in the discipline often use these methodologies (Thani and Wessels 2011; Wessels 2010; Auriacombe 2009; Wessels, Pauw and Thani 2009). In the South African Public Administration field, phenomenology as a research design in qualitative research methodology has recently received limited exposure. In view of the possible insight this approach can bring to the field, it deserves more attention and should not be neglected. Such neglect could possibly be the reason why researchers conduct irrelevant research for the use of practitioners to consider in their decision-making process. Practitioners, including policymakers and decision-makers, are often criticised for their failure to implement policies that solve societal problems. More often than not they rely on academic institutions to conduct research for them. Wright, Manigault and Black (2004:747) assert that research in Public Administration does not only guide theory, but also influences

managers' and policymakers' decisions. If a less applicable research design is used, the final product will be questionable.

This article serves as a call to Public Administration researchers to use appropriate research methods with applicable research designs. After conducting an extensive literature review, the author of this article concluded that it is necessary to use phenomenology as a research design in Public Administration.

## **AN OVERVIEW OF REPORTED RESEARCH METHODS IN SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

To understand the research methods used in Public Administration it is necessary to define Public Administration and to provide an overview of some kinds of research conducted in this field. Public Administration in general studies how the government functions and scrutinises the activities of the government. Public Administration researchers evaluate programmes and policies as part of their research. Their research requires them to study people and to read policy documents. The people that are studied can be either the policymakers or members of the general public who are affected by the policy. This requires creativity and the use of appropriate research methods with applicable research designs. It is evident that researchers in this field use various research methods. As already highlighted in the introduction of this article, researchers in the public administration field use both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Auriacombe and Mouton (2007:441) argue that qualitative field research is important in Public Administration because it uses statistical techniques to understand people rather than to explain their behaviour. In their article they criticise quantitative research, which is associated with experiments and/or surveys. They emphasise that qualitative research methods enable researchers to see the social world through the eyes of others. Considering the nature of Public Administration, one can agree with Auriacombe and Mouton that it is of paramount importance that researchers conduct qualitative field research in order to understand people's views and/or opinions and phenomena. Auriacombe and Mouton (2007:444–447) discuss more research designs in the qualitative research approach, such as ethno-methodology, grounded theory, case study designs, institutional ethnography and participatory action research. However, they fail to include phenomenology in their discussion, perhaps because its importance in the field has not been realised.

Cloete (2007:513) contends that the quantitative research method refers to "objectively observable, measurable and calculable phenomena and it employs a narrow range of technical, statistical and mathematical approaches". He further highlights the importance of qualitative research by asserting that

it subjectively interprets "logic, values, meanings, attitudes, emotional driving forces ...." (Cloete 2007:513). Moreover, phenomenology is mentioned as an example, with no further discussion of it as a design. Auriacombe (2007:459) also provides and discusses examples of unobtrusive research methods, namely content analysis; analysis of existing statistics and data; and historical or comparative analysis. Her research shows that content analysis helps the researcher turn qualitative analysis into quantitative data, making it possible to "perform additional statistical tests on the material". Thani (2009) uses content analysis as research method when analysing 54 doctoral theses for the purposes of her research project and in doing so verifies Auriacombe's findings. She identifies various categories and uses a chi-square statistical method to determine the relationship between the variables. Auriacombe (2006:465) clarifies the historical/comparative analysis method and argues that it aims to discover common patterns that occur at different times and in different places. Understanding the history of a particular event and institution is also important in Public Administration.

Webb and Auriacombe (2006:591) discuss various methodological research designs available to Public Administration researchers in terms of qualitative and quantitative approaches. They claim that there are experimental and quasi experimental research designs in the quantitative research approach. In the qualitative research approach there are research designs such as biography, ethnographic studies, grounded theory, case studies and phenomenological studies. Webb and Auriacombe (2006:591) argue that in phenomenological studies the researcher seeks to understand how other people perceive the world. These two authors only write very briefly about this design. In their discussion of the various types of data, Mouton, Auriacombe and Lutabingwa (2006:580) highlight the importance of qualitative data and quantitative data as data collection methods. This implies that these two types of data can be used for qualitative and quantitative research studies following a mixed method approach. When discussing the importance of quantitative (data) analysis and solutions, Croucamp (2009:885) also emphasises that statistical software for the social sciences such as SPSS needs to be prescribed as a module in postgraduate curricula.

Cloete (2006:682) argues that it is necessary to conduct evaluation research in Public Administration. He describes evaluation research as "determining whether a social intervention, policy, or programme has produced or not produced the intended result" and explains that it is not a research method, but a type of research. Wessels, Pauw and Thani (2009:15) classify evaluation research as a research approach focusing on programme evaluation and policy analysis. Schurink (2009:814) highlights and discusses the research designs in the qualitative research approach, such as ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory and case study. When describing the phenomenology research

design, Schurink (2009:812) states that the research aims at understanding the experiences of the participants. In order to gain a greater understanding of participants in a study, the researcher needs to use interviews and participant observation as data collection methods. Schurink briefly discusses the phenomenology research design and compares it to other research designs. Wessels *et al.* (2009:15) provide a classification of research methods. They identify the following research methods: quantitative 1, quantitative 2, qualitative 1, qualitative 2, participatory action research, historical/narrative studies, conceptual analysis, hermeneutics, comparison and content analysis. However, they fail to discuss the applicability of these methods to Public Administration.

Auriacombe (2009:824) explains what grounded theory is. She argues that grounded theory "focuses on generating substantive theory based on the study of social situations leading to improved understanding of human behaviour and experience". Auriacombe argues that researchers often confuse grounded theory with qualitative research. Grounded theory is also new in Public Administration, but it can bring about a rewarding learning curve and enable Public Administration academics to develop their own theories. Cameron and Milne (2009:391) analyse a database of 383 articles and find that "most research was descriptive and normative and there was very little testing of validity or causality, very little systematic quantitative or qualitative research was carried out".

Thani and Wessels (2011) conducted an empirical study of appropriate methods for postgraduate researchers in Public Administration and Management. They identify four research methods that were used by doctoral students in the period 2000 to 2005, namely quantitative 1, qualitative 1, qualitative 2 and hermeneutics (Thani and Wessels 2011:82). During the above-mentioned period, students either studied people and their behaviour directly, or they used case studies or unstructured interviews and evaluated programme and policy analysis (Thani and Wessels 2011:78). This might mean that these postgraduate students were encouraged to use such methodologies by their supervisors. Wessels (2010) conducted an empirical study to determine whether there is a relationship between researchers' institutional affiliation and their selection of research methods in Public Administration. His findings differ from findings about doctoral candidates (see Thani and Wessels 2011), because researchers or lectures mainly use quantitative 1, quantitative 2, qualitative 1, qualitative 2, hermeneutics, participatory action, historical/narrative and conceptual analysis. It seems that researchers are encouraged or influenced to select specific research methods.

Based on the preceding discussions, the followings deductions are made with regard to the research methods proposed for Public Administration researchers:

Quantitative 1, qualitative 1, qualitative 2 and hermeneutics are mostly used by doctoral students (Thani and Wessels 2011).

- Quantitative 1, quantitative 2, qualitative 1, qualitative 2, hermeneutics, participatory action, historical/narrative and conceptual analysis are applied by academics or researchers in Public Administration (Wessels 2010).
- Qualitative research is more important than quantitative research in Public Administration and Management (Auriacombe and Mouton 2007).
- Quantitative and qualitative research methods are used (Cloete 2007; Webb and Auriacombe 2006; Croucamp 2009).
- Unobtrusive research methods can also be considered for Public Administration research (Auriacombe 2006).
- Qualitative data and quantitative data (Mouton *et al* 2006).
- Grounded theory (Auriacombe 2009).
- The use of various methods (Wessels *et al.* 2009).

Most of the academics in the literature reviewed agree about the use of qualitative and quantitative research methods in Public Administration research. When writing about these methods, some authors acknowledge that there are various research methods in each research design. For example, Webb and Auriacombe (2006) mention experimental and quasi experimental research designs in the quantitative research approach. In the qualitative approach, various research designs such as ethnography and case studies are mentioned. As already discussed, phenomenology as a research method gets limited exposure in Public Administration. After the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, people were encouraged to express their views without any fear. Section 195 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996, highlights the basic values and principles governing public administration. It emphasises that "people's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making". Phenomenology can encourage people to steer the policy-making process to some extent.

Before we discuss the case for the use of phenomenology as a research method in Public Administration, it is important to provide a general definition of this research design.

## **ORIGINS OF PHENOMENOLOGY**

Husserl (8 April 1859 – 26 April 1938) was the founder of the school of phenomenology. He was a German philosopher (Hughes and Wesley). Embree (2001:2) acknowledges that phenomenology began late in the 1890s. This research method is dominant in philosophy because Husserl thought that "the world means a world experienced and made meaningful by acts of consciousness". In science, conclusions and proposals are influenced by everyday

experience. Embree (2001:3) acknowledges that this research method is spreading to "non-philosophical disciplines". Embree further explains that phenomenology received more attention during the 1940s and 1950s in South Africa. Although Embree does not specify the disciplines influenced by phenomenology, one can safely assume that it spread to the philosophical disciplines. Embree classifies disciplines other than philosophy as "non-philosophical disciplines", and Public Administration can be regarded as a non-philosophical discipline. To promote scientific rigour, it is crucial to explore some research designs that can make a major contribution to Public Administration and Management. Psychology also frequently utilises phenomenology (Giorgi 1997).

Leedy and Ormrod (2001:153) define phenomenology as a "person's perception of the meaning of an event, as opposed to the event as it exists external to the person". Leedy and Ormrod (2001:153) argue that a phenomenological study aims to "understand people's perceptions of and perspectives on a particular occurrence, and the meaning they attach to the occurrence". For example, a researcher in Public Administration may want to conduct research on rural women in Mpumalanga to understand their perceptions of the empowerment of women and the various interventions they have witnessed. These women can define their everyday experience as it relates to the phenomena. The researcher can observe and listen to the construction of the participant. In other instances there is a possibility that the researcher has experienced that phenomena and now seeks to understand other people's perceptions of the same phenomena.

When defining phenomenology in the context of Public Administration, McNabb (2005:278) acknowledges that it "establishes meanings that social actors apply to events, works and symbols". For example, a researcher in Public Administration may conduct research on the personal experiences of unemployed postgraduate students. The main goal is to understand their experiences and perceptions of the problem of unemployment. This means that the researcher allows the participants to share their perceptions and then record them or take notes in order to present their perceptions as they are. This process can also involve recruiting companies and government departments.

## **A CASE FOR PHENOMENOLOGY IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT**

When one sees the word *case*, one might wonder if it is necessary to make a case for phenomenology in Public Administration. The author of this article read articles published in South African accredited Public Administration journals from 2005 to 2011. In this time there was not a single article that discussed phenomenology exclusively in *Administratio Publica* and the *Journal*

of *Public Administration*. In 2006, Auriacombe included phenomenology as one of the research designs in the discipline and provided a brief description of it. Auriacombe and Mouton (2007) fail to justify the importance of phenomenology as a critical research design in the discipline. Schurink (2009) describes phenomenology in passing, but does not mention the importance of phenomenology as a credible research design in the discipline.

Why make a case for phenomenology in Public Administration? Thani and Wessels (2011:80) identify topics researched by Public Administration and Management doctoral students. The four research areas that are most often investigated include: public organisational development and management; human resource management; managing public service delivery; and policy analysis and management. In his article entitled "South African trends in master's and doctoral research in Public Administration", Wessels (2008) deduces that a high percentage of research is concentrated on two research topics: public service delivery; and human resource management. Considering the nature of research topics selected by Public Administration researchers and students, it is possible to recommend the use of phenomenology as a research design. Rather than relying on what Cameron and Milne (2009:392) call "desktop research or secondary research", Public Administration academics can contribute findings based on the real-world perceptions and experiences of affected people.

Morcol (2005:1) agrees that Public Administration theorists "should include the embodiment of human knowledge in their theories". Human knowledge derives from studies of human behaviour that aim to capture such knowledge. Studying human behaviour is more than filling in questionnaires, but implies understanding people's perceptions. Theorists can only gain knowledge when they are in touch with the real world. One may wonder in which research scenario this design can be more applicable than in the Public Administration context. Phenomenology in Public Administration can be applied during the planning or policy analysis stages. Hummel (1982:313) justifies this proposal by stipulating that phenomenology will assist in avoiding errors that are associated with incorrect assumptions of what human beings are and what they know. Hummel further points out the importance of taking proper account of people's values, because it can enhance policy evaluation. For example, a public administrator, researcher or lecturer wants to understand the perceptions of men about interventions aimed at empowering women. A researcher cannot decide that the participants involved are negative about a specific intervention; the researcher allows people to define their experiences and how they affected their real world. A different picture will emerge, because the researcher has not used a questionnaire where participants could select their experiences from a given list.

Goulding (2004:301) maintains that in phenomenology it is perceived that people's lives are socially constructed. Participants are selected only if they have

experienced the phenomenon under study. The experiences of the selected participants are taken as facts. Goulding (2004:301) further explains that the sampling method in phenomenology is purposive and the major method of data collection is interviews. One can agree with Goulding, because the selection of participants is not random; one has a specific purpose in mind when selecting or drawing a sample. It is necessary to have lengthy interviews to capture people's perceptions and their understanding of a certain occurrence. McNabb (2005:278) echoes Goulding (2004) by pointing out that the phenomenologist employs participant observation, interviews and recordings as methods of data collection. The researcher does not aim at interpreting the experiences or perceptions of the participants, but attempts to present them truthfully as they are. No wonder McNabb (2005:278) highlights that "the underlying concept of interest is the life history of individual persons".

Aspers (2004:5) presents his claim that the world needs to be studied as experienced. Aspers is of the opinion that the world is constructed and reconstructed by the people who live in it. In order to understand people's perceptions, it is necessary to communicate with them. Other researchers can argue that there is an objective reality. Edwards (2001:2) sees phenomenology as a creative way of studying the new world. He draws the reader's attention to the advantages of using phenomenology as a research design, namely that it suspends preconceptions and allows the lived world reality to reveal its true meaning. Some other designs can drive participants to say what the researcher wants, depending on the nature of questions that will be asked in the questionnaire. In contrast, phenomenology aims to remove that bias by allowing participants to share their experiences rather than influencing them to say what the researcher expects.

Willis (2001:3) argues that in phenomenology things are not accepted as they appear, but they become what they are because of perceptions and naming. This naming and the perceptions are influenced by many factors, including cultural and religious factors. People consciously construct the meaning of a certain phenomena as they experience it. For example, a student in a rural area may perceive technological facilities differently than a student from urban areas would. This differentiation occurs simply because the surroundings and the environment influence the different students' understanding and perceptions. It is safer to agree with the claim made by Aspers (2004) that the meaning of the individual world is socially constructed. Willis (2001:7) explains that phenomenology endeavours to objectivise subjectivity, "focusing on the thing being experienced but still as experienced by me – as apart from subjectivising subjectivity". Language plays a critical role in this regard. As science or research aspires to be as objective as possible, it makes sense that Willis (2001) should suggest that phenomenologist need to objectivise subjectivity.

Embree (2001:7) names six features that characterise the generic approach of phenomenology:

- It opposes accepting unobservable matters.
- It opposes naturalism.
- It justifies cognition, and also evaluation and even action.
- It considers ideal objects, such as numbers and propositions, but also universal essences to be observable or evident.
- Phenomenologists practise reflective observation of what can be called encountering (encountering of objects) and also of objects as they are encountered.

Embree's six features concur with the discussion above that phenomenology requires the researcher to observe the participants and evidence. The main data collection method that can be used is lengthy interviews that give participants an opportunity to express themselves. Dahlberg (2006:2) agrees that phenomenological studies sometimes require researchers to use observation rather than interviewing as a data collection technique. This author argues that we sometimes get too close to the phenomenon and miss important aspects that we should have observed. Each phenomenological researcher needs to think critically about the need to be close to or at a distance from the phenomena. This is a thought-provoking argument, because if the researcher is too distant, he or she may misinterpret what is observed. In a Public Administration context, observation as data collection method brings about challenges because, as government or public institutions change their policies and programmes, various experiences and perceptions are developed. In order to have access to evidence of "the real world", a researcher needs to communicate with the people who are affected positively or negatively by that specific intervention. It may be possible to follow Willis's approach of objectivising the subjective. Using observation as the only data collection technique can mean subjectivising the subjective. Researchers often realise that their perceptions are not necessarily true after engaging the participants and allowing them to share their perceptions or experience. In phenomenology it is somehow premature to say that beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. What if that beauty needs more than to be beautiful? Willis (2004:3) asserts that in phenomenological studies it is important to ask questions such as: "What was it like?" and "How did you feel and what did you make of the experience?" For example, a lecturer in Public Administration may be asked about his or her experience when reading a paper at an international conference for the first time. This would mean interviewing more than one lecturer. Maybe the experiences are never the same. The researcher cannot conclude by mere observation that it was a wonderful experience. In order to get facts, the researcher should allow the lecturers to speak for themselves.

Willis (2004:10) strongly believes that the phenomenological approach "is still a worthy project in its attempt to return the things themselves and to attempt to create a feeling of understanding for a phenomenon".

Giorgi (2008:3) stipulates that phenomenological reduction refers to two elements: "(1) The researcher needs to consider bracketing personal past knowledge and all other theoretical knowledge not based on direct intuition; and (2) The researcher withholds the positing of the existence or reality of the object or state of affair that he or she is beholding". Giorgi explains that the researcher cannot make claims about what is observed. In order to return to the things themselves, as recommended by Willis (2004), researchers need evidence and facts from the objects or the participants.

From the above discussion it is possible to deduce the following about phenomenology:

- Phenomenology entails an understanding of people's perceptions, perspectives and meaning (Leedy and Ormrod 2001; Willis 2001; Giorgi 2008).
- People's perceptions and experiences are socially constructed (Goulding 2004; Aspers 2004).
- Phenomenologists use data collection methods such as lengthy interviews and recordings (McNabb 2005; Embree 2001; Dahlberg 2006).
- Phenomenology is a creative way of studying the world (Edwards 2001).

In one way or the other the above is relevant in Public Administration. As Edwards (2001) points out, researchers can opt to use a creative way to conduct research in Public Administration. Groenewald (2004:7) uses phenomenology in his doctoral thesis. The growing of talent and the contribution of cooperativeness were identified as phenomena. A purposive sampling method was used to select programme managers at higher education institutions in Gauteng. Lengthy interviews were conducted to allow the research participants to share their experiences. A snowball sampling method was used and the interviewees were asked to recommend someone who had a similar experience. Informed consent was used to assure that interviewees participated willingly and they could withdraw from the study without any negative consequences. Questions such as "How did you experience the joint educational venture?" and "What values if any have been derived from the collaborative effort?" were asked during the interview process. Groenewald (2004:12) argues that the research participants shared their "experiences, feelings, beliefs and convictions about the theme". There are various ways that can be used to store information for the explication of data. These ways include, among others, memoing, field notes, recordings and audio records. When drawing the sample, programme managers and employers were included to avoid bias. This design must not be confused with grounded theory as it does not require any statistical analysis. It is believed

that in phenomenology researchers record experiences as they are. This process requires time because researchers need to consider listening to the recording more than once to ensure that they record the experience accurately. This is one way to illustrate how phenomenology can be used. Public administration researchers can decide and select the most suitable way to apply it.

## CONCLUSION

In this article an exploration of literature highlighted the need for the application of phenomenology in Public Administration research. It has become evident that quantitative and qualitative research methodologies are promoted in this field. These methodologies provide insight and valid results. Consultative approaches and public participation was encouraged in South Africa after the democratic elections in 1994. The only way to gather information from people is to allow them to tell about their experiences. Public Administration researchers need to consider changing their research designs and applying those that are aligned to the Constitution. This article does not conclude that research designs utilised are irrelevant, but it acknowledges that Public Administration researchers or academics can consider utilising phenomenology as a research design in order to influence and perhaps enhance decision-making at this time. This is achieved in the article by firstly discussing the prominent research method in the field. Secondly the article gives an historical overview of phenomenology. Thirdly a case is made for the use of phenomenology in public administration. Researchers in this field need to consider exploring phenomenology.

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# The promotion of developmental local government to facilitate a developmental state

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First received 01/06/12

Accepted for publication 11/09/12

## ABSTRACT

Unemployment and poverty levels in South Africa since 1994 have increased such that the Gini-coefficient – the disparity between the rich and the poor – has grown rapidly over the years. In overcoming the challenges faced by communities, the South African government accepted the concept of a developmental state as the answer to the plight of the poor. It is argued that municipalities could be utilised to address some of the socio-economic challenges. This article contributes to the discipline, by classifying South Africa in terms of the characteristics of a developmental state and measuring it against other developmental states. The concept *developmental state* is clarified and the post-apartheid local government sphere, which has its own unique set of challenges, is examined. Developmental local government, as a concept that has been developed with the idea of promoting a developmental state at the local sphere of government, is also explored. The policy initiatives for the promotion of development are discussed and the policies that were implemented since 1994 are critically analysed. Finally, the challenges that hinder municipalities in their attempts to facilitate a developmental state are assessed and recommendations are made.

## INTRODUCTION

According to a forecast made by Moeletsi Mbeki (2011), South Africa will experience civil disobedience in the year 2020 if the current political situation

does not change. Since the inception of South Africa's democratic dispensation in 1994, local government has not been capable of attaining the developmental goals set for the country by the ruling party. The apartheid government's system of separate development left a legacy of human development being based on a set of criteria that include race and gender. A democratic South Africa thus inherited a dysfunctional local government system based on ineffective structures in some communities. The system promoted the belief of exclusivity and racially based community participation. The discussion on the achievement of a developmental state cannot be separated from developmental theories emanating from the disciplines of Public Administration, Economics and Political studies. Within this theoretical frame, issues relating to human development from a local government point of view need to be explored. The discussion of a developmental state will highlight the precautions that are necessary to achieve the goal of building a developmental state. This can be done by equipping the municipal employees with the tools that will enhance their personal development, so that they can play a role in encouraging municipalities to implement particular characteristics associated with the developmental state theory.

The research on which this article is based investigated the possibilities of utilising municipalities as efficient structures towards building a developmental state. It is argued that municipalities do indeed have a developmental role to play in the total construction of a developmental state.

The research was aimed at assessing the policies instituted by the South African government since the introduction of a democratic dispensation, with the intention of fast-tracking the development of the country, thus ensuring the creation of a developmental state. The extent to which these developmental policies have outlined the role to be played by the local sphere of government in a developmental state is emphasised. Such policies include the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (1994), the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) initiative (1996), the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (AsgiSA) (2005), and the New Growth Path (NGP) (2010).

A concise definition of a developmental state within the South African local government framework is provided. This is important as it will demystify particular characteristics associated with the concept, *developmental state*. Next, the post-apartheid local sphere of government, which is assumed to create an environment that is conducive to the enhancement of a developmental state, is assessed. The contribution made by post-apartheid policies is subsequently explored. It is argued that the identified policies promote the creation of a developmental state, through developmental local government system.

## THE DEVELOPMENTAL STATE

South Africa has a unique history of colonisation, war and oppression. When the first democratic government took office in 1994, it inherited a society divided on racial lines, with the black majority mainly being deprived and poor. With an economy in which about 20% of the population – mainly white people – had control of the economy, a major change was imperative and the government faced considerable challenges. It has been argued that to overcome these challenges, a developmental state in South Africa is needed. Van Dijk and Croukamp (2007) conducted a reflective study that emphasised the social origin of the concept *developmental state* in the context of local government in South Africa. The focus of their study was not on how municipalities can be used as critical institutions to assist in the realisation of a developmental state, but on locating the concept in the social sciences. Thus, their study was aimed at establishing how the concept is defined and used in the social sciences discipline.

The concept of the developmental state originated in East Asia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In East Asia, countries created mechanisms that enabled the state to intervene in the affairs of the private sector. The mechanisms include, *inter alia* the creation of an economic planning commission, the implementation of market-defying selective industrial policies and total state control of the banking sector (Chang 2010:83). During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Scandinavian countries (including Denmark, Norway and Sweden) were broadly associated with the characteristics of a developmental state. Chang (2010:84) contends that more prominently, the Scandinavian countries focused on selective industrial policies and the promotion of research and development. In the context of the social sciences, development in its broadest sense is a form of social change. The change agent – that is the state – plays a pivotal role in promoting developmental intervention in society (Theron 2008:3). A developmental state would normally strive to generate and maintain the economy of a country, through institutions established to promote a developmental state. Netshitenzhe (2011) claims that there are different paradigms that can be followed in creating a developmental state. He argues (2011:6) that, “It depends on the path, states choose to achieve the developmental objectives, as well as the instruments such states use to this end”.

In the case of a democratic South Africa, the idea of a developmental state emerged during the tenure of President Mbeki (1999-2004), despite the developmental policies that had emerged earlier, i.e. the RDP, which had been initiated already in 1994. This came as a reaction to the alarming rate of the increase in inequality and poverty levels in the country. Accordingly, the recently established National Planning Commission (NPC) of South Africa

(2011) notes that the Gini co-efficient is at its highest peak since democratisation in 1994. Despite the constitutional democracy, inequality among South Africans is gradually increasing. As pointed out in the National Development Plan of the NPC, the Gini co-efficient increased from 0.64 in 1995 to 0.7 in 2011 (National Planning Commission 2011:3). Against this background it is clear that promoting the establishment of a developmental state is imperative. A developmental state will aim at the reduction of the Gini co-efficient through the implementation of progressive policies where the people's quality of life will be improved and maintained.

In order to avoid ambiguities in this discussion, a developmental state is identified as a state that uses all the necessary mechanisms and institutions at its disposal to achieve successful economic intervention in a specific country. According to Edigheji (2007:3), to be developmental in the South African context, implies equity, justice, enabling a rapid growing economy and improving the quality of life for all citizens. This should lead to successful economic activity that will stimulate employment opportunities and subsequently alleviate poverty among the citizens in a country. As indicated in the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*, (section 153) requires all municipalities to promote the developmental duties to ensure the effective and efficient management of its administration, budgeting and planning, in order to promote socio-economic development (RSA 1996). This is imperative to satisfy the basic needs of the people.

Within the South African three-sphere government system as set out in section 40 of the Constitution (RSA 1996), each sphere exists in its own right and authority, and can make binding decisions applicable to the sphere concerned. An integration of government policies is vital for a developmental state. This underlines the importance for the three different spheres to co-operate with one another when performing their functional activities. This co-operation should ensure that the spheres complement one another when implementing the policies. In South Africa it is often argued that the national sphere of government is more important than the provincial and the local spheres. This misconception is caused by the privilege the national government maintains, in collecting and distributing the national revenue, in terms of the *Division of Revenue Act* (Act 5 of 2012), passed annually. The funding allocation and distribution to the provincial and local spheres are done by the national sphere of government, hence the assumption of its superiority. National government could undermine the authority of a provincial government by assigning functions and performing actions without consultation. Sections 100 and 139 of the Constitution assign the national and provincial spheres powers to intervene in the provincial and local governments respectively. This intervention can only take place should the spheres (provincial and local

governments) fail or cannot reach service delivery targets as set out in the Constitution and other legislation. Du Plessis (2012:13) postulates that the interrelatedness and interdependence of the spheres of government referred to in the Constitution, 1996, suggest that local government executes its functions within a national and provincial policy framework. It is important to note that the priority areas for government activities are determined nationally, although the operational implementation may differ in provinces and in municipalities. It is argued that a developmental state can encourage economic growth and development in the country. However, the growth of the economy will be dependent upon the implementation of the required processes and the introduction of mechanisms necessary to achieve developmental goals.

## **UTILISING LOCAL GOVERNMENT: A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE**

The purpose of local government, as one of the three spheres of government, is to provide basic and other municipal related services to the citizens directly in a particular area of jurisdiction. Arguably, local government could be seen as the sphere of government that is directly associated with the daily lives of the citizens. It should thus be acknowledged that the local government sphere is required to obtain the participation of the citizens in determining the quality and quantity of services delivered. Local government should play a pivotal role in ensuring the provision of basic services, namely water, refuse removal, sanitation, and electricity. The provision of such services is essential to maintain an acceptable standard of living. Local government has, over the years, served as the sphere of government that aims to promote the relationship between the 'governors' and the 'governed'. This relationship can arguably be achieved, by taking the following steps (Hanekom 1988:18):

- ensure a proper linkage between the government and the people over which it governs;
- promote greater community participation; and
- ensure a flourishing democratic political system.

The acknowledgement of the above-mentioned requirements could develop participatory democracy, where the citizens are at the epicentre of the activities involved in the determination of the way in which they are governed. Governments that practise participatory democracy are characterised by the citizens taking ownership of the governing processes, especially its policy making. An example of such a system can be seen in Mumbai, India, through the system called the *Panchayat Raj*, which is a system that exploits the *Gram*

*Sabha* (a legitimate committee within the community) in achieving the expected participation of the community members (Nambiar 2001:3114). In such a system, public participation is imperative as it determines the needs, expectations and aspirations of the citizens and translates them into the achievable goals.

## **Achieving development through participation**

In the local sphere of government, municipalities use public participation as a measure to deepen local democratic culture. Thus, local democracy ensures the promotion of the delivery of goods and services to the community. This creates an inextricable link between the processes of public participation and development. Public participation in South Africa is construed to mean any activity from the election of the representatives to consultation of citizens when formulating legislation by those elected. Democracy, whether direct or representative, is an imperative practice for all spheres of government. What seems to be a challenge in a contemporary state is the undisputable growing number of the citizens. This rapid population increase makes full participatory democracy impossible, as people cannot participate directly, in their own government. Public participation is an essential element of democracy, which makes it a sacrosanct initiative for every citizen. According to Arnstein (2003:246), public participation is a process that involves a power struggle in terms of who gets to make the decisions. Thus, it exists where the distribution of authority is enhanced to deliberately include the underdeveloped and powerless (who could be excluded from the political and economic processes). On the one hand, Clapper (1993:13–14), defines public participation as the efforts of all the people affected by political process to influence the government's activities. On the other hand, Creighton (2005:7) identifies public participation as two-way communication and an interactive process through which the public's concerns, needs, and values are made known and incorporated into the government's decision making. It can thus be deduced that public participation is an intricate process that involves the people affected in determining their own policies towards the satisfaction of their needs, concerns and aspirations through the government. Municipalities have the potential to involve the people in a participatory process to enhance the local economy and thereby create sustainable livelihoods.

Public participation aims at achieving a developmental local government, thereby creating an environment that is conducive to growth. For growth to ensue, it is important for municipalities to understand the needs of the community. These needs can only be acquired through an integrated development plan (IDP). An IDP is a strategic process through which municipalities aim to effectively achieve their developmental goals. However, for the IDP to be effective, its processes will depend on the quality of the planning involved, that is, municipalities should

aim at achieving effective delivery of services through rapid development and the promotion of local community participation (Subban and Theron 2011:98). Public participation is an integral process that involves intensive planning in so far as the decision-making processes are concerned. Through this intensive planning, an integrated development plan emerges within municipalities. As such, the basis of an IDP entails the constitutional principles, and is aimed at promoting representative democracy as well as development in local government. It is important for participation to take place in local government, since municipalities, as the facilitators of IDP, are the agents of the state closest to the local communities (Du Plessis 2012:21).

### **Developmental local government: a key to achieving growth and community development**

According to the *White Paper on Local Government* (RSA 1998:17), developmental local government is defined as a local government that is committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives. Subban and Theron (2011:98) highlight the importance of deepening the local democratic culture, where development and participation would be seen as intertwined concepts.

The *White Paper on Local Government* (RSA 1998) notes the following characteristics as those of a developmental local government:

- maximising social development and economic growth
- integrating and coordinating development planning
- promoting a democratic development
- building social capital at the local level to enable local solutions to development challenges

It is evident that the goals the state ought to achieve in terms of development are the same as those of the municipalities. Thus a congruent approach towards overcoming the developmental challenges is suggested. This approach would require that a functional system of local government be utilised. All policy considerations must be passed in the local sphere by way of a consultative process, because municipalities are government structures that could be used effectively to mobilise citizens.

Municipalities differ in their composition and functioning. As a result of the lack of a common framework applied in municipalities, some municipalities often find that they are faced with unintended malpractices, which have the potential to render the municipality's service delivery ineffective. National legislation provides a framework for the individual municipalities, where it is

expected that the communities would intensively participate in the municipal procedures applicable (Reddy, Nzimakwe and Ramlucken 2012:51). Municipalities must at all times strive to obtain extensive consultation with the people. Non-involvement of the public could be regarded as the most important limitation because it defeats the purpose of attempting to mobilise the community to support local government. Involvement of the people can be enhanced by improving the methods of organising community gatherings such as the ward committee meetings.

## **POLICY INITIATIVES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Since democratisation in 1994 the South African government has formulated major policies in order to facilitate development. These policies emanated from the African National Congress (ANC) led alliance and were technically introduced in government as they were derived from the principles and policies of the governing party. These developmental policies include:

- the Reconstruction and Development Programme 1994–1996 (RDP);
- the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme 1996–2000 (GEAR);
- the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa 2006 (AsgiSA); and
- the New Growth Path 2010 (NGP) (Mthethwa 2011:30).

### **The transition of RDP to GEAR**

The primary goal of the policies was to create an equitably balanced society, within which all the basic needs of the people are met. During the period 1994–1996 the facilitation of the RDP created a platform for engagement to introduce the notion of development to the cross-cultural and multiracial society in the post-apartheid South Africa. As development became a dominating element in the government's agenda, it moved to the centre of the debate. The implementation of the RDP was significant as the policy emanated from the ANC's 1994 election manifesto which promised quality of life for all. To illustrate its significance, an entire ministry in the presidency's office was dedicated to ensuring successful implementation of this policy.

Due to particular challenges, e.g. lack of finances, both practical and political, the Reconstruction and Development Programme was not successful and the government could not achieve most of the objectives intended. It is a reality that approximately one million people per year migrate to the cities in search of economic opportunities. Since 1996 the movement of these migrants from the rural to urban areas has created over 3 000 new informal settlements (Dinokeng Scenarios 2012). Mthethwa (2011:31) contends that the RDP's replacement by

the Growth Employment and Redistribution initiative was a strategic one as this macro-economic strategy aimed at stabilising the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and foreign currency markets. Policy makers in the office of the Deputy President formulated the Growth and Employment and Redistribution policy, but without consultation within the tripartite alliance, which includes the ANC, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). As was in the case of RDP, the assumption was that government policies do not need the approval of all the alliance partners. In the period 1996–2000, GEAR dominated the government's agenda as the government adopted it as its strategic policy for economic stability. Because of their non-involvement in the formulation, the alliance partners criticised the GEAR policy, claiming that its 'neo-liberal' and 'macro-economic' nature compromised the social issues that ensure development. Growth Employment and Redistribution had particular shortcomings towards reaching its objectives, which were to stimulate investment and increase employment and development. Both the RDP and GEAR were policies which had the potential to improve the conditions of society, through municipalities, by utilising government-supported programmes in encouraging a co-operative government.

## **Policy shift to a macro-economic strategy**

In 2006, the government led by President Thabo Mbeki introduced the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA) with the primary purpose of increasing the economic growth of South Africa by creating development targets. Critics dismissed AsgiSA as a policy strategy arguing that it had unrealistic policy goals. However, despite all these shortcomings, AsgiSA created a platform that identified institutional challenges that impede growth and employment creation in an economy. The current NGP introduced in 2010, aims to create suitable livelihoods for all citizens. It aims to do this by focussing on the creation of employment and the alleviation of poverty.

All developmentally related policies by municipalities do not encourage active participation in the economic activities. Ordinary members of the community recognise municipalities as the critical immediate government institutions. This reiterates the importance of citizen participation in municipal policy making. Residents within a municipality are constituents to their respective municipalities. These are the individuals whose quality of life is targeted. The development of the country could yield positive results as the lives of the citizens will be improved through the delivery of quality services. In his 2009 State of the Nation address, President Jacob Zuma emphasised the importance of involving the people in the task of creating a developmental state, and linking the developmental state to the improvement of the delivery of services. It was argued that this approach will

create employment opportunities and subsequently improve the standard of living of the people. This begs the critical question: How will municipalities contribute to the formation of a developmental state?

### **Developing through community partnerships: a case of Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP)**

The most important indicators of a developmental state are the ways in which the resources of the country are distributed and the way in which employment is created. These two factors have a major influence on the growth of the country's economy and general development. Within a municipal sphere, a developmental state could be introduced through the promotion of the EPWP in order to fast-track the skills transfer in that the unskilled and semi-skilled individuals can have an opportunity to be employable. Once they are employable, they will possess the potential to release the burden from the government in the form of social grants and other welfare interventions by the government. The ultimate goal of the implementation of the EPWP is threefold: to eradicate poverty levels within the indigent communities in the country, to increase employment opportunities through the transfer of skills and to reduce the Gini-coefficient of 0,7 to below 0,5 in the next 10 years. Municipalities play a major role in implementing the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP). The EPWP is a government initiative aimed at bridging the gap between growing the economy and addressing the large number of unskilled and unemployed potential workers in municipalities. This is done in a way that ensures that everyone benefits from the economic development of the country (EPWP 2011). The EPWP initiative involves creating temporary employment opportunities to the unemployed, thus transferring skills. This will give them the competitive advantage of being employable (Thornhill and Madumo 2011:139).

The government could use the municipalities, through the EPWP initiative, to achieve local development. The EPWP cuts across all the government departments and all the three spheres of government to provide skills in the infrastructure, environmental, non-state and social sectors (EPWP 2011).

It is important to note that the primary role of the local sphere of government is not to create employment but to provide basic services. However, municipalities' can also contribute positively to the creation of a developmental state that is to engender a culture whereby citizens start participating in the affairs of the government they have elected. Thus, they realise the aspirations of the people in general (Subban and Theron 2011:98). This should be possible, moreover in a state where constitutional democracy is the order of the day. As such, the primary role that would be played by local government in this

instance should be to organise the society behind the banner of ‘developmental state’ and start working towards establishing such a state.

## **CHALLENGES FACING MUNICIPALITIES**

In order to reach a situation where a state is a developmental state, particular factors must be guarded against if a municipality is to be effective. These factors include (*SA Yearbook* 2011/2012:260; RSA 2009:28; Thornhill 2006:322-323):

- corruption and maladministration;
- a lack of administrative capacity to deliver the required services;
- a lack of financial control systems to ensure transparency and accountability; and
- a lack of political stability, which has an impact on sustainable policy direction.

### **Corruption and maladministration**

Corruption and maladministration exist in all the spheres of government – in particular in municipalities. Corruption and maladministration, which seem to be the main impediments to growth and development in municipalities, lead to non-delivery or a slow pace and even inadequate service delivery. A possible reason for these problems is that in local government the system does not have a common framework for monitoring and evaluation. In some of the municipalities the appointment of the senior administrative workforce is influenced by political affiliation (Reddy, Naidoo and Pillay 2005:49–50).

### **Lack of administrative capacity, control system and political stability**

According to the Local Government Audit Outcomes of 2011, 87% of the municipalities (including municipal entities) in Gauteng depend on the assistance of consultants to perform their financial management functions (Auditor-General 2011:20). This shows a general lack of administrative personnel in municipalities to perform particular tasks. Political instability is a challenge that emerges as a result of political interference within municipalities. This instability is triggered by the limited five year term of office for councillors, where incumbents are not guaranteed a re-election. Political instability handicaps the daily functioning of municipalities.

According to section 60 of the *Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act*, (Act 56 of 2003) the municipal manager is the accounting

officer of a municipality and plays a pivotal role of the overall management thereof. In 2011, out of 278, 83 municipal managers had not been fully appointed in their posts, but serve in an acting capacity. This means that 30% of the municipal managers are appointed in an acting capacity in this critical managerial position. The breakdown of acting municipal managers per province is illustrated in Table 1 below.

The instability, as shown by the replacements of municipal managers within a five-year term of office, will have dire consequences for the growth and development of local communities, could be associated to political party power struggles. This demonstrates a clear lack of administrative capacity. It could also be argued that municipal managers are replaced as a result of the political climate and through interference. The average term of office for a South African municipal manager is 2.5 years instead of five years (runs concurrently with the municipal council) as set out in the legislation.

It is often observed that the national sphere of government would create and impose a policy on to the local sphere. This has serious consequences because the activities involved in the policy frequently over-ride the normal functions of a municipality. For example, during the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup tournament, the national government promulgated a policy that required all the hosting cities to unwind their municipal by-laws in favour of that 'FIFA World

**Table 1: Provincial breakdown of municipalities with acting municipal manager**

Province	No of municipalities per province	Acting Municipal Manager No. %	
Eastern Cape	45	8	17.8%
Free State	24	5	20.8%
Gauteng	12	2	16.7%
KwaZulu-Natal	61	17	27.9%
Limpopo	30	9	30%
Mpumalanga	21	10	47.6%
Northern Cape	32	8	25%
North West	23	13	56.5%
Western Cape	30	11	36.7%
Total	278	83	29.9%

Adapted: SA Local Government Research Centre (2012:3)

Cup policy'. This caused a problem because at times the municipality's capacity to deliver on particular projects had not been assessed.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to initiate a debate on the utilisation of the local sphere of government in order to instil a culture of growth and development in the lives of the people of South Africa. Principally, it was argued that local government, which is perceived to be the sphere closest to the people, is viewed as having the capability to facilitate a developmental state. Literature on the nature and character of developmental state was assessed and it was found that the South African situation is different from those of other developmental states, i.e. Scandinavian countries. The policies that aim to achieve a developmental state were investigated and it was found that developmental local government is a critical component in establishing a developmental state. It was argued in the article that the objectives of a developmental local government are the same as those of a developmental state. Various challenges that prevent municipalities from facilitating a developmental state through their established mechanisms were identified. Overcoming such challenges would translate into the effective usage of a developmental local government, through municipalities to facilitate and achieve a developmental state in the national sphere.

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# The Kwanaloga Games of KwaZulu-Natal

## A case study of intergovernmental relations and lessons for developmental local government

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First received 25/01/12

Accepted for publication 18/09/12

### **ABSTRACT**

Since decentralisation became government policy in South Africa, intergovernmental relations (IGR) have evolved in formal and informal dimensions. While each sphere of government has its specific Constitutional mandate – issues of poverty, inequality and marginalisation of vulnerable groups are best addressed through a concerted effort by all spheres of government. Balancing the overall coordination and allocation of limited resources against the distinctiveness and independence of each sphere of government, is an ongoing challenge.

The Kwanaloga Games have taken place annually for the last 15 years under the aegis of the KwaZulu-Natal Local Government Association (KWANALOGA). Based on interviews conducted with a range of stakeholders associated with the Games, this article examines processes, procedures and collaboration between the different spheres of government (local, district, provincial, and to a certain extent national) and sports bodies associated with the staging and management of the Games. The findings are analysed in relation to a theoretical framework of intergovernmental relations and multi-level governance.

The Kwanaloga Games are a good example of successful collaboration between different spheres of government. In this regard the research concludes with suggestions on how lessons drawn from the collaborative

running and management of the Games, can guide the same governmental participants to align their objectives, processes and resources in a comparable way, in order to promote the delivery of more extended developmental outcomes for local government. It is suggested, among others, that this be done by sharing of leadership skills, facilitation and capacity building – combined with organisational and management development.

## INTRODUCTION

Public administration reforms in South Africa since 1994, have brought about decentralisation of governance, which is embodied in multi-level administrative and political structures. As with other countries that have decentralised, there is a need in South Africa for the enhancement of intergovernmental relations (IGR) between the different spheres of government, in order to promote a stable and responsive overall system of governance (Peters and Pierre 2001:132–133). Steytler, Fessha and Kirkby (2006:12) define IGR as involving complex and interdependent relations between the three main spheres of government, and ways these could work together for the good of the country. Coordination of public policies through programme-reporting requirements, planning budgetary processes, and formal and informal communication, all hinge on IGR (Levy and Tapscott, 2001:79). *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996 recognises that the different spheres of government are distinctive, interdependent and inter-related, but that each has its own unique role to play in managing vertical and horizontal relations, which are required for mutual interest and support.

Over the last fifteen years, the IGR system in South Africa has evolved and matured through several key phases. Various commissions and reports, including the Presidential Review Commission (PRC) of February 1998, and the IGR Audit Report of 2003, have highlighted a shift in the perception of IGR. Currently the focus is more on the implementation of IGR through the development of actual processes that will support coordinated service delivery priorities of various sectors, the facilitation of intergovernmental dialogue and collaboration, the creation and support of municipal IGR forums, and integrated development planning (IDP) for all spheres of government. Although the principles of IGR have been entrenched in the South African Constitution since 1996, the *Intergovernmental Relations*

*Framework Act (IGRFA) (No. 13 of 2005)*, was only promulgated almost ten years later, in August 2005 - following the PRC of February 1998 and the IGR Audit Report of 2003. Both the Constitution and the IGRFA acknowledge that challenges will have to be met in terms of the practical implementation of IGR. These challenges nonetheless present an important way for all spheres of government to demonstrate the value of working together for the common good of the country.

A range of collaborative models have been tested in response to the developments in IGR since the promulgation of the Constitution in 1996, one example being the KwaZulu-Natal Local Government Association (Kwanaloga) Games – the relative success of which are discussed in this article. According to the Kwanaloga Blueprint document (Kwanaloga 2003), the Games were inaugurated in 1998 by the then Transitional Local Councils (TLCs), with the key aim of fostering IGR in KwaZulu-Natal. The planning, organisation and coordination of the Games, has involved municipal, district and provincial authorities, and has provided an opportunity for the three spheres of government in the Province to work together for a specific outcome. The aim of the Kwanaloga Games has been to promote inter-district relationships and social cohesion between district council areas in KwaZulu-Natal, using sport as a vehicle to forge sustainable partnerships. Kwanaloga is the custodian the Games and appoints the local organising committee (LOC) responsible for organising and coordinating the Games on its behalf (Kwanaloga 2006).

Staging of the Kwanaloga Games imposes, each year, a range of requirements, obligations and actions on district and local municipalities, sport federations, the National Department of Sports and Recreation (DSR), the KwaZulu-Natal Local Government Association (Kwanaloga), and other stakeholders. There have been inevitable problems, mostly to do with equipment, playing facilities (venues), accommodation, transport, funding and affiliation fees, and catering. However, these have not been a significant hindrance, and the Games have now taken place for 15 years without interruption (see Kwanaloga District Post-Mortem Reports 2005–2009).

Fifteen years of successful Kwanaloga Games offer a number of valuable lessons for the three different spheres of government [local (including metropolitan), district and provincial] in KwaZulu-Natal, and in other provinces in South Africa. These lessons are particularly relevant to local government. For this reason, the procedures, processes, challenges and solutions that have arisen within the specific mandate of the Games, merit documentation, discussion and dissemination, and this is part of the brief of this article. Given the issues and background discussed above, the article also considers whether the Kwanaloga Games reflect an example of successful IGR practice and implementation in local government in KwaZulu-Natal.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This article presents the findings of a study on the role played by the Kwanaloga Games in promoting IGR in KwaZulu-Natal (Nhlabathi 2012), and discusses lessons derived from the process of holding the Games over 15 years.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Investigate the role played by the Kwanaloga Games in promoting IGR;
- Document public-administration challenges experienced by major participants in the Games;
- Evaluate the sustainability of relationships and partnerships forged between provincial, district and local spheres of government during the Games;
- Examine best practices exemplified in the Games, for IGR improvement; and
- Identify strategies for sustaining relationships and partnerships connected to the Games, to promote further developmental objectives in local government.

It should be emphasised and noted here, that although the Games involve participation of national government (represented by the Department of Sports and Recreation) as well as some private sports bodies, the focus of the article is not on public-private collaboration and partnerships, but rather on obvious public-public collaboration. The public-public collaboration refers in the main to local (including metropolitan), district and provincial spheres of government. The relationships, participation and collaboration of these spheres of government are discussed in general terms, in an effort to convey how they represent effective and functioning IGR.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Levy and Tapscott (2001) describe interdependence of spheres of government in terms of the degree to which one sphere depends on another for the proper fulfilment of its constitutional functions and obligations. Interdependence of spheres of government emphasises co-relationships, and may include aspects such as the duty of the respective spheres to empower one another, and monitoring or intervening in the activities of a dependent sphere.

The interdependence of the different spheres of government in South Africa is reflected in Section 41(h) of its Constitution, which states that if the goals of the nation are to be achieved, the three main spheres of government must cooperate with one another through mutual trust and good faith. This is to be done by fostering friendly relations, assisting and supporting one another, informing and consulting with one another on matters of common interest, coordinating actions and legislation, adhering to agreed procedures, and avoiding legal proceedings

against other spheres. No sphere of government should operate in isolation; all are inter-reliant, mutually dependent, and should be supportive of one another, especially with regard to capacity-support for provincial and local government. The different spheres of government should be closely supervised and monitored, in order to ensure that national objectives are met through effective oversight by the appropriate institutions. Malan (2005:227–228) adds that inter-relatedness signifies cooperation through joint planning, fostering friendly relations, and avoiding conflict. For policy implementation and the attainment of government objectives, effective IGR is critical. Mathebula (2004:53–55) argues that the IGR system in emerging democracies should be made obligatory through constitutional provisions.

## **STATE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE NEED FOR IGR**

There have been numerous initiatives in local government in South Africa to promote service delivery and institutional support. Examples include the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which envisaged new roles for local government; Project Consolidate (PC), a local-government support programme for developing understanding of how municipalities should discharge their constitutional mandate at grassroots level; the five-year Local Government Strategic Agenda (LGSA); Planning and Implementation Management Support (PIMS) centres; Integrated Developmental Planning (IDP); and the Bucket Eradication Programme. Although some progress has been made through such interventions, the COGTA Overview Report (2009) reveals that governance and service-delivery challenges in local government still abound. These include:

- Significant service delivery and backlog challenges (e.g. housing, water and sanitation);
- Poor communication and accountability relationships with communities;
- Problems with the political administrative interface;
- Corruption, including fraud;
- Poor financial management;
- Weak civil society formations;
- Intra and inter-political party issues negatively affecting governance and delivery; and
- Insufficient municipal capacity due to the lack of scarce resources.

Achieving local government developmental objectives clearly requires municipalities to be more strategic, visionary, and ultimately influential. Municipalities have a crucial role as policy makers, thinkers and innovators, and as embodiments of local democracy. In seeking progress along these lines, several studies have shown that effective IGR would accelerate attainment of

developmental objectives. Ile (2007) established that well-managed IGR structures can advance service delivery. Highlighting the complexities in the management of IGR structures, Ile's study indicated the need for alignment of roles between the three spheres of government and the importance of coordination, commitment, cooperation and leadership. An earlier study by Sokhela (2006:75–79) saw IGR as a practical instrument for cooperative delivery of services by the various spheres of government, indicating that sound IGR in South Africa could play a facilitative role in improving local government's delivery of services. International studies have similar findings. Examining multi-level governance in Australia, for example, Painter (2001:141–142) points out that IGR – using collaborative models of joint decision-making – can obviate tensions that would obstruct problem solving.

## **RESEARCH METHODS USED**

In this study one-on-one interviews were conducted with senior and middle management representatives of municipalities, including three district Municipal Managers, three district Mayors and Deputy Mayors, district Community Services Portfolio Chairpersons, three Senior Managers or Directors from the Community Services Department, three District Teams Heads of Delegation, the Chairperson of the KwaNaloga Association, relevant officials from the KwaNaloga institution and officials from provincial and national government departments (Notably the Departments of Education and Sports and Recreation). In all a total of 25 senior management persons and representatives were purposively sampled for the interviews.

In addition, a total of seven focus group discussions were held with the following categories:

- District sport officers involved in sports administration;
- Sport Federation representatives;
- Team Managers of the three District teams;
- Representatives of the Departments of Education (DoE) and Sports and Recreation (DSR);
- Sport officers from local municipalities;
- Municipal officials assisting in the KwaNaloga Games; and
- Athletes representing sporting codes.

## **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

While considering the significance of IGR for the Kwanaloga Games in the light of the objectives of this study, it was important to establish whether the officials

involved had a shared understanding of IGR and how they perceived the Games in the context of IGR.

Eleven different pertinent aspects of the findings are now enumerated and discussed. All are based on interviews with selected officials, and are a synopsis and assessment of the respondents' viewpoints. A synthesis of these findings instructs the conclusions and recommendations of the case study.

## **Officials' length of engagement with the Games**

The length of time that officials had been involved with the Games varied. Some 40% of respondents reported that they had been engaged with the Games for between one and four years, 20% for between four and eight years, and the remaining 40% for between eight and twelve years. Respondents indicated that they first encountered the Games while they were founders, pioneers, politicians, technical officials or municipal officials. Twenty percent were founding members when the Games were first conceptualised in 1996, and then inaugurated in 1997. They described how the Games sprang from the idea of a social get-together and playing friendly matches.

The technical officials interviewed originally became involved when district municipalities requested expertise from National government departments such as the Department of Education and the Department of Sports and Recreation, and sport federations such as the South African Football Association (SAFA). The municipal officials originally became involved when working for local municipalities as coordinators and officers for sport. Most Games' officials had been involved for at least five years, which gave stability and continuity to the annual organisation of the event.

## **Importance of IGR for success in the work environment**

In a multi-faceted process like organising the Games, role-players need to have an adequate grasp of the objectives of the event. The current case study sought to establish how far this was the case. Interviews revealed the following:

Respondents stated that the key concepts that captured their understanding of IGR were: cooperation between the three spheres of government; collaboration among government departments; interaction with athletes, politicians and officials; and working together to ensure the success of the Games and other programmes of municipalities and departments within the three spheres of government in question. They added that all participants should complement one another in the delivery of services. Respondents associated IGR with structures and committees created to deliver services – seeing IGR as a platform where the different spheres of government combine to achieve common developmental goals. Also associated

with IGR was coordinated service-delivery planning, resolution of tensions, and maximisation of limited departmental resources. Respondents saw IGR as crucial in service-delivery enhancement, requiring government departments to work together so that action plans, programmes and services at municipal level are aligned with the priorities of other spheres of government. All the respondents - without exception - clearly understood the nature of intergovernmental relations and the critical role they play in the delivery of services that typically cut across different spheres of government.

## **Promotion of IGR between municipalities**

Respondents indicated that the Games promote IGR between municipalities, and that they help them work together as a unit. Teams from local municipalities join to form 10 district municipality teams, along with one metropolitan municipality team, competing in a single, jointly-coordinated event in which respondents highlighted sharing of information and exchange of leadership, administration and management expertise among the participants. The sharing process happens through consultative and implementation protocols that are established within sport-planning committees and structures – where sport managers also report on their district teams, and sport federation representatives give guidance on individual sport codes. In terms of political and administrative collaboration, respondents also cited the Games as a mark of progress in the history of KwaZulu-Natal, following an earlier period of violent political contestation between African National Congress and Inkatha Freedom Party supporters.

## **Participants' relations before, during, and after the Games**

When asked to reflect on the sustainability of relations forged between the different spheres of government ahead of the Games and subsequently, respondents indicated that these relations depended on the specific issues tabled for discussion at meetings, but tend to improve during the Games, because municipalities and provincial government departments are all trying to work towards a common goal. Sixty percent of the respondents rated the relations between the province, districts and local municipalities before, during and after the Games, as average; 30% rated them as good; and 10% as poor.

Respondents cited good relations where municipalities ultimately compete at the provincial level, although this does not rule out tensions that occur along the way - like bias in the selection of athletes. Respondents also indicated that non-payment of affiliation fees by some local municipalities can sour relations, because other districts end up bearing the cost of the Games. After the Games are completed, the working relations such as joint planning, joint budgeting,

joint projects and delivery of services, all continue. When good relations exist, these functions are improved upon.

Respondents mentioned that the spirit of cooperation at the Games was so high, that the former Local Government MEC was motivated to escalate the event to the level of intergovernmental Games, with competition between Provinces (including KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Eastern Cape, Free State and Mpumalanga). A related memorandum of understanding was concluded between KwaZulu-Natal and other provinces, which mandated all municipalities to promote and strengthen IGR between the different spheres of government

## **Sustaining working relationships and partnerships**

Respondents commented on a number of issues concerning relationships and partnerships. Sustainability of working relationships at the various spheres of government required the adoption of agreed protocols by all stakeholders. Roles and responsibilities all needed to be clear, and there should be ongoing engagement and consultation with institutional structures, forums and committees. Sport officers should bring sport-development programmes to the table, and their participation should not be confined to coordination of the Games. Talent identification and promotion, together with team selection, should be left to the sport federations. Stakeholders should adopt a reciprocal approach to the expenses of the Games, rather than relegating these to districts' budgets. The view was also that there should be evaluation and research to assess the impact of the Games in terms of value for money, problems and benefits.

## **Statutory and non-statutory forums for IGR and the Games**

Statutory forums related to the Games include the Technical Committee, the Mayor's Coordinating Forum, the Premier's Coordinating Structure, and the Kwanaloga Executive Committee. Non-statutory forums include the Sports Council, Sports Desks, the Sports Planning Committee, the Daily Management Committee, the Stakeholders' Forum, the Provincial Social Development Structure, the Portfolio Committee, and the Local Organising Committee (LOC). Respondents indicated that the LOC is mainly responsible for organising the Games and is constituted by the hosting district and all its local municipalities, sport-code representatives appointed by provincial federations, and any other body or government department appointed by Kwanaloga. The LOC takes full responsibility for the provision and preparation of facilities.

The Kwanaloga Executive Committee has 35 members and is a decision-making body responsible for oversight and accountability. The Sports Planning Committee advises on matters pertaining to municipalities' participation in the

Games. The Stakeholders' Forum represents all districts and has responsibility for the strategic management of the Games. It is constituted by representatives of councillors, municipal officials and sport federations.

## **Committee and forum meetings**

The LOC meets twice a month in the hosting district. It has six constituent commissions: Support and Logistics, Public Relations and Marketing, Games Services, Sport Services, Emergency Services, and Disaster Management Services. At the Stakeholders' Committee meeting, which is held monthly at hosting-district level, municipalities report their state of readiness for the Games. The Social Development Committee, which meets quarterly at the Kwanaloga Association office, supports community-related projects. The Sports Planning Committee, which coordinates the logistics of the Games, is housed in local and district municipalities, and meets monthly as and when required. Closer to the District Eliminations Games and the main event, the frequency of meetings increases to twice a month.

## **Strengthening of stakeholder collaboration**

Citing the *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act* (No. 32 of 2000), respondents stressed the importance of joint planning of the Games, with active communication and involvement among stakeholders from the time the annual commencement date is known. Particular mention was made of DSR participation in support of coaches, administrators and technical staff. Respondents noted that the Games have become an expensive event for the municipalities. It was suggested that the DSR could assist municipalities with games' equipment and stipends for coaches. Districts also needed to coordinate with the sport federations' own calendars of events.

All interested stakeholders are encouraged to contribute towards financial resources in order to lessen the expenses incurred by municipalities. It was considered that there should be mutual understanding in terms of the roles and responsibilities of all major participants. Some respondents suggested that the Kwanaloga Association could establish a website for communication, networking and partnerships, in order to teach the youth the skills of sports development.

Some respondents felt that politics should be set aside in sport; others disagreed, but thought that distinctions should be made between the roles of officials, politicians and sport federations. Respondents also said there should be evaluation meetings with sport federations, with recommendations going forward to districts for discussion and agreement. The issue of the stipend paid to technical officials needed to be reviewed as it was insufficient, and there

also needed to be a memorandum of understanding among the immediate role-players and stakeholders.

## **Provision of technical expertise by sports federations**

Respondents stressed the need for assessment of technical expertise like coaching, and for knowledgeable technical personnel. To develop athletes' skills, sport federations should provide coaching manuals and have databases of personnel and services such as the availability of football coaches. A database of athletes indicating their progress would help encourage sponsors, the business sector, and stakeholders in general. Respondents indicated that the DSR in particular, should be fully utilised in capacitating and training coaches, administrators and technical staff.

The view was expressed that the DSR could provide greater input. Respondents commented that although the DSR had invested in developmental programmes for sport federations, these were compromised because of squabbles between sport federations. Respondents called for the DSR to back the objectives of the Games, since its core function is to give support and leadership in sport. They felt that the requisite technical expertise could be provided through formal meetings with coaches of different sport codes and a memorandum of understanding between districts, the DSR and sport federations.

Respondents cited a need for the training of sport administrators and coaches, so that the Games could be conducted according to sport-code rules. Sport federations for all 15 codes needed to be decentralised, and sport at lower spheres needed to be structured and organised as it is at national and provincial spheres. Respondents also said that sport federations should co-fund the Games, provide more expertise, and contribute towards accommodation and sports attire. The comment was made that sport federations have their own internal politics and problems. This had sometimes impacted on the Games when people with the required expertise were overlooked thus affecting the quality of coaching.

It was apparent from respondents' input that for IGR to promote service delivery, statutory structures and forums must be in place, that meet regularly, and that maintain collaborative relations. Such structures also need capacity building in the area of technical expertise, enabling them to perform their functions efficiently and effectively.

## **Coordination and communication systems**

Respondents who had been involved in the Games at their inception in 1998, noted that there were at that time no formal coordination systems. It was a matter of trial and error, a case of bringing on board whoever was available. In the beginning, the Games were driven by politicians, but today officials, federations

and stakeholders all participate in a coordinated system. At first, only politicians aligned to a single political party played a role; now all politicians participate, irrespective of party affiliation. Initially, the Games were administered entirely by volunteers, with no day-to-day involvement of dedicated personnel. Volunteers do still participate at ward level and at local clubs for sports development in some codes of sport, but the personnel presently involved in the management of the Games are employed by municipalities, the DSR and sport federations.

Respondents recalled that initially there was simply a random selection of players and athletes. Infrastructure and facilities were poor, and the dominant sport codes were limited to football and netball (this is now expanded to 15 codes). Local municipality areas of jurisdiction at that time were fragmented and concentrated around towns, which often excluded rural participants. After the transformation of local government in 2000, which created local government units for the whole country, Games' participation became more inclusive.

From 2000 onwards, coordination became more organised, with new support from the Office of the Premier and from the MEC for Education. Political leaders were joined by officials in the management of the Games, and federations provided technical support. Present-day structures and committees for the Games had emanated from the need to coordinate the Games, but this development also coincided with the transformation of local government in 2000, when the former regional councils became local and district municipalities.

Respondents explained that coordination between the various offices takes place by attendance at meetings, along with communication via email, telephone and fax. Although phone calls were faster, letters and faxes were recommended because they rendered proof of communication. Emails are problematic as not everyone had email access. Respondents also pointed out that it was not advisable to rely on a single form of communication.

Coordination and communication mechanisms in the delivery of the Games have improved over time. In the main, these systems have evolved through need rather than decree. Statutory bodies may be useful in initiating IGR, but this research indicates that intergovernmental relations cannot be forced – or indeed legislated. Rather, interaction and trust-building in the long run, creates sound IGR that will benefit all the parties involved.

## **COORDINATION, ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE GAMES**

Respondents noted that at the provincial level, the Kwanaloga Association is the custodian of the Games. Currently, there are no full-time officials for coordination of the Games, but staff of the Kwanaloga Association assist in the

planning and administration of the Games. In 2010, the Kwanaloga Association engaged a consultant as a coordinator and project manager for the Games.

Affairs relating to the Games in the municipalities are located in the community services departments, where directors, sports managers and officers handle their administration. Respondents indicated that the sports officers are not only responsible for sport, but also deal with other youth programmes, arts and culture, and tourism. Politicians are represented by community services portfolio chairpersons, and councillors from local and district municipalities.

The federations for the 15 sport codes (athletics, basketball, boxing, cricket, dance, football, golf, indigenous games, karate, netball, rugby, swimming, table tennis, tennis and volleyball) sit on the district technical sports planning committees or sports councils, in order to provide technical support and to advise on sport-code rules and regulations. One challenge is that councillors and sport federations have differing interests and requirements (athlete selection, for example, sometimes gives rise to dispute).

Respondents indicated that responsibility for coordination of the Games (setting up and planning meetings, drawing up operational plans and budgets) rests with the managers of the sports officers. However, problems can occur here, such as political interference in operational decisions (e.g. the funding of athletes' attire).

Clearly, an array of stakeholders and role-players contribute to the delivery of the Games. In such a scenario, conflict may well arise when role-players have diverging expectations, and there will be inevitable logistical challenges. However, this research has shown that the popularity and success of the Games has nonetheless continued to grow year-by-year.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The principle of staging the Kwanaloga Games coincides with the basic principles of public administration, which underpin IGR. Challenges encountered by the Games' organisers, accordingly have a direct bearing on the understanding of the functions of public administration within the different spheres of government. This study found that challenges encountered by major participants in the Games include issues of policy making, administration, managing, organising, financing, personnel provision and utilisation, work procedures and control. These are all critical elements in administration at any level of government.

The Games involve a variety of stakeholders with differing agendas and expectations that can, in turn, complicate intergovernmental coordination. These stakeholders can also, through negotiation in the spirit of cooperative government, resolve and avoid conflict. It should be noted that the main role-players provide

financial, administrative and political-support systems which could equally contribute to success in the delivery of other services in municipalities.

The multi-sectoral structures and committees established for the Games, acknowledge the culture of consultation and cooperation in making joint decisions, and this benefits communities in the delivery of other services. The present study established that such structures and committees pursue mutual interests such as coherent planning, mobilising resources, service delivery, and development.

In upgrading infrastructure and promoting social and economic development for the Games, municipalities and government units have an opportunity to build relationships and partnerships with communities, thereby fulfilling the mandate of district municipalities. This mandate is to redistribute resources within a district according to need, to assist and capacitate local municipalities to provide and sustain services in their area, and to promote economic development in the district. The experience has in fact been that the Games strengthen existing relationships, enhance cooperation between districts across the province, and contribute to local socio-economic development in the particular locality where the Games are staged (Kwanaloga 2003).

### **Recommendations for developmental local government based on the Kwanaloga Games case study**

A contributing factor to the success of the Kwanaloga Games is a shared conceptual understanding among role-players of the nature, relevance and role of IGR in the staging of the Games. In the delivery of local-government developmental objectives, it is equally necessary that role-players at all spheres of government have an understanding of the 'bigger picture', and such role-players ought to be encouraged to think beyond their level of government and to seek out the contribution of other spheres of government in the achievement of developmental local government objectives. This can be done through sharing of leadership skills, facilitation and capacity building – combined with organisational and management development.

The Games are an instrument that unite district residents and allow them to cooperate and compete as a unified district team, unaffected by political affiliations or differences. In addition, employees, officials, politicians and community leaders, continue networking even after the Games are over. Successful district partnerships established for the Games should be sustained for the continuing reinforcement they can provide in wider developmental and service delivery endeavours by local government.

The joint coordination for delivery of the Games, creates a distinctive synergy which promotes IGR through consultation, negotiation, cooperation and capacity building – across all spheres of government. This successful interaction could

extend to analogous teamwork in other service-delivery programmes. Successful relationships and partnerships forged among all possible major Games participants – including the business sector, the sports fraternity, the tourism and hospitality industries and others – should be sustained and extended through consultation and negotiation, for the advancement of further developmental objectives in local government.

In relationships and partnerships linked to the Kwanaloga Games, all spheres of government show a commendable level of cooperation and commitment to the advancement of developmental objectives. The success of the Games indicates that these relationships and partnerships have been constructive in advancing municipal integration and cohesion, and should in turn be a valuable model for wider enhancement of IGR. Given these results, it is recommended that cooperation and collaboration between the different spheres of government should be strengthened through agreed, viable protocols and functional oversight structures, in order to accomplish the set goals of service-delivery programmes and projects at large. This article concludes by asserting that – using the Kwanaloga Games as a proxy – if diverse government entities can align their objectives, processes and resources around a specific outcome like the Kwanaloga Games, then it is possible for the same spheres of government to reach similar alignment for the provision of housing, water, safety, security and other crucial developmental outcomes.

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# Municipal supply chain management

## Challenges and solutions: An empirical study

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First received 10/05/12

Accepted for publication 20/09/12

### **ABSTRACT**

Realising the importance of cost-effective procurement as a prerequisite for better service delivery, the democratic South African government embarked on a major review and transformation process of the public procurement policy soon after it took office in April 1994. This culminated in the introduction of a Supply Chain Management (SCM) policy (2003) based on internationally accepted best practice and designed to address procurement related matters in municipalities.

Despite clearly-defined legislated stipulations, many service delivery challenges are still being experienced by communities throughout the country. The authors are Government independent facilitators who are currently involved with facilitating Municipal Supply Chain Management policy training workshops which are attended by senior municipal officials. The training required participants to complete an academic assignment on the Supply Chain Management challenges they experience in their day-to-day working environment, and provide recommendations. This article encapsulates the basic challenges and possible solutions identified in the trainees' individual assignments.

The major practical challenges identified included: political interference, the appointment of inexperienced and unqualified officials and contractors; qualified technical and professional experts not being members of the respective bid committees, ignorance and lack of understanding of the

Municipal SCM policy and non-compliance of the Municipal Supply Chain Management policy. The objectives of this article are to identify the main practical challenges and problems experienced with the execution of Municipal Supply Chain Management policy, and to propose practical solutions to address the identified challenges and problems.

## INTRODUCTION

The establishment and thorough execution of a cost-efficient procurement policy that ensures the effective supply of goods and services such as tarred roads, clean streets, clean drinking water, electricity and recreation parks to the community, is the main function of effective and efficient municipal service delivery. In pursuit of an improved service delivery to all South Africans, the democratic South African government realised the importance of cost-efficient public procurement as a prerequisite to effectively serve both the community and the national economy. However, when the government took office in April 1994 (including the initial years in office), several general procurement-related problems existed. These included: a lack of uniformity and understanding of procurement policies, procedures and documentation; insufficient procurement planning; limited alignment of procurement with budgeting processes; and no systematic data collection on contracts awarded and completed (National Treasury Learner Guide for Unit Standard 116353 2008:31).

For these reasons, the government embarked on a major review and transformation process of the public procurement policy. This process culminated in the introduction of a legislative framework consisting of Acts, regulations and guidelines within which Supply Chain Management (hereinafter SCM) needed to be conducted. The SCM policy is based on internationally accepted best practice and is designed to address procurement related matters in municipalities. The legislation was issued by the Government to “add to the common wealth of the country and the achievement of enhanced economic and social well-being of all South Africans” (National Treasury 2005:17). The enactment of the aforementioned legislation was an indication of Government’s commitment to implement a procurement policy to enable the emergence of sustainable small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs).

Despite clearly-defined legislated stipulations, many service delivery challenges and problems are experienced by communities throughout the country. This has led to social unrest, frustration and discontentment amongst citizens throughout many parts of the country.

The central theme of this article outlines these challenges and proposes possible solutions.

The authors are Government independent facilitators who are currently involved with facilitating Municipal Supply Chain Management policy training workshops which are attended by senior municipal officials. The training required participants to complete an academic assignment on the Supply Chain Management challenges they experience in their day-to-day working environment, and provide recommendations. These were evaluated and the findings are reported in the section: challenges and problems identified. Details hereof are discussed in the research methodology section.

The objectives of this article are:

- To provide a brief outline of what the concept SCM entails in relation to the municipal environment;
- To highlight the Acts, regulations and guidelines which form part of the municipal procurement transformation process;
- To identify the challenges and problems experienced with the current execution of Municipal SCM; and
- To propose practical solutions to address the identified challenges and problems.

## **SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT: BACKGROUND AND DEFINITION**

The increasing awareness and knowledge of the concepts *Supply Chain Management* and *Logistics* have had a major impact on actual business practice and performance in recent years, both in the private and the public sectors. The two interrelated concepts have succeeded in stressing the fact that business processes need to be performed at the lowest possible cost (efficiency) and in such a way that customers are satisfied with the goods and services they receive (effectiveness). The realisation of the benefits to an organisation to be efficient and effective, whether in the private or public sector, resulted in modern managers adapting to this supply chain revolution and related logistical renaissance (Bowersox, Closs, Cooper and Bowersox 2012:4).

A supply chain consists of all the partners (parties) involved, directly or indirectly, in making goods and services available to a customer. These partners include suppliers, manufacturers, transporters, warehouses, retailers and the customers themselves, with the latter forming an integral part of a supply chain (Chopra and Meindl 2007:3). The supply chain focus commences with the customer and then works backwards through the entire supply chain so that each supply chain partner is familiar with the customer's specific requirements (Wisner, Tan and Leong 2008:7). A supply chain is dynamic, consisting of

multiple stages of operations, and connected by three types of flows namely: information, materials/goods and finances (Liu 2012:7).

- Information flows refer to informational interactions between supply chain stages, such as information regarding orders and requests for supplies and products.
- Materials/goods flows refer to the flow of supplies and products that are delivered in response to orders and requests.
- Financial flows include all the financial transactions that are associated with supply chain operations.

The concepts *Logistics* and *Supply Chain Management* are not new. They represent the third phase of a revolution that started in the business-related literature in the 1960s under the label of *physical distribution* that focused on the outbound aspect of an organisation's business activities (Langley, Coyle, Gibson, Novack and Bardi 2009:14). The concepts gained prominence during the 1990s when business organisations began to view logistics in the context of a supply or demand chain that links all the organisations from the supplier's supplier to the customer's customer.

The concept *Logistics* owes its origins to the military. It encompasses the supply of troops, food, medical supplies, fuel and spare parts (Pienaar and Vogt 2009:35). Logistics refers to the efficient and effective movement of products and materials, triggered by a customer order, from the point of manufacture to the point of final consumption by the consumer. In a private sector, logistics is about getting raw materials to the factory, moving them to where manufacturing takes place, storing the manufactured goods when and where necessary, running information systems to keep management up to date, and finally transporting the product(s) to the consumer. In a public sector more specifically municipalities, logistics is about getting goods and materials from suppliers, storing the goods and materials when and where necessary, running information systems to keep management up to date, and finally transporting the goods and materials to where they are required to deliver a service and meet the needs of the citizens. Logistics is thus a process within a firm or municipality's supply chain, initiated by a customer order and concludes with the customer receiving the ordered goods and services, with value being created by the correct timing and positioning of inventory.

Organisations, both in the private and public sectors that succeed in the logistics activities and functions mentioned in the previous paragraph, will satisfy their customers, mainly because their supplies reach their customers in the right quantities and quality, as well as at the right place, time and price. This is called the Five Rights of Logistics: Right quantity; Right quality; Right time; Right place; and Right price. The five 'rights' need to occur simultaneously and

in an integrated manner to ensure the reliable and consistent on-time delivery of a product or service, known as cost-effective customer service in a supply chain context.

*Managing* the supply chain is crucial to ensure that services are rendered timeously. All logistic activities require well-integrated and well-coordinated planning, implementing and controlling functions in a manner that will ensure that the materials, goods, services and related information move from the point of origin to the point of consumption in the most efficient (lowest cost) and effective (satisfied customers) manner. Managers are required to pay close attention to the origin of the materials, how their suppliers' products and services are designed and assembled, how finished products are transported and stored, and what their direct consumers and end-product users require (Bowersox *et al.* 2012:5).

*Supply Chain Management* (SCM) encompasses the coordination and collaboration between supply chain partners, as well as planning based on the correct receiving and processing of information to source and procure goods and services from the supply chain partners. Cooperation among partners can result in value being added to individual operators and thereby customers benefitting from lower rates. For example, in the automotive industry, the value that the motor car manufacturer can provide to the customer depends on the degree to which the manufacturer coordinates with the suppliers of engines, gearboxes, seats and tyres, as well as the level of cooperation among these suppliers. The delay in the delivery of textbooks to the schools in Limpopo Province was branded a scandal by opposition parties and made headline news in June 2012, is an example of poor supply chain management in the public sector (Schoolchildren still lack textbooks 2012). The delay was caused by a lack of integration and cooperation between the National Education Department, more specifically the officials involved in the planning, warehousing, distribution and financing of the textbooks on the one hand, and the suppliers of the textbooks on the other. Effective and efficient SCM is thus a cross-organisational, cross-functional, integrated system, based on four basic processes, namely: plan, source, make and deliver, with the focus on the end customer (Hugo, Badenhorst-Weiss and Van Biljon 2009:5).

Although the theory and methodology of SCM was traditionally centred on manufacturing and the private sector, emerging evidence indicates a new global trend that SCM, with its emphasis on sourcing and procurement, has become increasingly service-based and is now also being applied increasingly in the public sector (Liu 2012:12). Municipalities control large budgets which have the potential to affect specific social goals such as sourcing from local suppliers, awarding contracts to previously disadvantaged suppliers, and establishing ethical business practices in business transactions (Handfield, Monczka, Giunipero and Patterson 2009:122). The increased introduction of private-

sector applications in the public sector is also in line with the government's pursuit of improved and increased public-private partnerships (PPP) (Binza 2009:1). South Africa has introduced legislation, policies and systems in support of public private partnerships (National Treasury 2004:PPP Manual).

In this theoretical framework the community has become the customer, and, in the case of municipalities, municipal management is required to plan and procure in such a manner that they provide communities with good infrastructure, tarred roads, a clean environment, good sanitation, electrified houses and clean running water in the most cost-efficient manner. When the citizens receive inconsistent service delivery, one of the reasons could be that the supply chain that provides the services has faltered.

For the purpose of this article, SCM is defined as a systems approach to manage the flow of information, materials, goods and services from the suppliers of materials, goods and services, through to warehouses, and finally, the citizens (as end users), such that the citizens are satisfied with the delivery of services.

## **SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT WITHIN MUNICIPALITIES**

The Municipal SCM policy was approved by Cabinet on 10 September 2003 and gazetted on 5 December 2003 as part of the National Treasury Regulations. The intention of the policy was to guide the uniform implementation of the government's procurement reform initiatives and serve as a basis for the *Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999* (PFMA). The policy has since become an integral part of financial management in all spheres of the South African public sector. It bridges the gap between traditional methods of procuring goods and services and the balance of the supply chain, whilst addressing procurement related matters that are of strategic importance (Policy to Guide Uniformity in Procurement Reform Processes in Government: 2003). A strategic and integrated approach is required to be followed in managing the supply and delivery of municipal operations, focusing on long-term strategies that support the objectives of municipalities. Municipal SCM is designed to optimise factors impacting on material costs, quality and service. It also includes a monitoring and research strategy in the supply environment of municipalities. It is important to note that the new SCM policy collaborates with the Information Technology (IT) function to develop a data management system which facilitates strategic supply planning and incorporates improved supplier performance relationship management (National Treasury Learner Guide for Unit Standard 116353 2008:30).

The South African government and local government authorities expect the multi-functional, intra-organisational Municipal SCM policy to ensure economical spending of municipal budgets, while achieving the critical outputs

and outcomes identified by municipalities in their Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). An IDP is aimed at the integrated development and management of a municipal area, and forms the policy framework and general basis on which annual budgets must be compiled (National Treasury Learner Guide for Unit Standard 116353 2008:21). The IDP must align the resources and capacity of the municipality with its implementation as well as reflect a financial plan that includes a budget projection for at least three years.

## **GOVERNMENT'S PROCUREMENT TRANSFORMATION PROCESS**

As indicated in the introduction, the need to review and transform public sector procurement in South Africa was identified soon after the democratic government came into power in 1994. For this purpose, it created a task force in 1995 headed by the State Tender Board under the Ministry of Finance and the Department of Public Works, with technical and financial support from a World Bank IDF Grant (The World Bank Country Procurement Assessment Report: South Africa: 2003). The task force focused broadly on two key areas:

- The promotion of the principles of good governance; and
- The introduction of a preferential procurement policy which would assist in addressing the government's broad socio-economic objectives.

The transformation process was supported by the introduction of a number of legislative measures. The three prominent Acts and a guideline included:

- ***The Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act 5 of 2000 (PPPFA)***.  
The Preferential Procurement Regulations policy prescribes a preference points system (PPS) and formula to be used when awarding contracts throughout the three spheres of government.
- ***The Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003 (BBBEEA)***.  
The BBBEEA was formulated to establish a legislative framework for the promotion of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and to empower the Minister of Trade and Industry to issue codes of good practice and to publish transformation charters.
- ***The Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 (MFMA) which emanated from the Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999 (PFMA)***.  
With the enactment of the MFMA, the financial management and supply-chain principles implemented at national and provincial level were extended to the municipal level. In terms of the MFMA, "The supply chain management policy of

a municipality or municipal entity must be fair, equitable, transparent, competitive, and cost-effective and must comply with a prescribed regulatory framework for Municipal SCM”.

- ***Supply Chain Management Guidelines for Accounting Officers of Municipalities and Municipal Entities (issued by National Treasury in October 2005).*** According to the National Treasury SCM Guidelines for Accounting Officers of Municipalities and Municipal Entities together with the MFMA, the Accounting Officer (AO) is responsible for the establishment and implementation of an appropriate demand management policy to ensure that the resources required by a municipality support its operational commitments and its strategic goals as outlined in its IDP.

All the legislative measures, including the above-mentioned legislation and guideline, incorporate five core principles of behaviour or *Five Pillars of Procurement* upon which the entire SCM policy of effective and efficient municipal and government procurement is based. These include:

- **Value-for-money:** Refers to a cost-effective procurement function that provides value-for-money service, for example, the avoidance of unnecessary costs and delays for a department or its suppliers, as well as the monitoring of contracts to make sure they provide the anticipated benefits.
- **Open and effective competition:** Refers to the transparent, standardised and easily available laws, policies, practices and procedures that came into place.
- **Ethics and fair dealings:** Refers to fair dealings with all suppliers, the elimination of fraud and corruption, as well as the non-acceptance of gifts or hospitality that could compromise the good standing of a municipality or the State.
- **Accountability and reporting:** Refers to the accountability of all concerned through openness and transparency.
- **Equity:** Refers to the advancement of persons or categories of persons previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination. Here the PPPFA seeks to ensure the government’s commitment to economic growth by supporting industry but more specifically small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs); historically-disadvantaged individuals (HDIs); the creation of opportunities for women and the physically disabled, as well as support for procuring local products (National Treasury General Procurement Guidelines 2012:2).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Since municipal service delivery includes both the procurement and supply of goods and services, National Treasury instructed all parties involved in providing

municipal services to the communities which they constitutionally serve, to undergo the latest Municipal SCM policy training. These parties include political executives, municipal managers, strategic executive managers and assistant strategic executive managers in South African local government organisations (National Treasury Learner Guide for Unit Standard 116353 2008:8).

The training is aimed at helping the trainees to effectively and efficiently manage the financial and fiscal resources of South African municipalities. Unit standards for the training were approved by National Treasury and registered with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). Municipal officials who apply for promotion are only considered if they have successfully completed the training.

The authors are Government independent facilitators who are currently involved with facilitating Municipal SCM training workshops which are attended by senior municipal management, namely: directors, assistant-directors and Chief Financial Officers (CFOs), middle management, accounting officials, financial officials, heads of SCM, and SCM officials in various parts of the Cape Province. Thus far, 93 trainees have attended the workshops. The following unit standard is presented: *Participate in the design and implementation of municipal supply chain management* (National Treasury Learner Guide for Unit Standard 116353 2008:1).

The workshops were facilitated with the emphasis on application of practice to theory. The participants were encouraged to participate in discussions and to share their experiences with the group. At the beginning of each day, a trainee was requested to take field notes of the main points discussed during the day's sessions, especially the practical challenges experienced in their day-to-day working environment. An hour before the end of each day training was dedicated to discussions seeking recommendations and possible solutions to the challenges. At the end of the four day workshop, and as part of the official training assessment, each trainee was required to submit an individual 15 page typed academic assignment in which they were required to discuss the SCM problems which they experience in their day-to-day working environment, and provide recommendations.

This article is a summary of the basic challenges and solutions identified in the trainee's individual assignments, as well as the notes taken during the discussion sessions. Every effort was made to ensure that the discussion in the following paragraphs is a true reflection of what was stated by the trainees in their assignments. The trainees are referred to as the respondents.

## **CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED**

The Municipal SCM policy prescribes and requires cost-effective measures to be adhered to for the prevention of fraud, corruption, favouritism, unfair and

irregular practices when procurement is secured and contracts are awarded. However, according to the respondents, this does not usually take place in practice. Consequently, services to the communities are compromised. The major practical challenges experienced by the respondents in their day-to-day work environment are political interference; the appointment of inexperienced and unqualified officials and contractors; qualified technical and professional experts not being members of the respective bid committees; ignorance, non-compliance and lack of understanding of the Municipal SCM policy. The challenges are discussed in the section below.

## **Political interference**

The respondents reported that certain office bearers use their office for personal gain, rather than fulfill their constitutional mandate. Some municipal officials appeared to enjoy some form of political immunity and were known to have strong political ties at higher levels of government. Apart from the consistent subtle manipulation by politicians, there were also clear examples of overt interference. This included political appointments of inexperienced and poor-performing officials into senior positions, interference in tender procedures, as well as officials and politicians using family and friends as 'fronts' to conduct their business for personal gain. The situation is in line with the dissatisfaction expressed at the annual conference of Consulting Engineers of South Africa (CESA), namely that there was too much political interference in public tenders (Bhojaram 2012). These practices revealed a significant lack of ethical standards, confirming the strong public and internal perceptions that the integrity of the Municipal SCM policy had been compromised for nefarious ends.

A major impact of appointing unqualified/incompetent personnel results in the roles of the various committees being undermined. A good example is associated with land allocation and land disposal, where certain politicians often try to intervene in the administrative processes within the land sales policy. This leads to accusations of corruption and the spread of misinformation, which often results in legal action by parties who feel that they should have been awarded tenders. This situation impacts on the integrity and credibility of the Municipal SCM policy (Bhojaram 2012).

Political interference is also closely linked to unsolicited bids, especially when dealing with land allocation and disposal of land. For example, approaches and suggestions are often made by property developers to politicians and municipal officials with regard to a new business development on a prime piece of municipal land. The property developers then expect to be given priority and rewarded for their ideas, making it extremely difficult for officials to explain and apply the legislation regarding unsolicited bids and the need for competitiveness

in terms of Section 14 of the MFMA. Often tension surface as politicians may have created the expectation or given a positive impression in respect of the proposed development. However, officials are required to implement the legislation in terms of the land disposal policy and related Municipal SCM processes. It also needs to be noted that municipal councillors, through council, are required to approve the SCM policy for a municipality, but are prohibited in terms of Section 117 of the MFMA from being involved in the acquiring, selling or letting of property.

### **Appointment of inexperienced and unqualified officials and contractors**

Although closely linked to the first challenge (political interference), the appointment of inexperienced and unqualified officials and contractors is problematic. This problem was also pointed out at a National Public Finance Conference outlining the role of councillors in the financial management of municipalities (Thulani and Conrad 2011:4). The ability of municipal officials and outside contractors to execute their jobs effectively is not always considered when appointments are made, with the result that incompetent, unqualified and poorly-qualified personnel are often appointed. To complicate matters, poor workmanship is not systematically assessed to obtain, at least, the minimum returns from contracts, specifically in cases where poorly-qualified contractors are appointed. Without this oversight, work performance is compromised and the chance of fraud and corruption is increased. The question is often asked why contractors with proven track records and who have performed high quality work for a municipality in the past are not considered, even though their bid prices may be lower and more competitive when compared with the successful bidders.

The main reason for this situation is the socio-political issue of municipalities wanting to nurture small emerging contractors, particularly in the area of low-cost housing delivery, without consideration of possible lack of experience and capital. In many cases such emerging contractors are liquidated and do not complete the projects (Smith 2012:1). However, poor performing contractors are often re-appointed and penalties are not invoked for poor performance as prescribed in terms of the SCM policy.

### **Qualified technical and professional experts are not members of the respective bid committees**

The SCM policy requires representatives who sit on the Bid Specification, Bid Adjudication and Bid Evaluation committees to have the necessary technical and professional knowledge, especially in the construction and technical fields to make informed and objective decisions. Unfortunately, the representatives

who decide on tender issues often do not have the necessary professional and/or technical knowledge and experience. This compromises the integrity of the resolutions taken by the respective bid committees.

Another problem is that there is often a *fixed team* which serves on the Bid Specification committees. The manager, an official and/or the project manager of the specific department which requires the projects, goods or services is purposefully omitted from the committee. This results in time being wasted since the officials who serve on the Bid Specification committees are not knowledgeable to take decisions of a technical nature. Furthermore, the team often attempts to dictate matters with regard to the specifications. This results in possible favouritism (Bhojaram 2012).

Another problem is the excessive time lapses between the closing date of tenders and the receipt of bid evaluations from the Evaluation committees. To exacerbate matters, Bid Evaluation and Bid Adjudication committee meetings, which are scheduled to be held fortnightly, are often cancelled because of no quorum, or absence of a key member. For example, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), who is a key member of this committee, has no proxy and if he or she is unavailable, the meeting is cancelled. These problems delay service delivery (Thulani and Conrad 2011:3).

The same committee members sit on all three bid committees when the same tender is considered. In other words, the same groups of officials who specify the specifications for a tender also evaluate the bids received and adjudicate to whom the tender should be awarded. For example, the chairperson of the Specification and Evaluation Committee is the same person. This could lead to fraud and is contrary to the National Treasury's Supply Chain and Procurement Acts, regulations and guidelines for the public sector and municipalities. In terms of the legislation, regulations and guidelines, "neither a member of a Bid Evaluation Committee, nor an advisor or person assisting the Evaluation committee, may be a member of the associated Bid Adjudication Committee" (National Treasury 2005:17).

These problems were highlighted and discussed at a National Public Finance Conference outlining the role of councillors in the financial management of municipalities (Thulani and Conrad 2011:3).

## **Lack of understanding of the Municipal SCM policy**

Poor planning and control is compromised when officials lack the necessary knowledge of the Municipal SCM policy. This is evident in all directorates and culminates in unnecessary expenditure. Directorates are to a great extent reliant on the officials in the SCM section. However, a high degree of centralisation allows more opportunity for the manipulation of the SCM policy which often

results in corruption. The lack of understanding with regard to the application of the legal framework by both suppliers and municipal officials is a country-wide problem (Dyakala 2011).

The lack of proper planning and control owing to ignorance has various consequences. Firstly, the general inventory levels of purchased stock items are not well managed. Stock items include fuel, paint, electricity equipment, plumbing supplies, stationery, as well as steel used for the manufacture of catch-pit drains and railings on highways. Situations varying from stock-outs, to excessive stock levels, to obsolescence occur and municipalities lose thousands of Rands per month owing to the lack of efficient control standards.

Secondly, a lack of planning and control results in the non-payment of service providers within the required 30 days, causing reluctance on the part of service providers to provide services in the future. Thirdly, annual contracts are not managed effectively. Consequently, new contracts are not in place by the time current contracts have expired which result in goods and services not being supplied (Dyakala 2011).

Proper planning is also linked to the urgent need to manage municipal land and to speed up land disposal processes. For example, after the amalgamation of the Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, Despatch and Western District municipalities, there was uncertainty regarding the land that the new municipality actually owned. This made proper planning for future development, land allocation and the prevention of fraud extremely difficult (Dyakala 2011).

## **Non-compliance of the Municipal SCM policy**

Although various examples of non-compliance were mentioned by the respondents, the main reason for the non-compliance is the general lack of oversight over the implementation of the official SCM policy. This behaviour is in strong contrast to what is expected in terms of the country's Constitution of 1996 which places key responsibilities on all municipal councillors. The Constitution of 1996 established the framework for local government, including the oversight role to be played by national, provincial and local governments. In line with national, provincial and local legislation, the enactment of the *Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 (MFMA)* stipulates the accountability and oversight responsibilities of councillors for optimum municipal financial management and reform. The lack of non-compliance is mentioned as a major concern in a report by the public protector (Madonsela 2010: 84).

The reasons for the lack of oversight are two-fold. Firstly, many council members are unfamiliar with the new SCM policy. Secondly, there is meddling by councillors who have a specific interest in certain contracts, thereby frustrating officials and delaying processes. Every respondent expressed the view that

senior managers in particular do not always accept and apply the SCM policy as stipulated. Consequently, senior managers often ignore, apply inconsistently, and/or try to invent creative ways to by-pass official SCM procedures. For example, during the awarding of contracts process, officials often have their own preferences and create loopholes to award contracts to service providers who do not qualify or score the highest points. In many instances the appointees are unable to deliver, resulting in litigation which creates a negative public image. Furthermore, project managers are wrongfully blamed when such irregularities are exposed. The offenders, however, are protected, neither investigated nor charged. SCM is then seen as an obstacle rather than the means to an end.

An example of non-compliance that causes major problems is the so-called *List of Restricted/Blacklisted suppliers*. The list is not updated on a regular basis as stipulated in terms of the Municipal SCM Regulation 38(1)(c). This list is required to be drawn up and issued by the National Treasury, in close cooperation with local municipal officials, and contains the details of unqualified, unskilled and incompetent suppliers which are restricted from doing business with the public sector. The non-availability of the list results in poor performing suppliers being awarded contracts by municipalities. Contrary to SCM policy, quotations and bids are accepted and considered from service providers who do not have tax clearance from the South African Revenue Services (SARS) to confirm that their tax payments are in order, as well as from bidders whose municipal rates, taxes and services accounts are in arrears for more than three months. Although some service providers are included on the database for *administrative* requirements, many contractors lack the required technical or business acumen, resulting in rework, sub-standard quality, non-delivery and frustration (Dyakala 2011).

The non-existence and non-monitoring of rosters for contracts are further examples of non-compliance. The roster system is not always properly monitored. There is no regular reporting to the Accounting Officer (AO) in terms of the correct use of rosters. This results in the system being open to abuse, unfair distribution of work, and/or the risk of litigation.

Another problem as a result of non-compliance is the absence of a SCM unit. This leads to Departmental Procurement Plans (DPPs) not being drawn up and put in place as a planning tool. Where a SCM unit does exist, it is often dysfunctional, mainly because of the lack of suitably qualified and knowledgeable staff. This often results in poor record keeping and difficulties in finding documents after contracts have been awarded. The written agreements are often unsigned and there is also no secure identified space to store the documents. This creates problems when the Auditor General (AG) seeks information during annual audits or when there are queries by tenderers. The SCM department which is supposed to be the custodian of the safekeeping of documents often refers the AG and other tenderers to officials who are inevitably blamed (Bhojaram 2012).

Also contrary to official SCM policy, contracts with a transaction value between R10 000 and R200 000 are procured without inviting at least three price quotations from accredited prospective providers. Goods and services of a transaction value of less than R10 000 are procured without inviting at least three written quotations from accredited prospective providers. Furthermore, tenders are often awarded even though the SCM unit highlights discrepancies in the tender documentation of the winning tenderer (Madonsela 2010:84).

Other examples of non-compliance include:

- contracts awarded to persons employed by the State;
- contracts awarded to councillors and municipal officials;
- contracts awarded to service providers whose directors and/or shareholders are in the service of other State institutions;
- goods procured without the necessary quotations;
- vehicles used for non-official purposes and logbooks are neither completed nor checked; and
- no programmes in place to measure and assess supplier performance to ensure that municipalities obtain at least minimum returns from awarded contracts. Without this oversight, performance is not always what it should be and the chances of fraud and corruption is increased.

The non-compliance behaviour reflects that reasonable care is not taken to avoid illegal and fraudulent activities. Deviations from and ratification of breaches of procurement processes are often used to authorise spending outside of the policy framework and to conceal bad planning and control. Officials procure goods and services which are unnecessary, unplanned, unbudgeted for and does not support the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) projects.

## **RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES**

In terms of the requirements for the national legislative framework pertaining to SCM directly aligned to the Constitution – Section 217(1), it is stated that:

*“When an organ of state in the national, provincial or local sphere of government, or any other institution identified in the national legislation, contracts for goods or services, it must do so in accordance with a system which is fair, equitable, transparent, competitive and cost-effective.”*

Furthermore, Section 76(4)c of the PFMA and Section 112(1) of the MFMA are aligned with the Constitution of 1996 in institutionalising the key areas of

focus of the new government, namely, “the promotion of principles of good governance”. National Treasury (NT) was established in terms of Section 216 of the Constitution of 1996, and is required to promote and enforce transparency and effective financial management (revenue, expenditure, assets and liabilities) throughout the three spheres of government. Provincial Treasuries are required to establish SCM offices which monitor the implementation at a provincial level and report to NT as required. Jointly, NT and the relevant provincial treasury monitor the implementation at a municipal level.

Therefore, the comprehensively designed SCM policy for South African municipalities should have led to an improved service delivery, and not be associated with the challenges identified. The various examples of dereliction of duties by officials and politicians, tardiness, lack of capacity of staff, opportunities for fraud and corruption, as well as lack of control systems and processes, are unacceptable. Drastic action is required. Unless SCM policies are implemented correctly and holistically by municipalities as intended, its citizens will be at an unfair disadvantage through a lack of service delivery and financial irresponsibility.

The respondents recommended the following solutions in an effort to address the challenges:

## **Development and approval of a comprehensive SCM Procedure Manual**

Such a manual will assist in avoiding any difference in opinion with regard to the implementation of SCM policy. SCM is not the sole responsibility of the SCM Directorate. All the directorates should work in an inclusive, participative and integrated manner, with the SCM policy being part of a multi-functional, intra-organisational team. The following aspects need to be catered for in such a SCM Procedure Manual:

- Guidelines for cost effective supply, the economical use of resources, and contract performance monitoring (oversight).
- Open and effective competition by standardising criteria to eliminate bias and favouritism.
- Ethics and fair dealing in a context of trust, respect and integrity with no conflict of interest.
- Accountability and clear lines of reporting. Regular reporting (both internal and external), openness, transparency, as well as scrutiny of the reports are an imperative requirement. The SCM policy makes provision for reporting by the Accounting Officer on supply chain performance on a quarterly and annual basis after the financial year. Reports are required to be submitted within ten days of the expiry of each quarter and 30 days of the financial year

unless there is an urgent need to report on non-compliance. These reporting procedures must be applied strictly.

- Equity favouring the previously disadvantaged, disabled, women and SMMEs.
- Prevention of unauthorised, irregular or fruitless and wasteful expenditure.
- Managing the expenditure of the municipality by means of a system of expenditure control, including procedures for the approval, authorisation, withdrawal and payment of funds, as well as the payment of all money owned by the municipality to be paid within 30 days of receiving the relevant invoice or statement.
- Open and transparent pre-qualification processes for tenders.
- Competitive bidding processes in which only pre-qualified experts may participate, the correct and official bid documentation is used, and the correct advertising and invitation procedures are followed.

The aspects of a SCM manual as outlined above underlines the necessity to commit to a comprehensive SCM policy for the sake of good governance and which needs to guide all local authority endeavours. The policy must aim for effective and economical spending to achieve the critical outputs and outcomes identified in IDPs. This will ensure that ratepayers receive value for the rates and taxes they pay, while municipalities optimise service delivery.

## **Establishment of Supply Chain Management (SCM) units**

In line with the first recommendation, SCM units are required to be established within all municipalities and municipal entities. Wherever possible, such a unit must operate under the auspices of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) or an official to whom this duty has been delegated in terms of Sections 79, 82 and 106 of the MFMA. Accounting Officers must ensure that their SCM units are appropriately staffed with skilled professionals and that staff receive training, where required, to be able to deliver a high quality service, both to the various municipal departments (internal customers) as well as in their dealings with external stakeholders.

## **Adherence to guidelines on minimum competency levels**

Guidelines on minimum competency levels have recently been issued by National Treasury to ensure that SCM staff and senior managers within a municipality have the necessary competency levels in the short to medium term. The SCM unit, as well as the department for which the goods and services were purchased, must ensure that the performance of a successful contractor/service provider is according to the specifications and that the agreed quality, quantity and lead times, as tendered, are adhered to. Where perceived poor

performance occurs, this should be brought to the attention of the contractor/ service provider, in writing, clearly indicating a time period within which the breach is to be rectified. Where poor performance continues, steps should be taken to recover any damages, and where performance is seriously compromised, the contract terminated on the grounds of non-delivery.

## **Development of Departmental Procurement Plans which are consolidated into Municipal Procurement Plans**

Departmental Procurement Plans, which are aligned to the municipality's IDP and each department's Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP), are a useful tool in assisting municipalities in defining their SCM needs and identifying likely future requirements for goods and services. These plans also assist in identifying or verifying areas where joint or municipal-wide bids can be undertaken in order to achieve savings and develop opportunities for potential strategic alliances with suppliers. Procurement plans encourage a more competitive market and improved supplier and municipal planning as suppliers are better positioned to respond to procurement needs when given advanced notification. The plan should be for a minimum of one year (year one), but preferably aligned to the IDP's three-year period. This is especially critical in the case of capital projects which require the issuing of bids for multi-year projects, as well as obtaining cost savings through longer-term goods and service contracts (limited to a three-year period in terms of the MFMA).

## **Divide the roles of politicians and administration**

Clarity is needed between the roles of politicians and administration. A properly executed SCM policy recognises the important role that both politicians and administration play, whilst clearly and unambiguously distinguishing the role of each. In this regard, politicians need to set policy and strategic direction, whilst administration implements policy under the leadership of the Accounting Officer. Accountability and oversight are only possible if there is a clear separation of the legislative roles, responsibilities and powers of councils, mayors, executive committees and administration.

In terms of Chapter 11 of the MFMA that deals with *Goods and Services: Supply Chain Management and the SCM regulations*, an important distinction has been made in the separation of policy-making responsibilities of politicians and policy implementation responsibilities of the administration under the leadership of the Accounting Officer. This needs to be adhered to. Politicians and officials need to act in a spirit of self-sacrifice rather than greed and self-interest of which many are being currently accused.

## **Regular training**

Regular training for all stakeholders is needed. The National Treasury has also identified senior managers who need a minimum qualification in certain Treasury aspects, including SCM, to hold senior positions. The deadline for training to be completed and the competencies to be satisfied is December 2012. This has been a good initiative as understanding the new SCM processes is important for municipalities to function effectively and efficiently. If senior managers do not understand or subscribe to the processes then the rest of the staff cannot be expected to do so either. Regular workshops, during which the legislative prescripts are explained, can assist in overcoming the said challenges.

## **Restricted/Blacklisted suppliers**

A comprehensive list of restricted/blacklisted suppliers must be based on pre-determined criteria and updated at least quarterly to include any additional prospective provider(s) per commodity and type of service and be utilised on a rotation basis and not a roster basis. To allow for on-going competition amongst providers, prospective bidders need to be invited annually, through local newspapers, the municipal website and other appropriate means, to apply for evaluation and listing as accredited prospective suppliers. The listing criteria need to be clearly stated, for example, SARS tax clearance certificate, as well as municipal rates and taxes payment clearance. The listing criteria may also include whether the bidder promotes businesses located in a particular municipality, SMMEs and BBBEE. National Treasury developed a checklist for the implementation of SCM which covers various critical performance areas, including:

- Before awarding a contract, ensure that neither the recommended bidder, nor any of the directors are listed as companies/directors/persons restricted to do business with the public sector.
- Confirmation of whether a bidder is listed on the National Treasury database or "List of Restricted Suppliers". In terms of Municipal SCM Regulation 38(1)(c), an e-mail should be forwarded to [restrictions@treasury.gov.za](mailto:restrictions@treasury.gov.za) in this regard.

## **CONCLUSION**

The SCM policy as it is currently applied does not deliver the anticipated municipal services to the country's citizens as envisaged. Various reasons have been provided for this occurrence, including political interference, the appointment of inexperienced and unqualified officials and contractors,

qualified technical and professional experts are not members of the respective bid committees, ignorance and lack of understanding of the Municipal SCM policy and non-compliance of the Municipal SCM policy.

The recommendations, if implemented, should improve the situation, allowing the SCM policy to take its rightful place and become the means to effective and efficient service delivery to all South Africans.

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# Contemplating the big five questions in Public Administration and Management curricula

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First received 23/03/12

Accepted for publication 20/09/12

## ABSTRACT

Public Administration and Management, as an applied discipline, needs to be reviewed and adjusted constantly. In this way it will remain relevant to scholars, students, public sector practitioners and society in general. Within a dynamic higher education landscape this process is known as curricula.

Through the application of the principles of Complexity Theory, this article aims to facilitate curricula endeavors in Public Administration and Management by means of five 'big' questions that should be contemplated by all those involved in curricula decisions. The article does not attempt to provide answers to these questions, but rather to guide a curricula discourse by posing the 'right' questions. It is argued that these questions will contextualise any decisions regarding curricula and could contribute to the discourse on relevancy regarding Public Administration and Management teaching at tertiary institutions in South Africa.

## ORIENTATION

Any discipline which has as locus (research domain) and focus dynamic phenomena such as societal challenges and governance trends has to stay abreast of the latest developments, including new practices, theories and cognitive frameworks. It is imperative for the curricula of disciplines to remain relevant and thus provide students with the latest developments in practices and theories and make a contribution to society in general. Therefore it is

vital that these curricula are reviewed periodically. This exercise is known as 'curriculation'.

A curriculum can be regarded as a set of course-work and content offered by a university (including universities of technology for the purpose of this article) as part of a specific learning programme (i.e. qualification; Jackson 1992:3). A curriculum collectively determines the teaching, learning, and assessment that are applicable to a given learning programme. A critical point is that role-players involved in curriculation need to define the programme's objectives clearly. These are usually expressed in terms of learning outcomes in an outcomes-based, educational paradigm. Thereafter the role-players should demarcate the content (course material), as well as the teaching and assessment strategy (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman 1995:76). The outcomes are typically grouped in modules or study units, and a curriculum comprises a collection of such modules or study units. For the purpose of this article curriculation refers to the modification of existing programmes in Public Administration and Management in terms of their design and content.

Any curriculation effort (or perhaps it is more correct to refer to *re*-curriculation in cases where a body of knowledge and curriculum already exist for established disciplines), cannot occur within a vacuum. Subject matter experts, programme design professionals, and practitioners, should take into consideration the wider context within which the academic programme will be offered.

The purpose of this article is not to explore the principles and processes associated with the curriculation exercise as such. No attention will therefore be paid to the technicalities associated with curriculum design, such as the appropriate cognitive levels in terms of the following aspects: National Qualifications Framework (NQF), course design, learning outcomes, articulation, admission requirements, assessment criteria, core, fundamental or elective modules, credits, and so forth. Rather, five fundamental ('big') questions are proposed, which should guide discourse in Public Administration and Management (PAM). The aim of these questions will be to assist role-players in their curriculation efforts. It is argued that such questions will contextualize any decisions regarding curriculation and could contribute to the discourse on relevancy regarding PAM teaching at tertiary institutions in South Africa.

To contextualise curriculation efforts, the dynamic environment of higher education in South Africa will be explored first. Complexity Theory will then be highlighted and applied in order to illustrate the necessity to unpack a complex phenomenon by means of its constituent parts. Lastly, the five big questions will be posed with appropriate sub-questions to help guide curriculation endeavors.

## THE DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

A curriculum usually defines the learning that is expected to take place during a course or programme of study in which knowledge, skills and attitudes are transferred. A curriculum should also reflect the teaching, learning and assessment methods and provide an indication of the learning resources required to support the effective delivery of the course (McKimm 2003). Curriculum development is not carried out in isolation from other activities. It rather forms part of an iterative planning, development, implementation and review cycle. In the case of South Africa, curriculum exercises in PA Mare are also part of regular review, programme evaluation, and quality assurance cycles at universities. Curriculum therefore does not occur in isolation, but should take into consideration the realities the one encounters in higher education .

The higher education landscape changed significantly in the last decade in South Africa. The restructuring of the South African higher education system ranges widely from new political direction, new legislation, the creation of new or rationalised institutional arrangements, and mergers. Mergers entail the combination of two or more separate institutions of higher learning into a single entity under a single governing body. Especially mergers between universities and former technikons (now universities of technology) are significant for purpose of this article. Multi-campus were formed in cases where unitary institutions have geographically distant delivery sites. An example of distant delivery sites is North-West University (NWU), which, as unitary institution, has decentralised sites on Potchefstroom, Mahikeng, and Vaal Triangle campuses.

The *Higher Education Act* 101 of 1997 (as amended by Act 39 of 2008) was promulgated and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) was formed in May 2009 as a new department, bringing together all post-school education and training institutions that formerly resided under the Department of Education. Attempts also were made to curb the plethora of new programmes and module offerings through the development of a Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM).

Based on the National Plan Vision 2030 it seems that Further Education and Training (FET) colleges will play a more significant role in the country's strategy to develop higher education skills. The skills development strategy interfaces with existing strategies and plans such as the New Growth Path, the Industrial Policy Action Plan 2, the Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa 2010-2030, and the Ten-Year Innovation Plan. According to Vision 2030 and the Department of Higher Education and Training's Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (issued on 12 January 2012), FET colleges should produce at least 30 000 artisans a year in specific skills areas, such as civil engineering, mining technology, information technology, finance, electrical

infrastructure and construction and accounting. These skills are needed to make South Africa's comprehensive development programme of national infrastructure a success. Vocational education at the FET colleges should not be a dead-end; the Green Paper makes proposals to ensure pathways that allow students to move on to university education after completing their vocational qualifications if they wish to do so. What are the curricular challenges for Public Administration and Management associated with this type of mobility? How should universities gear itself to bridge the potential gap between vocational training (FET) and the theoretical-based programmes typically offered by universities?

The registration and curricular of new programmes are guided by the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) and the respective levels on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), as well as the principles of outcomes-based education.

The National Research Foundation (NRF), established in April 1999, is responsible to support research and innovation through its *Research and Innovation Support and Advancement Agency* (RISA). An important factor in the production of knowledge through universities is the focus areas that the NRF developed to guide the assessment of grant applications, as well as the way that research is funded. Only research that have scientific merit and show relevance for South Africa's development programmes (building high-level infrastructure and becoming globally more competitive), typically receive grants. NRF-funding thus supports the research agenda of the state. Critique against this position could be that more normative, theory-building research that is typical of social sciences is currently not funded adequately.

Based on the *Skills Development Levies Act* 9 of 1999 (as amended by Act 24 of 2010) and the *Skills Development Act* 97 of 1998 (as amended by Act 37 of 2008), Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) are obliged to, amongst other activities, develop Sector Skills Plans, and receive and evaluate Workplace Skills Plans and Annual Training reports from employers. These plans are aimed at accelerating the delivery of scarce and critical skills in the country. SETAs are also expected to design Learning Programmes (formerly known as 'learnerships') in conjunction with training service providers to implement apprenticeships and vocational skills programmes.

It is expected of universities that wish to partake in short learning programmes to register as a service provider with the relevant SETA. The university also should ensure that the nature of the programme (curriculum) conforms to the unit standards, credits, and assessment criteria specified by the SETA. This has implications for the formal recognition (credits) and alignment of short learning programmes with formal programmes at the institution.

A further issue that could influence curricular efforts in the higher education landscape is the perceived lowering of Grade 12 standards. This is a

highly contentious and politically-charged issue, but universities increasingly report weaker reading and writing abilities amongst first-year entrants. Due to the potential implication on admission requirements, articulation, tuition, and assessment, curriculum efforts need to take these realities into account.

This concludes a brief overview of the dynamics associated with the higher education landscape in South Africa. In the next section PAM as a complex, adaptive system is explored to illustrate the necessity to unpack the discipline in smaller parts by means of five 'big' questions.

## **PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT AS A COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEM**

Any attempt to contemplate the content of any academic programme in Public Administration and Management should consider a wide variety of possible variables. Such variables may, to varying degrees, influence eventual decisions regarding a curriculum. Due to the complexities associated with it, the curriculum for a highly dynamic subject discipline such as PAM may be described as a 'wicked' problem. In Complexity Theory vocabulary a 'wicked' problem is defined by Camillus (2008:99) as a complex problem that is difficult to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognise.

A complex system can be regarded as a system that comprises interconnected and interdependent parts that as a whole (system) portrays certain properties, which are not evident when observing the individual parts (Joslyn and Rocha 2000:72). Dynamic systems can be classified as chaotic, complex adaptive, or nonlinear (Newman 2010:45). A complex adaptive system is diverse in nature and consists of multiple interconnected elements. Such systems are adaptive in the sense that they have the capacity to alter, change and learn from experience. An example of a complex adaptive system is a social grouping (such as a political party) that engages in particular activities and behaviour within a certain society (Cohen and Havlin 2010:45).

Based on Complexity Theory it is argued that in order to understand a system it is necessary to unpack it into smaller subsystems, entities or parts that assemble the 'whole'. It is argued that the whole could be better understood based on its smaller parts. Complexity Theory, however, furthermore holds that although it is useful to understand the smaller parts in terms of the whole, the researcher may lose sight of the intricate interdependencies between the smaller parts when viewed in isolation. In other words, when one views the smaller parts in isolation the dynamics that are associated with these combined parts interacting interdependently are negated.

By placing the principles of Complexity Theory within the realms of PAM curricula, one may argue that this discipline could be regarded as a system comprising of smaller subsystems (functional domains), which function within a larger system (i.e. developmental state). The five big questions below are based on this argument. The 'larger system' refers to the nature of the state (as locus and focus of PAM research and theory-building endeavors), as well as the nature of the tertiary fraternity (i.e. university) within which PAM programmes are offered. The next level within the complex system refers to the nature of the discipline, its paradigmatic development, and finally, to its content (curriculum). Inductive logic as well as Complexity Theory are thus utilised to unpack and grasp the complex system better, as well as its smaller, interrelated parts (content) – hence the need to ask the right questions regarding curricula efforts.

In the next section five 'big' questions are posed to guide such a curricula inquiry. The author does not imply that these questions are complete, in other words that these are the only questions to be asked, but rather contend that these are the most fundamental questions that should be posed by all role-players involved in curricula. In turn, each question should be guided and refined by further 'smaller' questions (constituting parts of a system), again to inform the 'whole'. These five questions are intended to underscore the complexities that are associated with PAM teaching in general and PAM curricula in particular.

## **THE BIG FIVE QUESTIONS FOR PAM CURRICULATION**

Any dynamic discipline, such as PAM, continuously finds itself struggling to answer its "big questions". Neumann (1995:410), for example, argues that Public Administration lacks an understanding of what its big questions should be – or even how to define those questions. Other scholars such as Behn (1995) further states that if Public Administration wishes to be considered a discipline that is serious about its field of study, it must ponder its own big questions. According to Behn (1995) true big questions in PAM should focus on the nature of knowledge production (i.e. research, theory-building, etc.) and teaching.

Any curricula effort boils down to choices: choices of balance, content, weight, and relevance. Asking the right *questions* would facilitate making the right *choices*.

The five questions below are an attempt to suggest such fundamental or big questions, however posed within the context of curricula. It should be noted that the variables that should be considered in answering each question adequately are interconnected and interdependent. In other words, issues impacting on question 1 (Q1), for example, also affect 'answers' to other questions. As far as possible the author followed inductive logic in the way

questions are ordered. This implies that ‘answers’(consensus) to question 1 will guide role-players in the curriculum effort to answer question 2, then 3, and so forth. It should be noted further that due to their complexity, any debate regarding the content of these questions warrants or deserve an article (or various articles) on their own. Within the limitations of this article the author thus attempts only to *guide* or facilitate discussions on curriculum through typical questions that should be asked, and does not endeavor to *answer* these questions. The tone of the article is thus one of a discourse amongst colleagues within the discipline.

### **Q1: What is the nature of the (South African) state?**

Gerald Caiden, in his 1971 publication *The Dynamics of Public Administration*, stated that “...no one has yet produced a simple definition of public administration that is fully acceptable to both practitioners and scholars ...” Also Nicholas Henry (1992:20–51) reflects that “... Public Administration is a broad-ranging and amorphous combination of theory and practice.” More contemporary attempts to define PAM, such as those of Fox and Meyer (1995:105), Thornhill and Hanekom (1995) and Wessels and Pauw (1999:9–25) portray some commonalities. These authors seem to concur that scholars in the subject field typically focus their studies on:

- The executive branch of government
- The public or civil service
- The bureaucracy charged with the implementation of public policy.

If we concur with these commonalities, the question arises as to what extent changes in the state will impact on the discipline. Should scholars in PAM only focus on the South African state? What about comparative analyses between various kinds of states (e.g. developmental states, paternalistic states, nanny states, failed states or welfare states)?

A state as a legal and political entity can be typified by its goals or direction (see Wiechers 1995:237). A fundamental question that needs to be debated in any curriculum exercise is to what extent the curriculum of PAM should reflect the direction (including the means to reach it, such as policy, strategy, programmes, etc.) of the state? Based on this fundamental question further sub-questions come to the fore, such as: To what extent should the curriculum of PAM reflect the socio-economic, political, demographical and developmental realities of the state? Should knowledge production and tuition activities in PAM mainly serve the needs and interests of the state, or should it rather focus on building and testing theories to develop the discipline further? How do scholars in PAM serve the state without becoming *servants* of the state? What

is the nature of 'serve' – without renouncing academic freedom, as defined by the *Magna Charta Universitatum* (18 Sept 1988)? Does it mean that PAM's curriculum will always be *reactive* in nature (i.e. reviewing and including the latest policy, strategy and programmes of Government into the curriculum), or can scholars, and is it expected of them, become more *pro-active* (i.e. leading and facilitating a research agenda to suggest innovative, cutting-edge responses to societal challenges)? How do we as scholars thus transcend the focus on 'what is' towards a focus on 'what should be'? How can scholars organise themselves to serve as 'think tanks' in the interest of the state and how should they disseminate this information to practice within society?

Furthermore, to what extent should PAM reflect the values, intentions and interventions of the state? Vil-Nkomo (1998:132) in this respect argues that "... a major responsibility is placed on scholars of public management and administration to advance the public sector and the country through relevant pedagogical approaches and innovative research". Is the acceptance of such a responsibility evident in current curriculum practices?

With the clear policy directives issued by the ruling party (African National Congress) it is evident that the aims of a 'developmental state' will be pursued in the years to come (see National Planning Commission Vision 2030). The Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (issued on 12 January 2012) makes the position of Government and the role of universities in this respect clear: "Improving research capacity will be a major focus for universities, with a particular focus on research to meet our developmental objectives." On a pragmatic level, how should the curriculum of PAM enhance this developmental agenda? What kind of knowledge, skills, and behavior is appropriate for public officials to facilitate a developmental state and adhere to the principles contained in Section 195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa?

On a more theoretical level, a curriculum discourse about the interface between state, Government (practice) and PAM (theory) should consider the issues of political 'neutrality', the nonpartisan nature of the administration, and the dichotomy between politics and administration. These theoretical considerations should be juxtaposed on the agenda covering ideological dynamics and transformation in South Africa.

## **Q2: What is the nature of a (South African) university?**

Since the formal establishment of universities, dating back to the establishment of the University of Bologna in 1088 (Kerr 2011:16), societies debated the nature and role of universities as public institutions. In short, it is argued that a university should pursue scientific studies for the transfer of knowledge and for

tuition and research purposes. Usually an addition is made: universities should also render a service to society (Huff 2003:122).

Within the transformation agenda of the Government of the day in South Africa a vibrant discourse exists regarding the role of universities in society. What role do universities play in the system of governance in the country? To what extent should universities contribute to issues such as global competition, national development, and the political economy of the state? Should a university remain only accessible to students who can afford such studies ('elitism') or is access to higher education a right that the state should facilitate through the 'massification' of education? By 2030, for example, the DHET aims to raise university enrolments to 1 500 000 (a projected participation rate of 23%) as opposed to the 2011 enrolments of 899 120 (a 16% participation rate). Are universities adequately funded, equipped and organised to accommodate such an increase? It could also be argued that nature of the state (Q1 above) will influence the research agenda and ultimately direct any decisions regarding research funding, student admission policies, as well as the way universities are subsidised.

Kraak (2000:89–92) convincingly illustrates how universities in South Africa experience changing 'modes' and that new knowledge production has significant implications for higher education. He (Kraak) explains that universities rapidly are moving away from a more traditional form of knowledge production and tuition (Mode 1) to a more entrepreneurial, skills-based paradigm (Mode 2). Based on international developments in especially Britain, Van Jaarsveldt and Wessels (2011:380) argue that there is evidence that PAM as discipline is moving away from a more generalist type of training to a more technical orientation. Should we make a choice between technical and academic relevance in curriculum, or attempt to strike a healthy balance between the two?

Mainly due to dwindling subsidies from the state, third-stream income generation has become a necessity. In the context of PAM, third-stream initiatives almost exclusively focus on managerial competencies and skills. A good example of such third-stream endeavours is the R10m contract obtained from the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA). According to this contract consortia of universities are tasked with the delivery of the *Executive Development Programme (EDP)/Post-graduate Certificate in Executive Leadership* to approximately 10 000 senior managers from national and provincial departments country-wide. This usually requires a curriculum effort to facilitate academic articulation to learners who successfully complete third-stream (short courses and skills-based learning programmes). Such an effort also will ensure that credits obtained non-formally can lead to access into formal qualifications and programmes. This, in turn, generally results in a focal point that is more vocationally oriented.

Minister Naledi Pandor commented on 4 April 2012 that universities are "... partly to blame for a lack of innovation ..." She continued to state that "... universities continue to focus on producing talent rather than technology". These statements are indicative of the role that Government ascribes to universities in society in general and to economic development in particular.

### **Q3: What is the nature of the discipline?**

Is PAM a social science or an applied management discipline? Does the focus of the discipline fall on vocational training to prepare prospective public officials for the labour market, or should the focus rather fall on the academic discipline that provides knowledge production, research, theory building and theory testing – or should the focus fall on both aspects? These are some of the pertinent questions that should be asked in curriculum.

Key sub-questions to guide a discourse on these big questions further include: What is the nature of a public institution in contrast to a private sector enterprise? How does the political milieu influence public institutions in comparison with those in the private sector? What does the administration and management of a public institution entail? What kind of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior is necessary to administer and manage such an institution successfully?

There seems to be general consensus amongst social scientists that Public Administration covers the field of study concerned with society and human behaviour (Potter 1988; Byrne 1998; Flyvberg 2001). Social sciences can be regarded as an umbrella-term for a wide variety of study fields, which stand in contrast to the natural sciences.

Roux and De Beer (2010) contend that the social sciences in South Africa are in a 'state of crisis'. They base their argument on the inappropriate emphasis on the development of natural science and the pursuance of economic ideals (i.e. profit motive). Insight into human existence, reflection on social dynamics, and the loss of 'thinking about thinking' all lead to the increasing shallowness of social sciences. Roux (2012:23) further argues that 'human' is removed from the humanities and that 'social' is taken out of the social sciences, which have led to a general lack of a 'moral consciousness' in science. The distorted biasness towards natural (technical) sciences, the emphasis on relevance, and the way universities are organised, Roux (2012:32) argues, have led to a situation where social sciences are regarded as the 'black sheep' of the tertiary sector. He (Roux) further makes a case that knowledge production in the social sciences should entail far more than the search for empirical evidence and facts (positivism), but that insight, comprehension, interpretation, reflection, and the application of various schools of thought should be part of a 'journey of discovery'. To what extent do we as scholars in our curriculum efforts prepare students to embark

on such a journey? In this regard Langrod (in Van Jaarsveldt and Wessels 2011:379) argues that universities should seek to 'create cultivated individuals rather than to train for specific professions'.

How philosophically grounded is a Philosophy Doctor (PhD), a D. Litt. et. Phil., or D.Phil in PAM currently in South Africa? White (1995:279) maintains that PAM is a social science with the 'least philosophical sophistication'. The author concurs with this assumption. It seems that the new generation of academics in PAM is not interested or adequately versed in the fundamental underpinnings of the discipline. Due to the perception that theory is 'boring' and 'irrelevant for the world of work', students are not adequately exposed to theories that are relevant to the discipline, such as Classical Organisational Theory, Social Contract Theory, Public Choice Theory, Contingency Theory, Postmodernism, Human Relations School of Thought, and so forth. The same remains true of the fundamentals of knowledge production such as phenomenology, epistemology, and positivism. The result of this theoretical 'impoverishment' is that students struggle to pursue a particular theoretical vantage point in especially postgraduate research and are not adequately adept at applying the principles of inductive, deductive or retroductive logic in their argumentation. Studies conducted by Wessels (2007:97–120) and Cameron and McLaverty (2007:69–96) illustrate how vocationally minded and technically focused PAM research has become.

Another sub-question that should be contemplated is the fact that the majority of schools and departments offering PAM at universities are situated in Business and Economic or Management faculties. Practice thus reveals the perceived acknowledgement that PAM fits better into the management domain – rather than into that of pure Social Sciences. The New Public Management (NPM) paradigm with the introduction of 'managerialism' and private sector practices and vocabulary, significantly influence this trend. This led to the blurring of distinctions typically made between public and private sector practices. Recent developments and trends, such as public-private partnerships (PPPs), outsourcing, commercialisation and privatisation, further contributed to this haziness in distinction. A lack of clarity amongst the distinctions between public and private sector practices is further evident from the debates that often surface in university senates on the 'publicness' of *public* financial management and *public* human resources and how it differs from 'normal' typical B.Com. modules.

How does this trend towards 'managerialism' influence the practice of curriculum? Parties involved in curriculum should ask themselves: Do we prepare 'generalists' or 'specialists' for the labour market? Traditionally, PAM was supported or assisted by related disciplines such as Political Sciences, Sociology, Philosophy to operationalise the learning outcomes (usually 'generalist' in nature) that are associated with a BA or B. Admin. degree. However, if PAM

is part of a programme where other disciplines do not enhance outcomes typically associated with PAM teaching, one may end up with a student who is not adequately versed in societal dynamics, theory, humanities and statehood and citizenship issues. It seems further that if PAM is situated in management faculties, emphasis is placed increasingly on specialist 'how-to' (skills focus) training rather than on general contextual, 'why' questions (knowledge building). This issue accentuates the debate on 'technical versus academic relevance'.

If members of a particular school or department in PAM decide to pursue a more vocational focus in their curricula, the question should be asked: To what extent should the curriculum cover the respective competency profiles that are to be developed for the various managerial positions in the Public Service? The SMS (Senior Management Service: positions from Directors to Directors General) Competency Profile or Framework (DPSA 2003), for example, focuses on critical generic competencies, which senior managers would be expected to possess, rather than functional/technical competencies, which are essential to a certain department or a specific job. The SMS Competency Framework consists of a set of ten generic competencies that communicate what is expected of Senior Managers. To become more vocationally orientated and more 'relevant' from a developmental focus, should these generic competency areas replace existing traditionally accepted knowledge or functional areas of PAM? (also see Q5 below).

The Public Service in general experience high levels of staff turnover. New recruits, especially from the private sector, entering the public domain usually require high-impact orientation, induction and skills programmes to ensure that they promptly reach their productive capacity and fit into the culture of Government. This suggests that a *lacuna* of skills in especially specialized functional areas need to be transferred to new incumbents.

Due to his involvement (facilitator and participant-observer) in capacity-building programmes for the past 20 years, the author can testify to the significant contribution that access for students to 'real life' situations or cases make to enhance both research and teaching. Academics can become isolated from the cutting-edge experiences of development, and since some information is simply not available in traditional means of information, such as text books and scholarly articles, the content of study material may not address real life issues, and lecturers may lose their legitimacy as authoritative figures or sources of expertise. Practical exposure enriches tuition since the lecturer can draw from real life cases to provide appropriate examples of certain management applications. This type of exposure could also impact on research endeavors. A more phenomenological perspective (i.e. action research) and multidisciplinary vantage point could be developed in addition to a more traditional positivist paradigm – typical of scientific university research. It is argued that interaction based on 'practice-theory' is necessary to prevent stagnation in the discipline and will enhance

the relevance of the curriculum. In this regard Atkinson and Bekker (2004:454) contend that an 'intellectual bridge' needs to be built between the 'thinkers' (academics) and the 'do-ers' (public officials). Striking the right balance between traditional tuition and research responsibilities on the one hand, and consultancy services, community-outreach, and competency based skills programmes on the other hand, is probably the best way forward in curriculum efforts.

#### **Q4: What is the nature of paradigmatic developments in the discipline?**

Since the inception of Public Administration as discipline, earlier in Europe and in America in 1887 with the works of Woodrow Wilson, it has undergone various paradigmatic changes. These paradigmatic shifts are well documented, both nationally (McLennan and FitzGerald 1991; Schwella 1999:333–355; Theron and Schwella 2000; Thornhill 2007:1–18; Cloete 2007:19–42) and internationally (i.e. Nicolas Henry's 'Five Paradigms of Public Administration' [1973]; Goodnow 1997; Simon 1997; Hughes 2003:17–43) and fall outside the scope of this article. Although authors such as Cooke (1997) argue that the so-called paradigmatic development of the discipline is a 'deceptive illusion' and that these are normal developments within 'one paradigm', the paradigmatic perspective provides a useful tool to guide curriculum.

The question remains as to what extent the curriculum will reflect a particular paradigm. Are we still in the Public Administration paradigm criticised by some for its 'reductionist' nature (Schwella 1999; Cloete 2007) or is it necessary to transcend to a broader paradigm on public governance (see Sing 1999:98–100)? What knowledge do we convey to students in class: do we make them aware of the respective perspectives regarding the paradigmatic development, but convince them about the 'right' one? Or, do we leave the debate 'in the air' and expect students to make up their own minds? How must students interpret all of the different perspectives they will encounter when they do a PAM literature survey? How will these paradigms be packaged in the respective year levels? Will we, for example, follow a model whereby first year students will be exposed to an 'administration' paradigm (generalist, theoretical and contextual focus); in their second and third years to a more 'managerialist' paradigm (New Public Management, skills, specialist, vocational focus); and on postgraduate level to a 'governance' paradigm (broad, 're-inventing', joined-up, network focus)? How will we accommodate, in other words, the recognised approaches to PAM teaching (i.e. politics/administration dichotomy, conventional, generic administrative, business management, and comprehensive approaches) in the curriculum?

The question on paradigmatic development is compounded by the observation that PAM does not have a uniform and unifying theory. Ostrom

(1989) in this regard argues that attempts at successfully establishing an identity for Public Administration, fall short, leaving this discipline in an ‘intellectual crisis’. If we add the paradigm of ‘governance’, which has a far broader scope of focus than PAM, to the existing curriculum, it will add to this problem.

The particular paradigmatic view that lecturers at a particular university hold provides to a large extent the name of the department or school and determines its training foci. The vast variety of names of schools and departments that offer PAM programmes currently in South Africa reflects this tendency. Some examples include Public Administration; Public Administration and Management; Public Management and Governance; Public and Development Management; Public Leadership; and Public Affairs. This trend is in line with a lack of uniformity that exists globally. How do these trends influence decisions regarding the design of a curriculum?

### **Q5: What is the nature of the content of the discipline?**

Based on ‘answers’ to questions 1–4 above, the last, and probably the ‘biggest’ question is about how to package the most appropriate modules (in terms of content and credit weights) on the right NQF-levels in the semesters of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Sub-questions that are relevant to this issue include: What are the conceptual borders of the discipline? What do we need to include and what can be excluded from the curriculum? How do we accommodate new public sector trends, events and developments, as well as insight gained through inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary research?

During the deliberations of the Standards Generating Body (SGB) of Public Administration and Management (SGB:PAM 1998–2002), eleven functional areas of Public Management were identified. Based on the prescribed processes of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the purpose of the SGB was to develop unit standards per NQF-level and identify outcomes per functional area associated with the discipline. The SGB comprises academics, practitioners, professional bodies, as well as members from specific specialisation areas. The following functional areas were identified:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy Analysis and Management</li> <li>• Development Management</li> <li>• Public Organisational Development and Management</li> <li>• Managing public service delivery</li> <li>• Human Resources Management</li> <li>• Information, Knowledge, Communication and Technology Management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Management Ethics</li> <li>• Public Administration and Management history, theory and research</li> <li>• Inter-governmental Relations</li> <li>• Disaster Studies</li> <li>• Financial Management and Procurement</li> </ul>
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This list is not only indicative of the broad, dynamic scope of the discipline, but also raises the question as to whether contemporary thought and developments in the discipline are 'captured' adequately by this list. To what extent does – and should – the curriculum reflect these functional areas?

Again, a decision regarding the inclusion or exclusion of these areas or categories should take the 'answers' to Q1–Q4 into consideration. For example, to what extent will these areas address the developmental needs of the state or capacitate public (including municipal) officials for their managerial responsibilities? Should 'Leadership', for example, receive more attention based on answers to question 1 above, or should 'Ethics and professionalism' receive more attention in the curriculum due to the high levels of corruption that are pointed out in society?

Often, only six months (a semester) are available to deal with a particular functional area, such as Public Financial Management. Based on current realities about curriculum design, this area will typically not again be addressed in subsequent years of study. Therefore the lecturer needs to address the 'what', 'why' and 'how' questions, covering NQF-levels 5–7 issues, in one semester. This is hardly enough preparation to equip a public official for the complexities associated with the application of this functional area in the world of practice or to appreciate the intricacies associated with it when conducting postgraduate research in the area. Decisions on which areas to include or exclude in the curriculum should be guided further by questions regarding the most appropriate way to convey this knowledge to students (i.e. case-studies, research projects, assignments, group discussions, etc.) and how to assess it.

## **CONCLUSION**

This article attempted to provide a framework, in the form of five fundamental questions, to assist PAM curriculum endeavours. By applying the principles of Complexity Theory, PAM was unpacked in its smaller parts (in the form of what was termed five big questions).

Due to the 'wickedness' facing PAM curriculum within a dynamic higher education and developmental state context, it may be argued that a uniform curriculum for PAM teaching in South Africa is not only not feasible, but also not advisable. Only if the richness of the discipline receive, to various degrees, attention at universities, will the country as a whole benefit. In other words, no single curriculum at a particular university can accommodate the multifaceted nature of PAM as a discipline. It is argued that the country will only benefit if universities offering PAM could decide on their particular niche focuses based on the expertise of their particular staff complement. In this way the University of

Stellenbosch could, for example, focus on Leadership, WITS on Development, NWU and University of Johannesburg (UJ) on Governance, and so forth.

This would provide students a wider choice to specialize in and the developmental state will benefit from having future public administrators, managers and leaders who are generalists (with knowledge of the discipline), but also specialists (with knowledge of certain applications or functional areas within the discipline).

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# Reshaping power – South Africa’s gender machinery reviewed

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First received 04/06/12

Accepted for publication 25/09/12

## ABSTRACT

This article adopts a descriptive research approach to evaluate the main achievements and limitations of the mechanisms and processes that were established to promote greater gender equity and women’s empowerment in governance in South Africa in the period since 1994. While the article is juxtaposed against the background of South Africa’s ‘national gender machinery’ to advance gender equality in general, particular attention is paid to a new endeavour, in this case the Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, which is employed by the government to bring the constitutional rights of women to light, especially the poor in the rural areas and the many thousands of women in informal settlements. The fact that in 2009, there were 43.2% female parliamentarians, does not automatically translate into an increased welfare for women and more gender-sensitive development policies, hence the importance and relevance of this research.

## INTRODUCTION

South Africa’s “history is steeped in institutional racism, where rights, life chances and the distribution of goods and services were afforded along racial lines. More importantly, respect for the dignity of individuals was determined by the colour of their skin and, further, within various racial groupings, by their gender designation. The socio-cultural dictates of all groups defined women as inferior to men, and hence assigned to them the position of minors in both public and private spheres of life. In the private sphere, women were less likely to lead in decision-making. In most interpersonal relationships men had more power. This historical legacy of patriarchy influenced essential informal and formal human relationships with a marked impact on the workplace” (Office of the Status of Women nd:i).

South Africa's democracy was established eighteen years ago following prolonged constitutional negotiations. It carried elevated hopes for human rights activists not only in the country itself but around the globe. Today, women in Africa, like others across the globe, "... [a]re struggling for their fair share of political power and economic opportunity. In recent decades – thanks in great measure to their own organisation and energetic efforts – they have made important strides. As Africa shakes off its legacies of autocratic rule, social marginalisation and economic disarray, women are staking their claim to participate fully in their continent's promising future" (Anon 2012:3).

In South Africa, the gender machinery, which includes structures in government, the legislature, statutory bodies and civil society, which are collectively known as the National Gender Machinery (hereafter NGM), was part of a negotiated settlement that led to a democratic South Africa (Watson 2009; Commission for Gender Equality nd:13). The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* 1996, gave impetus to these mechanisms since Chapter Nine specifically lists state institutions, which include the Commission for Gender Equality, the Public Protector, the Human Rights Commission, the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities, the Auditor-General and the Electoral Commission, as means to strengthen constitutional democracy in the country. This acceptance of a need to establish NGM followed an extended struggle by South African women to place gender on the political agenda. The struggle for gender equality pre-1994 was always secondary to the struggle for racial equality (Gouws 2006:143). The Constitution, 1996, "recognises that gender inequality can seriously undermine democracy, and render it inaccessible for a majority of those who are marginalised on the grounds of gender" (Commission for Gender Equality nd:10). The NGM serves as structural nodes through which gender equality may be affected.

The NGM, until May 2009, consisted of the Office of the Status of Women, the Commission for Gender Equality, the parliamentary Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and the Status of Women (JMC), and gender focused NGOs (African Development Bank 2009:14). During 2007 the South African government, in the form of an *ad hoc* committee conducted a review of Chapter Nine institutions. The review revealed that the Commission for Gender Equality, as one of six institutions that were formed to promote democracy as alluded to earlier, showed a number of institutional and structural weaknesses, in particular with regard to its "approach, institutional architecture, policies, processes and interpretation of its mandate" (Commission for Gender Equality nd:13). It realised that even if a country has high-tech institutional infrastructures, many factors may cause its dysfunction. As a result, in May 2009 a Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and the Disabled was established (African Development Bank 2009:14). Prior to its inauguration, commentators such as Gouws (2010:1-2) argued that this structure

could not merely be added to the existing gender machinery without reconsidering the relationship between structures, their mandates and their relationship with civil society. At the time she argued that if a Women's Ministry was established "to cure all the ills of the gender machinery", as identified in a study, which she conducted in 2006 (see Gouws 2006), it may not only start at a disadvantage, but may also receive "resistance from those who were not consulted about its inception".

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The analytical model designed by Stetson and Mazur (1995:14) and also applied by Gouws (2006), uses two theoretical dimensions to test, whether, what they call 'national policy machineries' contribute to gender equality. These dimensions are:

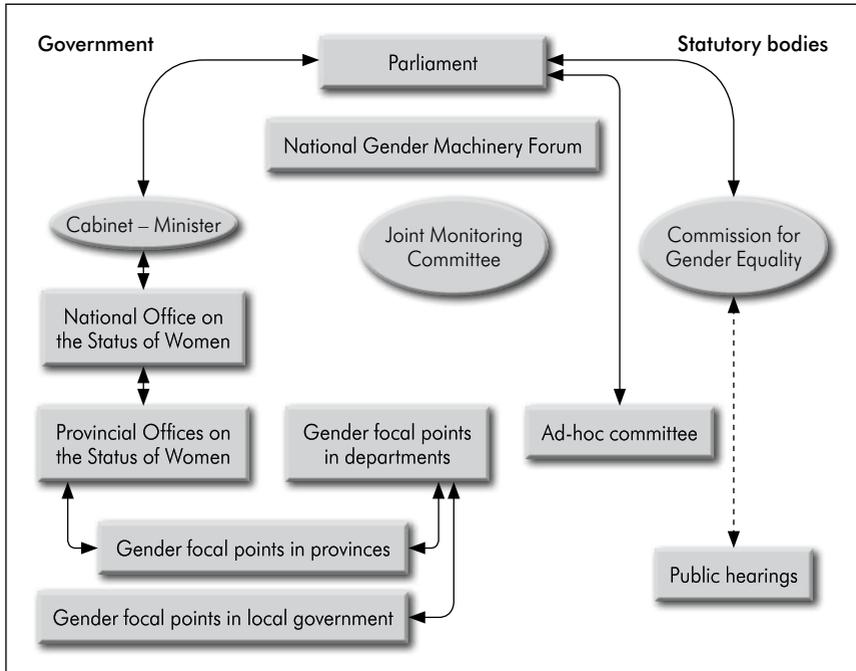
- State capacity: to what extent do women's policy machineries influence policy-making from a gender perspective?
- State-society relations: "to what extent do women's policy machineries develop opportunities for society-based actors – feminist and women's advocacy organisations – to access the policy process"?

In the following section, Stetson and Mazur's two theoretical dimensions is applied by analysing the main achievements and limitations of the South African gender machinery, in particular looking at the relationship between structures, their mandates and their relationship to civil society. It does so by considering the historical evolution of gender machinery in South Africa. It also reflects on the Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and the Disabled to see if this new structure brings the constitutional rights of women to light. Hence, the article adopts a descriptive research approach where content analysis is applied.

## **HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE GENDER MACHINERY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Negotiations on gender machinery for South Africa, which began in 1990, were at times lively and controversial. Stakeholders agreed before the first democratic elections in 1994 that an African National Congress (ANC) government would absorb many women activists and move them into the institutional political arena, where their relationship to the state had to be redefined. "The new context of a democracy changed the terms of women's organized engagement with the state in South Africa from a stance of intense suspicion and opposition during the apartheid era, to one that treats the state as permeable to women's interests and influence and, consequently, as a desirable locus for gender activism" (Hassim

**Figure 1: National Gender Machinery**



Source Commission for Gender Equality nd: 11; Also see Gouws 2006: 148

2003:505). Agreement “was reached that gender mainstreaming would be the policy tool through which gender equity would be established as a means of integrating gender into all government departments” in order to consolidate earlier gains that were made. At the time consensus existed that a sole women’s department or ministry should be avoided on account of the marginalisation that such structures had experienced in neighbouring countries. The adopted model of an integrated NGM (see *Figure 1*) which appeared complex, was meant to fan strategically through government, legislature, independent bodies and civil society, including the provinces. Its aim was to create a number of entry points that were designed to avoid any one element being superior and to allow each structure to fill a particular niche (African Development Bank 2009: Commission for Gender Equality nd).

The following section explores the intricacies of the NGM. At first, the Commission for Gender Equality is discussed. Thereafter, the Office of the Status of Women and the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and the Status of Women will be presented. This allows for closer consideration of each structure’s achievements and limitations.

## Commission for Gender Equality

In recognition of the importance of gender equality in a democratic state as mentioned earlier, Section 119 of the Constitution, 1996, provides for the establishment of the Commission for Gender Equality. Section 187 stipulates that the Commission “must promote respect for gender equality, and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality”. It must further “monitor, investigate, research, educate, lobby, advise and report on issues, which concern gender equality” (South Africa 1996). Accordingly, legislation that was enacted to govern the Commission for Gender Equality as an independent statutory body, is the *Commission for Gender Equality Act* (Act 39 of 1996). The powers and functions ascribed to the Commission, as embodied in the Act include:

- monitoring and evaluating policies and practices of private and public sector institutions;
- developing, conducting and managing of information and education programmes to foster public awareness and understanding;
- making recommendations to government to promote gender equality, laws, policies and programmes. Suggestions for law reform could include, for example, family and personal law, indigenous law, customary practices and any other law;
- investigating any gender-related issue of its own accord and following up on complaints related to gender inequalities and will attempt to resolve disputes by mediation, conciliation and negotiation;
- monitoring compliance with international conventions, international covenants and international charters that re to ratified by government; and
- preparing and submitting on gender equality to parliament.

The mandate of the Commission is wide-ranging. At its inception it started off by using a consultative approach where information was gathered in the form of evaluative workshops (Gouws 2006:151–52). This solidified its commitment to consultative planning and an understanding of accountability to constituencies of women. However, it has been argued that the Commission vacillated between a mobilising role and a representative role, neither of which captured the responsibility of its constitutional mandate to act as an oversight and accountability mechanism in relation to progress towards gender equality (Hassim, cited in Africa Development Bank 2009:21). Information workshops on gender equity issues were commended but work in awareness-raising stretched the capacity of the Commission to the detriment of its role as government watchdog, which it alone had been mandated to perform. The Commission’s inability to challenge government proved a major weakness. The parliamentary review which was mentioned earlier, confirmed that the Commission had the greatest powers above all the other arms of the NGM to ensure the achievement of gender equality. The CGE, for example, can take any case

to the Equality Courts on its own or on behalf of another party (Africa Development Bank, 2009:21). Despite assigned constitutional powers, “perennial infighting, mediocre performance and ineffectualness”, as highlighted by Van der Westhuizen (2009), rendered the Commission almost invisible. Further inadequacies listed by Africa Development Bank (2009:21) include:

- a dysfunctional relationship between CGE and civil society;
- lack of follow-up on issues that have been identified as problem areas through research and investigation;
- ineffective communication strategy with the public around its successes in dealing with complaints; and
- lack of input into the drafting of legislation.

The CGE recorded some successes. At a provincial level, particularly in Mpumalanga and Gauteng, achievements were recorded in the form of outreach programmes, workshops, meetings, handling of complaints, living conditions of widows, gender in the school curriculum and the handling of rape cases by the police. It was noted that men occupied positions in these provincial structures and it would appear that communities are inclined to pay more attention when men address gender issues (Africa Development Bank 2009:22).

The 2007 parliamentary review, which was alluded to afforded the CGE an opportunity to revise its mandate and to reposition itself. Amongst other issues, which emerged during the renewal process were:

- “the need for a clear alignment between the mandate and programmes of the CGE;
- a clear gender discourse and approach, which will guide the CGE in its work and ensure that the institution develops its own language and expression;
- clear planning processes and shared principles that will strengthen internal organisational cross-cutting social policy agenda on gender equality;
- strengthen and, where necessary, develop strong policy, processes of governance in line with the mandate of the CGE and the regulatory framework, especially the *Public Finance Management Act* (Act 1 of 1999), Treasury Regulations and other relevant law;
- the need for strong leadership at policy and strategic levels, which is driven by commissioners who work closely with the secretariat of the organisation;
- a clear delineation of responsibilities between commissioners and the secretariat who are informed not only by the *Public Finance Management Act* (Act 1 of 1999) but also by core principles of human affirmation and creation of an enabling environment;
- build a strong organisational culture that speaks to the mandate of the CGE, which enables, nurtures and affirms those who work for the CGE; and
- clear policy and procedures that govern the organisation internally” (Commission for Gender Equality nd:14).

In many ways the CGE has actually hindered gender transformation. As female leaders moved into parliament, a new leadership was not established fairly quickly to fill vacuums created. A further problem is that inadequate responses from government go uncontested due to futile pressure from organisations such as the CGE.

## **Office on the Status of Women**

The Office on the Status of Women (OSW) was the only office within government, which was articulated to implement a gender mainstreaming agenda. It was established as part of the NGM through a cabinet memorandum in 1996, to implement gender mainstreaming projects within government through facilitation, monitoring and implementation. It was tasked with the development of a national gender policy. The key operational framework, in the form of the national Gender Policy for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, was finalised and proposed for adoption by cabinet in 2000. The OSW was regarded as the apex of the NGM and was located in the Presidency at national level; the Premiers' offices at a provincial level; and Gender Focal Points located within government departments at national, provincial and local government levels (Mvimbi 2009:126).

The national OSW's functions, according to the Office on the Status of Women (nd:28), were to:

- “advance a national policy on women's empowerment and gender equality;
- prioritise key concerns and initiate policy and action-oriented research, relevant to gender mainstreaming;
- advise and brief the President, the Deputy President and the Minister in the Presidency on all matters pertaining to the empowerment of women;
- liaise with NGOs that deals with women and gender issues and the Presidency,
- liaise with international bodies and the Presidency;
- work with Ministries and departments, provinces and all publicly funded bodies to mainstream gender in policies, practices and programmes;
- develop key indicators to measure the national progression towards gender equality;
- arrange for training and gender analysis and gender sensitisation;
- act as a catalyst for Affirmative Action with respect to gender equality;
- initiate and promote cross-sectoral action on cross cutting issues such as the girl child, violence against women and HIV/AIDS;
- facilitate awareness-raising and confidence building amongst women at all levels;
- provide a coordination framework for the effective implementation of the gender programme at national, provincial and local government levels; and
- consult and liaise with civil society and parliament”.

The Office on the Status of Women, in its 2008-2009 year-end performance report, listed some of the following achievements:

- the coordination and facilitation of donor round table meetings with the private sector, UN agencies and embassies, and facilitated a study tour on behalf of the UNIFEM and UNDP;
- the development of terms of reference, and the appointment of a service provider around a 15-year gender review report;
- the office offered support to government departments and municipalities such as Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Metro and Matatiele;
- collaborated with PALAMA on the rollout of a training manual on gender mainstreaming;
- facilitated increased participation by civil society organisations, provinces, national departments and parliament,
- participated in a host of Women's Months activities and co-hosted the 16-days of Activism Campaign;
- participated in various international endeavours for example, African Union meetings, India Brazil South Africa Initiative, Commonwealth conferences in Africa, UN Commission on the Status of Women's annual session, and adopted the African Union Gender Policy.

Challenges, which were experienced by the OSW were, for example, limitations in relation to physical space, human resources and adequate finance to effectively drive a national gender programme at a desired level. The absence of a research position also hampered the organisation's research work. The lack of coordination and collaboration between the CGE, OSW and JMC negatively impacted the mandate of the OSW and an intervention at ministerial level was called for. Further challenges that were reported included a lack of:

- gender focal units at all spheres of government;
- a monitoring and evaluation framework; and
- a National Plan of Action to give strategic direction to the NGM.

The OSW also minimally engaged with municipalities, and activities, which were undertaken with them were of an ad hoc nature (Office on the Status of Women nd:7).

In sum, the relationship between the CGE, OSW and JMW proved dismal. The OSW's mandate were not effectively executed which raised the questions around the relevance of its existence.

## **Joint Monitoring Committee**

The Joint Monitoring Committee on Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Women (later known as the Joint Monitoring Committee or the JMC) as an *ad hoc*

committee, was established in August 1996 as part of the South African gender machinery, which was mentioned earlier. The committee was constituted jointly by both members of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces. It was mandated “to monitor and evaluate progress with regard to improvement of the quality of life and status of women in South Africa. It did this with specific reference to the Government’s commitments to the Beijing Platform of Action; with regard to implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; and to any other applicable international instruments. It was also tasked to make recommendations to both or either of the Houses, or any joint or House committee on any matter arising from the aforementioned”. The committee interpreted this role widely to include consultations with civil society about key legislation and policies (such as domestic violence, customary law, termination of pregnancy and HIV and Aids). The JMC played an important role in engendering legislation that was passed through parliament and fast-tracked bills that were crucial for the empowerment of women (African Development Bank 2009:22; Van der Westhuizen 2009; Gouws 2006:157).

Under the visionary leadership of then chairperson Pregs Govender, the committee extensively contributed to the enhancement of gender equality. It succeeded in shaping the *Domestic Violence Act* (Act 116 of 1998), *Maintenance Act* (Act 99 of 1998), *Recognition of Customary Marriages Act* (Act 120 of 1998), *Skills Development Act* (Act 97 of 1998) and the *Employment Equity Act* (Act 55 of 1998). It further ensured “that the sexual harassment code was included in the *Labour Relations Act and Amendments* (Act 66 of 1995), and pressurised the National Treasury to buffer the effects of inequitable gender relations when devising the government’s macro-economic policy and national budgets. By the end of 1999 the committee had ensured that about 80% of the legislative changes that it had prioritised at its inception, had been tabled and enacted” (Van der Westhuizen 2009).

“Govender took a principled position against the Arms Deal and abstained from voting when the defence budget was passed in 2001” (Van der Westhuizen 2009), which contributed to her demise as head of the JMC. Under Govender’s leadership, the JMC hosted a number of public hearings on the impact of HIV/Aids on women and girls. Her actions at the time provoked the anger of then - ANC leadership and government. She faced enormous political pressure, and in the end, she resigned (Van der Westhuizen 2009). Following her departure as chairperson of the JMC and as a Member of Parliament in 2002, the JMC had a much lower profile in government.

Van der Westhuizen (2009) contends that “the committee eventually became an empty shell, dogged by a lack of understanding of its mandate, absenteeism and a nonchalant attitude among committee members towards the cause of women’s empowerment”. In the face of high levels of sexual violence against women and girls in South Africa (World Health Organisation 2011), further

criticism that was lodged against the committee was that it did not give input to the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Bill, in spite of it being years in the making before finally being passed in 2007-*Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act* (Act 32 of 2007). The committee's lack of engagement in the Communal Land Rights Bill and the Child Justice Bill, was another indication of its lack of commitment to influence government policy to advance women's issues.

With its key mandate to monitor implementation and reporting on progress towards international gender equality instruments to which South Africa is a signatory, the JMC was criticized for often not performing this function where it failed, for example, in 2001 and 2005 to compile and submit Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) country reports. Whilst the JMC had the power to subpoena government departments to parliament, failure to act in this regard was interpreted as a lack of performance (Watson 2009).

Gouws (2006:158) reports that in 2004 the JMC was practically dysfunctional and seemed to have lost momentum. The loss of Govender, she contends, served to highlight the importance of having dedicated and skilled feminists within the NGM.

Eventually the JMC was replaced by a Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth, Children and Persons with Disability in parliament and with a Select Committee on Women, Children and Disability in the National Council of Provinces (Gouws 2010:8).

## **Structural problems reported in relation to the South African Gender Machinery**

Drawing on the analytical model designed by Stetson and Mazur (1995:14) which uses two theoretical dimensions to test, whether, what they call 'national policy machineries' contribute to gender equality in particular: a) State capacity: to what extent do women's policy machineries influence policy-making from a gender perspective? b) State-society relations: to what extent do women's policy machineries develop opportunities for society-based actors – feminist and women's advocacy organisations – to access the policy process? The following problems have been identified.

Watson (2009) states that if one considers the above structures individually, it would appear that each one successfully concluded a broad spectrum of its mandates. Each structure made a contribution to the struggle for gender equality through monitoring, advocacy, gender consciousness-raising and gender training. However, when one considers how the structures engage with each other, a different picture emerges. A series of structural problems and differential power relations impeded the national gender project. Problems which were reported by Gouws (2006:158–162) are outlined below.

*Problems between the structures of the NGM:* The boundaries pertaining to the mandates of the three major structures were not well defined. This overlap hampered integrated planning and led to different and sometimes exaggerated expectations. Whilst the coordinating function of all these structures resided with the national OSW, it did not exercise the necessary authority in the NGM. Problems were further exacerbated by personality clashes and personalised politics. Limited communication between structures further compounded the sound functioning of the NGM.

*Problems within the Commission for Gender Equality:* The split between the national office and the provincial offices, where the CGE's mandate is broad and staff component small; the split between commissioners (independent) and secretariat (administrators), where commissioners did not relinquish party political membership which in turn compromised their ability to be critical of the ANC government; officials at gender focal points were appointed at low levels without the necessary authority to enforce decisions that were made; CGE's infrequent communication with the public about its successes around complaints pertaining to ordinary women reinforced the public's perception of its incompetence and inefficiency; CGE's inability to hold government accountable for its actions and inactions pertaining to gender issues and misunderstandings around the workload in the CGE; high staff turnover and a lack of strategic leadership, to name but a few, were all problems which were identified by Gouws (2006:160-162) as undermining the overall tasks of the NGM (Watson 2009).

The above problems were confirmed by the parliamentary "review of Chapter Nine institutions, which pointed out a number of institutional and structural weaknesses of CGE, in particular, with regard to its approach, institutional architecture, policies, processes and interpretation of its mandate" (Commission for Gender Equality, nd:13).

## **MINISTRY OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

"The creation of the Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, which was announced on 9 May 2009, was an indication of the government's commitment and political will to ensure that human rights, empowerment, equality and human dignity for women and children and people with disabilities are advanced, promoted, protected and developed", particularly those in disadvantaged communities (Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, 2012). The initial acceptance of a resolution that was taken at the ANC Polokwane Conference in 2007, to introduce a Ministry of Women's Affairs, took a number of women's organisations by surprise. At the time, the fact that the proposed Ministry would include children and people with disabilities, elicited fears amongst feminists that the gender focus would be lost (Gouws 2010:8).

The Ministry was established to replace the original multi-agency national organisations for women, children and persons with disabilities, including the National Office on the Status of Women, the National Office on the Status of Disabled Persons and the Office on the Rights of the Child. It was believed that a number of factors made it difficult for these entities, in particular, the OSW, as mentioned in earlier discussions, “to deliver on their mandates. Inadequate financial and human resources and the low rank of officials responsible for driving programmes”, were highlighted as the greatest impediments to delivery (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2009).

A key question, which was posed by Gouws (2010:8) involved the core mandate of the new Ministry and how it would fit into existing structures of the NGM. She contemplated what the responsibilities of the new Ministry would involve. Ministerial responsibilities, according to Venter, as quoted in Gouws (2010:8) are:

- Informatory: to inform parliament of the work of the specific department;
- Explanatory: to explain policies and policy actions;
- Amendatory: to make changes to policies that are deemed unworkable; and
- Resignatory: that a minister will resign if he/she is deemed incompetent.

Gouws (2010:9) argues that views that were expressed at the time of initial discussions around the new Ministry, called for the establishment of different units, for example, a Unit for Women, a Unit for Children, a Unit for Youth and a Unit for the Disabled. In this way she contended that the Minister would coordinate policies and programmes. In the end, a Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities was established, and its mandate “is to coordinate and monitor compliance with country and global obligations, and to address challenges regarding social justice and marginalisation of the three targeted groups through the establishment of a Department for Women, Children and People with Disabilities” (Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities 2012). When the idea of establishment of this Ministry was first mooted, Van der Westhuizen (2009) argued that the creation of this structure was ill-considered, especially as it was an amalgamation of disempowered groups. She argued that it would have been more conducive to fix problems, which plague existing gender structures, than to create a “new” bureaucracy.

In relation to women empowerment and gender equality, the core functions of the new Ministry are below (Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities 2012).

- “the creation of an enabling environment for translating government policy mandates into empowerment, advancement and socio-economic development programmes for women, and the transformation of gender relations;
- the mainstreaming of women’s empowerment and gender equality considerations in government policies, governance processes and programmes through the establishment of relevant structures, mechanisms and catalytic projects; and

- the facilitation, coordination, overseeing and reporting on the national gender equality programme – as well as those programmes, which form part of South African regional, continental and international initiatives”.

In order to facilitate the above, the following organisational structure (See *Figure 2 – Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities 2012* below) was developed (Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities 2012). It displays the units, except the Unit for Youth, in the form of branches.

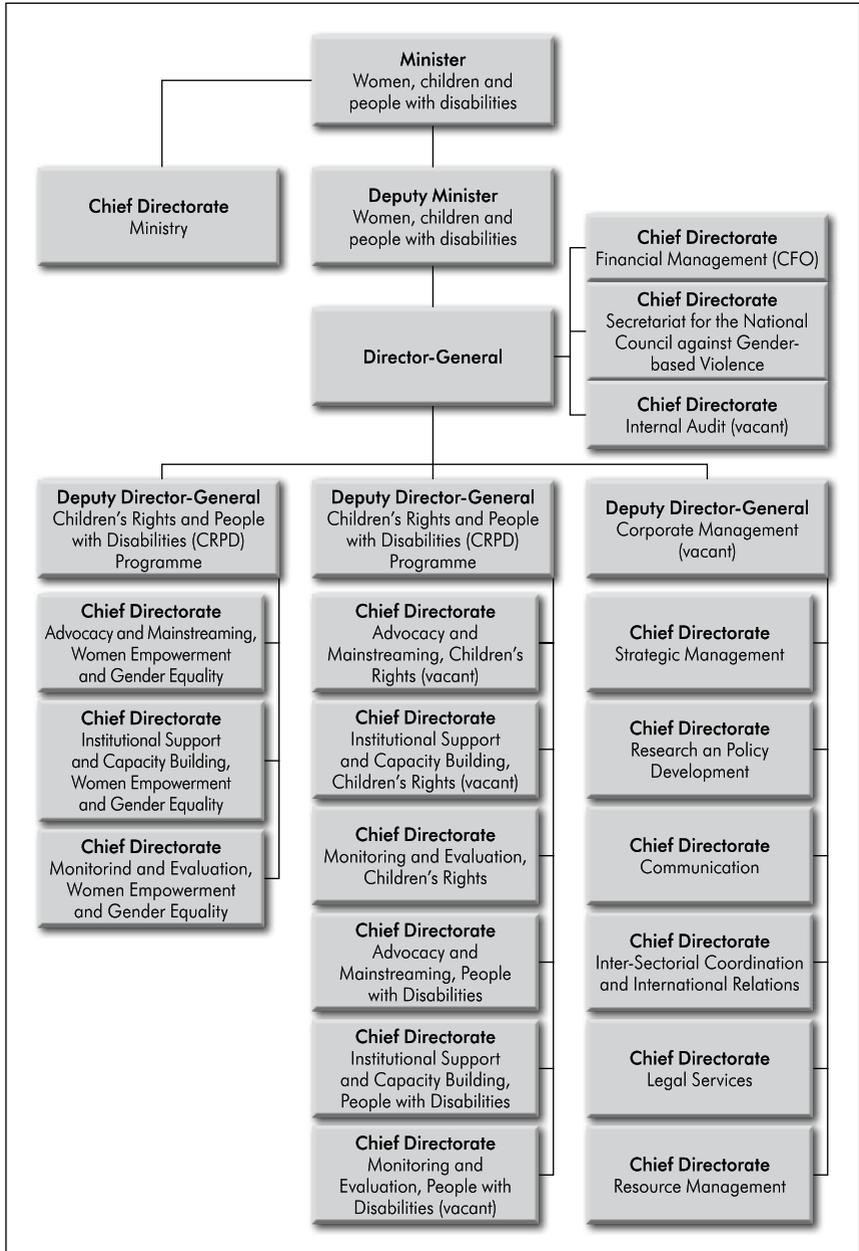
The Department is headed by a Director-General. The Office of the Minister is responsible for oversight, and has extended international obligations, therefore, the requisite staff component to fulfill these functions, is imperative. The Department has more capacity than the previous structure (see *Figure 2*). In the new Ministry three branches were established. Each branch has three Chief Directorates, namely monitoring and evaluation, research and development and policy and planning implementation. Each branch is required to develop frameworks, to identify gaps, to develop programmes and to conduct research. The Department’s prerogative was to continue and conclude projects and programmes, which were initiated by the previous entities (Department of Women, Children and People with disabilities 2012).

“While the establishment of a standalone Ministry to address the concerns of marginalised groups was met with both approval and skepticism from some gender activists, it provided an opportunity to strengthen the NGM, and the drive to engender government programmes” (Anon 2010).

The Department, in its Annual Report (2010–2011) reported on progress around the Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality programme, particularly around its first objective, which pertains to the monitoring and evaluation of delivery of government on national, regional and international mandates for women’s empowerment and gender equality, and its second objective, which pertains to the planning, coordination and advocacy for programmes on women’s empowerment and gender equality. In compliance with international, regional and national commitment, the branch reported that it (Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities 2012):

- Participated in the United Nations Economic and Social Council’s Annual Ministerial Peer Review, wherein South Africa was requested to peer review the report on the progress made by Namibia on women’s empowerment and gender equality. This review was presented at the United Nations in July 2010;
- Participated in the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality 2005–2015;
- Compiled and submitted an update report on the progress made in implementation of the African Union Heads of States’ Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa in June 2010;

**Figure 2: Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities 2012**



Source Commission for Gender Equality nd: 11; Also see Gouws 2006: 148

- Participated in the AU African Women Decade 2010–2020 held in Namibia in 2010;
- Compiled a progress report on the SADC Monitoring Tool on the implementation of the SADC Protocol;
- Initiated the ratification process of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development through National Parliament;
- Coordinated the progress report around the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, and
- Coordinated and participated in the 55<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2011.

In relation to the second objective, the following outputs were recorded:

- Developed and consulted on a draft National Strategy and Implementation Plan for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality. Consultations were held with the National Gender Machinery, Gauteng Provincial Gender Machinery; and the North West Provincial Gender Machinery;
- Developed the draft concept document on the proposed National Council for Gender Based Violence, including a reviewed 365 day National Action Plan for ending violence against women and girls;
- Compiled a strategy on rural women’s development and initiated the process of engendering the New Growth Path and Jobs Fund;
- Coordinated the National Task Team on women in informal cross border trade. A proposed plan of action was drafted. In collaboration with UNIFEM, the branch initiated research on the situation of women in informal cross border trade in South Africa; and
- Developed draft concept documents on the Sanitary Dignity Campaign; decent work for domestic workers; the National Techno Girl Launch and the SADC Ministerial meeting on climate change.

The Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality Branch reported that the greatest impediments to its service delivery objectives included the lack of human resources and limited finances to execute planned activities (Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities 2012). This seems to negate a recommendation, which was forwarded to government by the Africa Development Bank (2009:29) which concluded that: “Restructuring the NGM will not make much difference if government is not willing to enable the structure to function properly by allocating sufficient funds, and by appointing strong, confident and qualified leaders.”

In 2006, Gouws (2006:164) claimed that: “While enabling conditions and environments for gender equality have been put in place in the past decade, certain conditions are needed to shift the South African NGM into the category

of successful gender machineries without which enabling environments and conditions mean little.” This still holds true today in 2012. Conditions have certainly shifted and structures have changed, but the new Ministry should still fully engage with all arms of the South African gender machinery to ensure substantial influence and access in order to ensure the well-being of all women in all spheres of life in South Africa. Bornman, Budlender, Vetten, Van der Westhuizen, Watson and Williams (2012) contend that the lack of gender-disaggregated data has posed a stern impediment in measuring government performance. They claim that “the persistent unavailability of gender-disaggregated information make a mockery of government’s declared commitment to gender equality, as it is impossible for government programmes to target the multiple challenges that women face” in the absence of data to inform those programmes. Gouws (2010:10) also surmised that for the Ministry to be taken seriously, it should be well resourced both in terms of a budget and staff. A further recommendation, which she made was that staff should be “specialists in gender analysis and in the creation of interventions for gender related problems, as well as gender budgeting”.

## **CONCLUSION**

The article has analysed the main achievements and limitations of the South African gender machinery. It considered the historical evolution of gender machinery in South Africa, and reflected on the “newly” established Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and the Disabled to determine whether the constitutional rights of women were brought to light. Whilst the South African national gender machinery was created to give women access to decision-making and to ensure gender mainstreaming, to date, the machinery has not sufficiently influenced the setting of a policy agenda for gender equality. Prior to the establishment of the “new” Ministry, important pieces of legislation were advanced mostly by an alliance of feminist parliamentarians and civil society actors. The OSW, CGE and the JMC were plagued by continued infighting, high staff turnover, inefficient financial resources, miscommunication and a lack of coordination of strategies between the three arms, which impeded their work. In order to support all elements of the NGM and to set a common agenda, the new Ministry requires sufficient clout and authority to coordinate the gender equality endeavour. However, a perpetual lack of human resource capacity and inadequate financial resources continue to undermine the work of the Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality branch of the new Ministry, which is an indication of a spill-over of old ills of the NGM. Hence, the new branch in the Ministry did not necessarily cure old ills. Criticism lodged against the CGE was its lack of public engagement and visibility. Minister Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya

has shown commitment to gender issues by making public statements. This is a clear departure from former communication strategies that were employed by the CGE, in particular. While gender mainstreaming was neglected under the former NGM, the new Ministry drafted a National Strategy and Implementation Plan for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality. To ensure compliance with this document once formalised, institutionalised reporting mechanisms should be established so that management can be accountable.

In the 2012 State of the Nation Address, the President acknowledged "women as one of the groups that suffer under the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality, but this does not translate into a plan that will substantively improve the lives of women" (Bornman *et al.* 2012:5). Gender issues should be taken seriously, and it is imperative for the new Ministry to make a substantive difference.

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# Improving local government transformation in South Africa

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First received 27/07/12

Accepted for publication 26/09/12

## **ABSTRACT**

The Republic of South Africa entered the democratic era in 1994 when the first fully democratically elected government came into power. The new government faced the daunting task of remoulding the total structure of the state and ensuring equitable services to all citizens.

South Africa's system of government provides for three spheres, namely national, provincial and local. The country's total area was divided into municipalities in 1998. This new dispensation poses severe challenges to Local Government; it requires exceptional leadership and also demands effective and efficient administrative arrangements for the developmental state to promote society's welfare. Notably, municipalities need to consider financial and economic requirements when planning administrative systems to meet the demands of the developmental state.

Thus, the leadership requirements for political office-bearers and managers should be attuned to the new demands posed. Similarly, the employees could not be mere policy implementers; they should be able to devise new administrative systems and introduce novel managerial practices to achieve municipalities' diverse goals by utilising good governance principles. Both councillors and employees need to meet high ethical standards.

In this article, attention will be paid to transformational developments in South Africa by identifying needs and supporting governmental interventions. These new demands add a new dimension to the concept of governance in the local sphere, as all governmental actions have a local implication. The article will refer to the situation in African countries in general, and to South Africa in particular, to indicate the need to reconsider the quality of leadership in both the elected political office-bearers and managers in the local sphere of Government to promote

effective and efficient service delivery, in many instances through public sector-induced governance.

## INTRODUCTION

Most states make use of different levels/spheres of government to provide different categories of services to its inhabitants. In most cases, defence, police and economic matters are assigned to the national/central level of government. The matters of a regional nature are assigned to regional/provincial governments, such as provincial/regional roads, health, education and national/regional planning. Matters of a purely local nature are the domain of the local authorities/municipalities, such as water provision, waste removal, sanitation services and electricity distribution. However, these services represent the traditional approach to public service delivery. In the developmental state, the distribution of services is more complex. This is due to the state and its governmental structures' capacity to deliver the extensive services expected by contemporary society – either directly by a public institution or with the assistance of civil society – thus, adopting the concept of good governance.

The article aims to consider governmental structures' capacity to deliver public services effectively and efficiently and the factors that inhibit their efforts. Attention will be devoted to the characteristics of the African state in terms of the emergence of the developmental state in an African context. The article discusses the local government system in South Africa in order to explain the extent of the concept in delivering services of a local nature. Selected phenomena, such as financial capacity, human capital, service delivery and corruption in the African state and in particular in South Africa, will be highlighted to illustrate the challenges faced by the elected representatives as well as the appointed managers.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AFRICAN STATE

Particular characteristics were traditionally used to identify a *state*. Philosophers like Aristotle attempted to assign specific characteristics which were relevant in his era, but it became obsolete as the role of the state changed dramatically during the past few centuries. Some later *authors* also tried to define a state e.g. Strong (1963:5) who argued that: *"The state is something more than a mere collection of families, or an agglomeration of occupational organisations,*

or a referee holding the ring between the conflicting interests of the voluntary associations which it permits to exist. In a properly organised political community the state exists for society and not society for the state”.

In a paper delivered at the conference on *Dominations and powers: the nature of the state*, Chadran Kukathas (Internet source: nd) argues that the state is a form of political association or polity that is distinguished by the fact that it is not itself incorporated into any other political associations, though it may incorporate other such associations. He also argues that the state is a political community and that in its abstract form it is a corporate entity (Chadran Kukathas Internet source: nd).

These brief and overarching definitions are to emphasise the fact that the state exists for society. This implies that any actions taken or policies adopted by a government on behalf of the state should be to the benefit of society. It could thus be argued that in contemporary states the national government and their sub structures should honour their *raison d'être* as serving society. However, it seems as though this is not always followed in some African states. Ikome and Kode (2010:1) argue that “(C)oncentration of power and its abuse, the shallowness of the rule of law and the absence of popular oversight institutions were for several years the defining features of many post-independent African states”. The authors also argue that the African (sub) system of government has had an “unenviable reputation” regarding democratic governance and the rule of law (2010:2).

Mutahaba, Baguma and Halfani (1993) published a report originally commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Department of Technical Cooperation for Development (DTCD) in 1993 entitled: *Vitalizing African public administration for recovery and development*. The authors identified a number of generic maladies, challenges and negative tendencies in African states after gaining independence from their colonial powers. These include *inter alia* (1993:8–13):

- change in the nature, size and complexity of tasks;
- high rates of population growth and urbanisation;
- volatile economic performance;
- unstable political system and a resilient public administration; and
- incompatible socio cultural contexts.

The impact of these phenomena in the ecology of public administration includes the tendency towards centralisation (Mutahaba *et al.* 1993:14). This is ascribed to the colonial legacy of a preoccupation with law and order. However the net effect on the post independence system was: “... that the institutions and structures that have emerged have left little room for the sharing of responsibilities, with most functions and responsibilities tending to gravitate towards the center” (Mutahaba *et al.* 1993:15).

It could be argued that pressure from donors and governments supporting development in Africa contributed to some liberalisation of/or the democratisation of African governments. Considering the uncertainty surrounding *democratic* elections e.g. in Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire the recognition of the will of society does not appear to have been honoured. The current trend in many African states regarding the rule of law and the dearth of democratic rule are phenomena also prevalent at the local government level. Attention should also be paid to the influence of the developmental state on public administration before embarking on a discussion of recent trends in local government.

Fombad and Murray (2010) in their seminal book entitled: *Fostering Constitutionalism in Africa* requested various scholars to discuss constitutionalism in their countries. In his contribution: *The making, unmaking and remaking of the constitution of Côte d'Ivoire: an example of chronic instability*, Meledje (in Fombad and Murray 2010:v) poses the valid question regarding the African states' dilemma: "how can you lay down the foundations for a stable, modern and democratic state in a 'country' that is divided by civil strife?" This situation does not apply to only Côte d'Ivoire but to various other African states e.g. Zimbabwe, Sudan/Southern Sudan, Nigeria, Libya, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Somalia. The unstable state will undoubtedly affect the stability of local government. Therefore, in many of the states municipalities are unable to render even the most basic services such as the provision of potable water, refuse removal and sanitation. South Africa is fortunate in this regard as it has a stable democratically elected government and can boast with regular free and fair national as well as local government elections since 1994 (the first local government elections were held in 1995 and the restructured municipal system's elections in 2000).

Considering these examples, one could argue that the trend in many African states is towards unstable governments. This results in unstable administrative structures without consistent policies to follow; a lack of predictable financial resources on which to budget and the absence of a stable public service based on expertise and experience. However, the focus in this article is on trends in South Africa which could serve as best practice for other African countries once stability has returned.

## **THE DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

During the first decades after the African states attained independence from their colonial powers ( $\pm$  1950s–1960s) most of them considered themselves as developing states. They relied on foreign aid by their former colonial powers, the International Monetary Fund and other international donors. This approach

to obtain funding resulted in a dependency syndrome which prevented the newly independent states formulating sustainable policies that could serve the needs of their respective societies. They were also subjected to the donor's prescriptions regarding their internal policies without being able to determine their own sustainable goals with which society could identify.

During the latter part of the twentieth century the concept of a developmental state emerged. This concept provided for states to deal with their own social, political and economic challenges in a manner that would benefit society within their administrative and fiscal capacity. Tshishonga and De Vries (2011:59) quote Kuotsai Tom Liou (2002:13) arguing that the: *“(d)evelopmental state model rests on assumptions concerning the developments in the third world. Firstly, most developmental countries are in such a disadvantaged position that market forces themselves preclude substantial growth and secondly that states in some of these countries are capable of overcoming the barriers facing late developers. The developmental state is a state which is different from the neo-liberal state as well as from the all encompassing communist state and this has primarily to do with its priorities”*.

The intention with this exposition is not to discuss the characteristics of a developmental state. However, it is important to note that the principles inherent in the developmental state will also be present in the local governmental structures of the state. Therefore, it is important to note that economic and social development will be high priorities in a developmental state. Furthermore, effective structures must be developed to ensure that these policies are implemented effectively and efficiently. Another requirement is that capable officials acting with impeccable integrity and expertise should be employed to carry out the complex policies to promote socio economic development with the co-operation of the members of society.

Various arguments could be forwarded regarding the question whether South Africa could be classified as a developmental state. Tshishonga and De Vries (2011:62) argue to the contrary. They argue that the state focuses on protecting and stimulating the growth of its main domestic industry. Thus the state facilitates the maximisation of the profits of industry, even if industries fail to be profitable. Thus, according to the authors South Africa does not meet the requirements to be classified as such, as *“(t)he developmental state is first and foremost interested in the development of the country as a whole, i.e. all of the population, for which the development of its key industry is a means and not a goal in itself”* (Tshishonga and De Vries 2011:62). Other authors argue to the contrary and it is often stated that South Africa can be regarded as a developmental state. It seems that no consensus has been reached on the issue. For the purposes of this discussion it is accepted that South Africa reveals characteristics of the developmental state as governmental programmes are structured to enable civil society to participate

while the state's structures assist and finance development in areas that are not favourable for the private sector's profit oriented requirements.

It should be stated that development should not compromise democracy. Therefore, African states should strive to develop systems to safeguard democratic principles when developing policies requiring co-operative action between the public and the private sector. As could be expected exemplary leadership is a prerequisite while the rule of law should be honoured to prove to citizens that their values are recognised and entrenched. This must also be guaranteed in the constitutional provisions. In the case of South Africa, chapter 10 (section 195(1)) of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*, requires that public administration must be governed by democratic values and principles, including

- A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted.
- Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted.
- Public administration must be development-oriented.
- People's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making.
- Public administration must be accountable.

Section 195(2) of the South African Constitution, 1996 clearly requires that the principles of public administration enumerated in section 195(1) apply to all spheres of government; all organs of state and to public enterprises. South Africa is rather unique in this regard as the principles governing the public administration of the state are entrenched in the Constitution. It should be mentioned at this stage that the whole geographical area of South Africa has been demarcated into municipalities (*Local Government: Municipal Demarcation Act, 27 of 1998*). This has a particular effect on the policies of the national state as it implies that all policies are being executed within the geographical area of a municipality. This places a specific responsibility on municipalities to create favourable conditions for the state to give effect to its developmental mandate.

## **SYSTEM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

The South African democratic elections of 1994 introduced a new system of government consisting of three distinctive, interdependent and interrelated spheres of government (Constitution 1996: section 40(1)). The sphere of local government is entrenched in chapter 7 of the Constitution, 1996. The sphere consists of municipalities with executive authority in respect of, and the right to administer a variety of functions defined in schedules 4 and 5 to the Constitution. Section 156 of the Constitution assigns original powers to

municipalities implying that they are not subordinate structures of regional/ (provincial) authorities. They are thus fully fledged creatures of the state.

As alluded to earlier, municipalities cover the total geographic area of South Africa. Three categories of municipality have been created to cater for the diverse needs of the country, namely:

- Category A: metropolitan municipalities;
- Category B: local municipalities (for urbanised areas); and
- Category C: district municipalities (responsible for services common to local municipalities within its area of jurisdiction).

The functions and powers of the three categories of municipalities are not of crucial importance for the purposes of this discussion. The issue requiring attention is the capacity of the sphere of local sphere of government to give effect to its developmental duties as identified in the Constitution, 1996. To be able to assess the capacities of municipalities different characteristics will be attended to in the following paragraphs.

## **Financial capacity**

### ***Financial allocations to municipalities***

The South African Constitution, 1996 does not directly refer to the financing of local government structures. However, section 214 provides that “An Act of Parliament must provide for “... the equitable division of revenue raised nationally among the national, provincial and local spheres of government ...”. No specific formula is prescribed to guarantee the specific percentage of the share to be allocated to the municipalities. Annually the *Division of Revenue Act, 6* of 2011 is adopted by Parliament to give effect to the constitutional provision. For the local sphere of government an amount of R34,108 million of the total amount of R888,923 million collected nationally (less than 4%) was allocated to the local sphere of government.

For the 2011/2012 financial year the following categories of additional allocations/grants were made to municipalities:

*Firstly:* Allocations to municipalities to supplement the financing of functions funded from municipal budgets such as the Urban Settlements Development Grant intended to improve the efficiency of investments in the built environment by providing large municipalities with appropriate resources and control over the selection and pursuit of investment programmes in the built environment. For the eight metropolitan municipalities an amount of R6,267 million was allocated from the *Division of Revenue Act, 6* of 2011.

*Secondly:* Specific purpose allocations to municipalities. These include recurrent grants e.g. the Municipal Systems Improvement Grant; the Local Government

Financial Management Grant to promote and support financial management by building capacity in municipalities to implement the *Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act*, 53 of 2003; and the Water Services Operating Subsidy Grant to subsidise and build capacity in water schemes operated by the Department of Water Affairs or other agencies.

*Thirdly:* Infrastructure grants e.g. the Municipal Infrastructure Grants to supplement the funding of infrastructure programmes to address backlogs subject to municipalities' satisfying criteria set out in the grant policy framework; Integrated National Electrification Programme (municipal) Grant; Electricity Demand Side Management (municipal) Grant; Neighbourhood Development Partnership Grant to support neighbourhood development projects that provide community infrastructure to improve the quality of life of residents; the Public Transport Infrastructure and Systems Grant to accelerate the development of non-motorised transport networks; and the Municipal Drought Relief Grant to provide capital finance for the construction of appropriate water infrastructure to alleviate the effects of drought in a specific metropolitan municipality.

*Fourthly:* Allocations-in-kind to municipalities for designated special programmes such as the Neighbourhood Development Partnership Grant; the Integrated National Electrification Programme (Eskom) Grant; the Electricity Demand Side Management (Eskom) Grant; the Water Services Operating Subsidy Grant; the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant; and the Rural Households Infrastructure Grant.

*Fifthly:* Unallocated provisions for municipalities for disaster response that could be released immediately in the case of a disaster.

Municipalities in South Africa are entitled to raise the largest share ( $\pm 86\%$ ) of their revenue from own sources e.g. a surcharge on electricity; property tax; fines and forfeitures; and fees for services such as refuse removal and sewerage charges. Although municipalities appear to be financially sustainable, most of them fail to collect the revenue due to them from own sources. In 2003 this outstanding amount was nearly R18 bn. The total outstanding non recoverable debt amounted to R8,9m (Lubbe and Rossouw 2005:785). This suggests that South African municipalities are financially under threat if they do not implement policies to collect revenue due to them. If the reliance on the national fiscus increases, its autonomy and therefore its democratic requirements are also threatened.

### **Quality of financial management**

Some municipalities succeed in maintaining a high standard of financial administration. Moody's International has for example confirmed South Africa's Cape Town Municipality's Aa2 credit rating in March 2012 due to its "prudent financial policy and a relatively large and evenly diversified base" (SA Local Government Research Centre April 2012:2). It is mentioned that the challenges facing the City include the sizable capital expenditure programme and lingering expenditure

pressure for service delivery and social housing. Cape Town was also the only municipality that improved its audit findings to financially unqualified with no findings (Auditor-General: Consolidated General Report 2009-10. RP 92/2011:10).

A number of municipalities suffer from ineffective financial management. This results in an inability to collect revenue due to the weak financial management system and the inability by some municipalities (20%) to present finalised accounts to the Auditor-General in time. For the 2009-2010 financial year 46% of the municipalities (out of 283) (now 278) failed to obtain financially unqualified audit opinions (RP 92/2011:10). A total of 110 municipalities received disclaimers, adverse or qualified audit reports. Since the previous year 15 municipalities even regressed from their previous status concerning the quality of the auditing. However, to the positive side there is a marked increase in the number of municipalities that improved their auditing standards.

### **Supply chain management**

A significant development in South Africa was the inclusion of a chapter on *Goods and Services* (chapter 11) of the *Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act, 56 of 2003* with a dedicated section devoted to *Supply Chain Management*. The main aim of this chapter is to promote effective financial management regarding the acquisition of goods and services. It also limits the occurrence of corrupt practices. The Act *inter alia* prescribes the procedures for entering into contracts; bars councillors from serving on tender committees and prescribes minimum competency levels for officials involved in supply chain management (sections 116-118). With these guidelines, municipalities should be able to place supply chain management on a sound footing. However, human nature tends to prevail resulting in corrupt practices still being reported as will be discussed later in this presentation.

## **Human capital**

### **Appointment of staff**

Human resources are probably the most crucial resource of any institution. If we consider the current situation in South Africa an anomaly could be identified. The national sphere of government employs 1,195 million officials (Public Service Commission (PSC) 2011:2). It is estimated that the local sphere of government employs a total of ±219 000 officials. This implies that municipal officials, who comprise ± 15% of the total number of officials in the public sector, serve the same South African population of ± 50 million served by public servants in the other two spheres. It should furthermore be noted that every individual in the country is dependent on some form of municipal related service on a daily basis. It is obvious that municipal employees are under severe stress to cope with the demand for services. The quality of the available human capital is thus also of

utmost importance. It should be noted that in some municipalities the ratio of municipal employees to households is as high as 1:1 983 for district municipalities (South Africa Demarcation Board 2008:31). The national average for the country as a whole is 1:1 847 for district municipalities and for local municipalities it is 1:146 households although in some provinces it is as high as 1:255 (KwaZulu Natal)(South Africa Demarcation Board 2008:40). This highlights the challenge faced by municipalities due to limited human resources.

### **Competencies**

An issue requiring serious consideration is the practice of *deployment*. Deployment entails the appointment of former cadres to senior posts in recognition for their contributions to the freedom struggle. The challenge in this regard is that some of the senior posts are occupied by underqualified or unsuitably qualified officials. In one municipality (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality) the MK *veterans* even threatened the executive mayor because they are not employed. They even resolved to use force and appoint themselves (SA Local Government Research Centre March 2012:18). This threat implies that competence is not necessarily a criterion for appointment. Unfortunately this practice does not acknowledge competence as a requirement to perform a function.

A matter of serious concern is the qualifications and experience of municipal managers. The average years of local government experience of municipal managers with less than one year is on average 4%. A total of 66% of municipal managers have less than two years experience in the post (South Africa Municipal Demarcation Board 2011:51). In many cases acting municipal managers are appointed e.g. in one province (Eastern Cape) 14 of the 45 municipalities have acting municipal managers (SA Local Government Research Centre April 2012:10). In 29,9% of all municipalities the municipal manager and in 27% of all municipalities the chief financial officers have been appointed in acting capacities. In 13,3% of all municipalities both the municipal manger and the chief financial officer are acting appointments (SA Local Government Research Centre January 2012:3).

Considering the human resource capital available to the local sphere of government, some danger signs could be detected. *Firstly*, the practice of deploying cadres to senior positions prevents the development of a core of experienced well trained senior officials to administer and manage municipal services. *Secondly*, the short life span of a municipal manager (and also some managers) prohibits enforcing accountability. Once wasteful or unauthorised expenditure is detected, the accounting officer is no longer in the service of the particular municipality. Thus the essence of appointing an accounting officer is forfeited as no one can then be called to account for unlawful expenditure. *Thirdly*, the current practice of appointing acting municipal managers and even chief financial officers prevent those officials of committing themselves to long term policies as they are uncertain

of their future involvement. This trend detracts from long term commitment despite the introduction of an *Integrated Development Plan*, covering five years. Lack of commitment to a long term vision for a municipality could seriously inhibit the achievement of the goals set for five to ten years in the future.

South Africa has decided to address the challenge concerning the quality of municipal management. In 2011 an amendment to the *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000* was passed to compel municipal councils to appoint municipal managers only if they have the “skills, expertise, competence and qualifications as prescribed” (Section 54 A (1)). What is equally important is the conditions set that if a municipal manager is appointed who does not comply with the standards set, the appointment is null and void (section 54 A (3)). To this is added that the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) of the province concerned must be informed of the appointment. If the appointment has been done contrary to the Act, the MEC must take appropriate steps to enforce compliance, which may include an application for a declaratory order on the validity of the appointment (Section 54 A(8)) or may take any other legal action against the municipal council - this also applies to managers responsible to the municipal manager. This possibility of a sanction against the council is the most significant effort of government to enforce legislation on the quality of the management in municipalities.

As far as financial officials are concerned the South African National Treasury has embarked on developing career specific training requirements. Regulation R493 was published in 2007 (Republic of South Africa *Government Gazette* 29967 15 June 2007), detailing the minimum competency levels for accounting officers (Municipal Managers), chief financial officers, senior managers and other financial officers. Competency levels are also set for officials in public entities. The Regulations also prescribe the minimum qualifications for accounting officers and chief financial officers and other officials involved in financial administration and management (Chapter 2: regulation 3). These qualifications have to be met by 1 January 2013 (Chapter 7: regulation 18(2)). This is a major policy imperative which could play a significant role in promoting effective financial administration and management in the municipal sphere of government.

## **Service delivery**

Municipalities are established to render services. Even in the legislation listing the duties of a municipal manager it is emphasised that as head of administration he/she is responsible for managing the provision of services to the local community (*Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000* Section 55(1)(d)). To achieve its goals municipalities make use of its own appointed officials or contractors. However, provision is also made in the South African *Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000*

for alternative service delivery mechanisms e.g. municipal entities (Section 76–82). This allows a municipality in accordance with the *Municipal Finance Management Act*, 56 of 2003 to transfer appropriate technical, operational and financial risk to a private party. Provision is also made in the Act quoted above for the establishment of municipal entities to perform particular assigned functions on behalf of the municipality (Section 84). Strict conditions apply regarding the financial governance of a municipal entity and its budgetary matters (Sections 85–87).

One of the most significant initiatives to improve the sphere of local government, in particular service delivery, is the adoption of the *Local Government Turnaround Strategy in 2009* (<http://www.info.gov.za/aboutgovt/locgovt/info.htm>). This Strategy can be summarised into a 10-point plan involving:

- improving the quantity and quality of basic services;
- enhancing the municipal contribution to job creation and sustainable livelihoods through Local Economic Development (LED);
- deepening democracy;
- ensuring that municipalities adopt and develop reliable and credible Integrated Development Plans (IDPs);
- building and strengthening administrative, institutional and financial capabilities of municipalities;
- creating a single window of co-ordination to deal with intergovernmental matters in the local sphere;
- rooting out corruption, nepotism and maladministration;
- developing a coherent and cohesive system of governance;
- developing and strengthening a coherent system of local government; and
- restoring the institutional integrity of municipalities.

The strategy will be implemented to eradicate the main maladies of local government by introducing the following interventions:

- organising national government better in relation to local government;
- improving the capacity of provinces to fulfil their oversight role of municipalities;
- of municipalities to develop their own performance according to their own tailor made turnaround strategies;
- improving the Intergovernmental Relations policies of government;
- requiring political parties to enhance the institutional integrity of municipalities; and
- designing a good citizen campaign to guide citizens, trade unions, professional bodies and traditional leaders to adopt a common set of values.

The strategy should contribute to the improvement of service delivery as it also addresses the need for sound administrative and managerial systems as preconditions for efficiency and effectiveness.

It could thus be argued that the South African system of local government provides flexibility to municipalities to provide services. Clear legislative measures are in place to limit the abuse of power and the misuse of public money. However, it must be repeated that corruption still occurs due to the greed of humankind, thus militating against efficient and effective service delivery.

## Corruption

Ethics could be defined as the application of values to the behaviour guiding an individual in different actions. These values provide the moral basis for guiding personal conduct under different circumstances and in various situations (Bayat and Meyer 1994:39). Chapter 10 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996 states unequivocally that a high standard of ethics must be promoted and maintained in the public sector (Section 195(1)(a)). This commitment is reiterated by the mission statement of Government as contained in the Presidential Review Commission (PRC) appointed in 1997 (Presidential Review Commission 1998). This mission was stated *inter alia* as the “the creation of a people centred and people driven public service which is characterised by equity, quality, timeousness and a strong code of ethics (PRC 1998:2).

Corruption is probably one of the prime examples of unethical conduct by political office-bearers and appointed officials. The phenomenon could be defined as “offering or granting, directly or indirectly to a public official or any other person, of any goods of monetary value, or other benefit, such as a gift, favour, promise or advantage for himself or herself or for any other person or entity, in exchange for any acts or omission in the performance of his/her public functions” (Mwenda 2011:21). Corruption appears in various guises e.g. (Mwenda 2011:21–23) bribery, embezzlement, misappropriation or diversion of property; trading in influence; abuse of functions; and laundering of the proceeds of crime. Should these actions be allowed to continue unabated, it could seriously hamper the achievement of the goals of the developmental state.

The Public Service Commission (PSC), devoted its report for 2008 to the evaluation of the principles of public administration as contained in the Constitution, 1996. The Commission reported a total of 2 297 alleged cases of corruption in the period 2004–2005 and 3 355 for the period 2006–2007. What is most disturbing is that departments provided feedback on only 36% of the cases reported for the period 2004–2005 and 35% for the latter period (PSC 2008:18). The PSC concluded that “The feedback rates suggest that over the mid term, departments have generally not been able to strengthen their capacity to deal with cases of alleged corruption” (PSC 2008:18). To this the Commission added that the perceptions of a corrupt Public Service will remain. The Commission concluded that the challenges facing departments were

multi-faceted. In some cases insufficient resources were available to create posts to employ officials for this purpose. Some departments lacked proper procedures and processes to investigate the allegations while others lacked managerial skills and in some cases conflict of interest prevented any action being taken (PSC 2008:19). These allegations were consequently left unattended.

The prevalence of corrupt implying unethical conduct is not limited to the national or provincial spheres of government. The SA Local Government Research Centre publishes on a monthly basis cases of corruption. Some 45 cases of serious corruption in municipalities have been reported to the National Corruption Hotline for the period November 2011 to April 2012 (SA Local Government Research Centre April 2012:31). It is considered unnecessary to repeat the cases quoted. Suffice it to state that such cases are reported on a continuous basis either in the relevant publication of the Centre or in newspapers.

A trend that could be identified is the increase in the reported cases of corruption and unethical conduct in all spheres of government. This could be viewed as one of the most destructive forces in the public sector. Although the examples quoted are from the Republic of South Africa, similar tendencies are found in most other countries. This is exemplified by the following examples of efforts to address the corruption phenomenon (Mwenda 2011:10):

- African Union (AU) Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Corruption, 2003;
- Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Protocol against Corruption, 2001; and
- United Nations (UN) Convention against Corruption, 2005.

These treaties serve as proof of the concern of international and supra national bodies regarding the occurrence of corruption. Mwenda (2011:29) even argues that the treaties referred to above are proof of a “crystallisation of some norms of customary international law which seem to have evolved increasingly over the last decade concerning the fight against corruption in different countries and across international borders”. Thus this global phenomenon needs rapid response from governments if efficiency and effectiveness are to be promoted, governance principles established and if service delivery is improved to the satisfaction of all communities comprising the state.

## **CONCLUSION**

The article explored the characteristics of the state and also the peculiarities of African states. It was argued that the African states reveal numerous challenges. These challenges inhibit the development of effective and efficient

governmental and administrative systems. South Africa is used as an example of an African state which has made significant strides in its efforts to improve its public sector's performance. Particular attention was then paid to South Africa's local government system to illustrate the recent trends in governmental and administrative systems and practices. The last part of the discussion identifies the presence of corruption as one of the major stumbling blocks in achieving effectiveness and efficiency. It is concluded that the eradication of corruption and other unethical conduct should be one of the primary initiatives required to improve the livelihoods of society.

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# Conceptualising qualitative research through a spiral of meaning-making

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First received 15/08/12

Accepted for publication 27/09/12

## ABSTRACT

This article emphasises the meaningful interrelationship between practice, experience, concepts and theory in the process of meaning-making in qualitative research. The importance of existing knowledge, the researcher's background and stance (ontology and epistemology) and the conscious engagement of the researcher with him/herself in a critical reflexive process to develop new knowledge and direction to act upon will be underlined. Moreover, this article attempts to unravel the dynamic spiral of meaning-making when developing a conceptual framework.

## INTRODUCTION

"... take the elevator from the ground floor of raw substantive data and description to the penthouse of conceptualisation and general theory" (Gummesson 2002:585–586).

This article concerns the conceptualisation of qualitative research as Denzin and Lincoln's (2005:4–6) metaphor of a quilter. Just as the researcher, the quilter uses methods, tools and techniques to creatively stitch, edit, and put slices of reality together with the aim to design a 'quilt' of new understanding. In this process, the qualitative researcher is constantly reflecting, interpreting and comparing new information to what is already known and understood.

According to Schmitter (2009:13), “all concepts are normative in terms of the positive and negative reactions they evoke from those they describe and also in terms of the positive and negative evaluations of the researchers who use them. Furthermore, it is not difficult to understand the core meaning of a concept but it is difficult to separate a concept from its context. Most concepts flow from prior assumptions and are embedded in other concepts. Consequently, they are building blocks that are only as plausible and valuable as the foundations upon which they rest” (Schmitter 2009:14).

This article attempts to provide answers for the following questions: What are the different ways in which qualitative research is conceptualised? Which analytical tools are used in the inductive reasoning process? What are the ‘tricks of the trade’ of conceptualisation? How does a researcher’s own ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions influence meaning-making? What is the role of previous knowledge and theory in meaning-making in order to create new knowledge and theory? How does a researcher ‘size up’ existing literature and improve on it? What is the role of reflexivity in developing a conceptual framework?

## **BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

Qualitative researchers are united in the quest to “gain insight into the meaning (*verstehen*) that the subject gives to his/her life world to understand human behaviour from an insider's point of view (emic)” (Auriacombe 2007:7). According to Mouton (2001:137), the logic of research is based in three worlds. World-One consists of the social world: Individual human beings, actions, events, organisations, institutions, interventions, collectives and social objects, where researchers perceive this every day world through their senses and is the instrument through which the study is conducted (Rossman and Rallis 2012:33). According to Aristotle, nothing exists in our minds that we have not perceived or experienced with our senses.

World-One concerns the social and physical reality that is made up of social problems, such as poor services, crime and unemployment. When using first-world logic, researchers thus make use of first-order constructs to conceptualise research. If a researcher chooses to explore this type of problem he/she will be required to do applied research that requires some intervention, action or programme. The type of research that one will be conducting from a World-One perspective, will mostly inform aspects such as programme development, policy-making, policy execution and decision-making.

In World-Two, the researcher incorporates existing knowledge from the world of science and other scholars’ writings. The emphasis is on the literature,

existing concepts and theories (second-order constructs). Researchers who focus on constructing theories and models; analysing concepts; or reviewing the body of scientific knowledge are doing basic research in the World-Two realm.

With a World-Three perspective, researchers then use a process of cognitive reasoning (the spiral of meaning-making) and (self-), reflexively and (self-) critical questioning of their perceptions) to try and make meaning by analysing and interpreting first- and second-order constructs in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomena that concepts represent. From this, typologies, models or theory are developed and the representations of reality or the data gathered "... are thus transformed into scientific knowledge by means of exploration, description or analysis and interpretation" (Rossman and Rallis 2012:6–7). The problem is that qualitative researchers (especially novice researchers within the Public Administration and Public Management domain) are often afraid to conceptualise and thus to take the risk to interpret and move their analysis beyond the descriptive level of World-One. It is important to realise that in qualitative research practice should inform theory, which in turn should inform practice.

Morse, Hupcey, Penrod, Spiers, Pooler and Mitcham (2002:ii) state that it is qualitative researchers' duty to be bold by moving into the realm of World-Two and World-Three if they want to be taken seriously and earn respect. They state that, "We consider the goal of qualitative science twofold: first to develop concepts in order to get a better grasp on the phenomena represented by the concepts themselves and, second, from this, to develop generalisable and valid theories. We believe it is these tasks, essentially those involving interpretation, conceptualisation and abstraction that will eventually provide qualitative inquiry with a legitimate place in the social sciences, and ultimately earn its respect and contribution to knowledge" (Morse *et al.* 2002:ii).

However, it should be noted that qualitative researchers' perceptions of how to best understand 'actors', subjective meanings, interpretations and researchers' beliefs of how knowledge should be generated are, to say the least, not uniform. Qualitative researchers differ in their ontological, epistemological, methodological beliefs, as well as in their choice of specific methods. "Most qualitative researchers would concede that the social meanings people attach to the world around them are tied to a particular perspective and context. These perspectives influence how a researcher views the social context, focuses on and reacts to a situation, and, finally, analyses, interprets, and creates meaning from data and text" (Denzin and Lincoln 1998:3). In a later publication, Denzin and Lincoln (2005:xv) took the argument further and argue that, "there is no one way to do interpretive, qualitative inquiry. We are all interpretive bricolage stuck in the present working against the past as we move into a politically

charged and challenging future". One of the main ongoing issues in qualitative research is the ethical dilemma faced by researchers concerning the question of how the 'other' or subjects should best be represented to provide the most truthful picture of their reality".

"A discussion of understanding and learning about qualitative methods thus requires a clarification and explication of the respective qualitative-methodological model of knowledge production. In fact the same phenomena are investigated, analysed and interpreted differently depending on the belief the researcher has of what social reality is (ontology) and how social phenomena can best be known (epistemology)" (Breuer and Schreier Internet source 2007).

There are different epistemologies, such as objectivism, interpretivism, and constructionism. Objectivists believe that, "... what we see is what there is provided that we have been suitably trained to observe in a rigorous manner we can collect objective evidence to test the truthfulness of our theories" (Qualitative Research Design Internet source Undated). Interpretivists believe that the subject matter of the social sciences "is fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences". Therefore, "a different methodology is required" to reach an interpretive understanding or *verstehen* and explanation that will "enable the social researcher to appreciate the subjective meaning of social action" (The Philosophy of Qualitative Research Internet source Undated). This meaning could only be discovered through language (*cf.* Schwandt 2007:314–317). Constructionists believe that, "there is no truth out there", but "only a narrative reality that changes continuously. Reality can therefore only be socially and personally constructed and the subject should be actively involved in this process. Reality is thus seen as the result of constructive processes" (Constructivism Internet source: nd).

In light of the above, "it is no surprise that there is no uniform definition for qualitative research" (Auriacombe 2007:7). As Denzin and Lincoln (2005:xv) state: "The open-ended nature of the qualitative research project leads to a perpetual resistance against attempts to impose a single, umbrella paradigm over the entire project". For the purposes of this article, it is essential to have an understanding of qualitative research. The most realistic interpretation is taken from Denzin and Lincoln (2000:7): "Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counterdisciplinary field. It crosscuts the humanities, the social sciences, and the physical sciences. Qualitative research is many things at the same time. It is multi-paradigmatic in focus. Its practitioners are sensitive to the value of the multi-method approach. They are committed to the naturalistic perspective and to the interpretive understanding of human experience. At the same time, the field is inherently political and shaped by multiple ethical and political allegiances" (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:7).

They further state that, "Qualitative research embraces two tensions at the same time. On the one hand, it is drawn to a broad, interpretive, post-

experimental, postmodern, feminist, and critical sensibility. On the other hand, it is shaped to more narrowly defined positivist, post-positivist, humanistic, and naturalistic conceptions of human experience and its analysis” (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:10).

“Therefore qualitative research could be seen as an umbrella term for different approaches with each having its own theoretical background, methodological principles and aims” (Flick 2007 in Auriacombe 2009:97). “How qualitative research methods and methodology are understood is closely linked to the ways in which qualitative researchers conceptualise themselves and the research they are doing. In this respect, qualitative research can be seen along a continuum with the one dimension marked by a holistic – somewhat paradigm-like – conception, and the other by situational pragmatic and opportunistic methodological practices” (Breuer and Schreier Internet source 2007).

Furthermore, researchers bring their own experiences, training, specific beliefs and theoretical assumptions to a particular study. Depending on this orientation, researchers have an idea or way of reasoning of how the study should proceed in order to answer the research question as truthfully as possible. Most efforts to teach qualitative research ignore this important reality of the researcher’s life world and more specifically the awareness of the researcher in his/her world. Instead, it follows the pragmatic approach of focusing on teaching research methods and techniques to produce research (Bentz and Shapiro 1998:xiv). This will be discussed further in the next section.

## **DIFFERENT WAYS OF CONCEPTUALISING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

From a pragmatic point of view, qualitative research is “conceptualised as an application of selected methods in order to answer specific research questions (i.e local/situational problem solving strategies)” (Breuer and Schreier Internet source 2007). The question is whether this pragmatic view is sufficient to enable the researchers to gain an understanding of the meaning of their subjects’ life world. Moreover, often when the qualitative research process is removed from the network of the ontological, epistemological and other constitutive assumptions, all that is left is to regard the methods used as research strategies or techniques that can be taught like ‘recipes’ following specific steps. To make matters worse, through this, qualitative research could be reduced to nothing more than a situational problem-solving strategy.

In order to conceptualise and relate concepts theoretically, researchers must develop a “well conceptualised research design where reflexivity where data analysis forms part of the total research process” (in Auriacombe 2009:67).

According to Glaser (Internet source 2004), this is the challenge that they are often unable to meet: “The thrill of generating one concept is all they need and can handle. Some researchers cannot handle the tedium of conceptualisation by constant comparison while coding, collecting by theoretical sampling and analysing, writing up theoretical memos and saturating the concept”.

Bentz and Shapiro (1998:xiii-xiv) elaborate on this as follows: “We have found that for students – and for us – the challenges in understanding research are not mainly about research methods. Rather they are about making choices about which research approach to take; trying to figure out how to integrate your research with your underlying sense of who you are and what you want out of life; being aware of your intellectual and social context and how your research relates to it; deciding what your ‘knowledge values’ are; trying to figure out if your research is significant; learning to be an intellectual peer of other scholars; finding your own niche in the world of scholarship and research; situating yourself in the cross-cutting discourses that exist in the academic world; finding the right way of conceptualising the topic in which you are interested; making sure that the topic approach are ‘right’ personally and existentially; relating to the social worlds that you inhabit and in which you do your research; and managing personally the conflicts, ambiguities, fears and confusions that research (in an intellectual and cultural postmodern, chaotic situation) can bring to the surface”.

From this paradigmatic viewpoint “qualitative research methods and methodology “conceptualised as craft, art or bricolage has also been widely prevalent” (Hammersley 2004:204). According to this perspective, the appropriate selection of research methods should form part of a researcher’s philosophical concerns, as well as his/her approach to knowledge-building (HesseBiber and Leavy 2006:4-5 and Denzin and Lincoln 2000). The craft of “qualitative research involves a holistic approach, where qualitative research is conceptualised as a reflexive and process driven approach, ultimately producing culturally situated and theory-enmeshed knowledge through an ongoing interplay between theory and methods, researcher and researched” (HesseBiber and Leavy 2006:5).

The way in which knowledge is generated within the paradigmatic approach implies a chosen methodological conceptualisation within an appropriate approach and using a suitable research strategy to achieve the goals of the scientific endeavour. For example, while objectivists are driven by the belief that the meaning that the “other give to their life world” could best be represented through an approximation of ‘objective reality’, constructivists believe that there is no truth ‘out there’, and that the innermost experiences of the ‘other’ could best be represented through a narrative reality that changes continuously. Epistemology is therefore embedded within ontology and more specifically the “...philosophical perspective of the researcher” (HesseBiber and Leavy

2006:5). They further argue that, “More than a concept or a series of techniques that can simply be employed, qualitative research is an intellectual, creative, and rigorous craft that the practitioner not only learns but also develops” (HesseBiber and Leavy 2006:5).

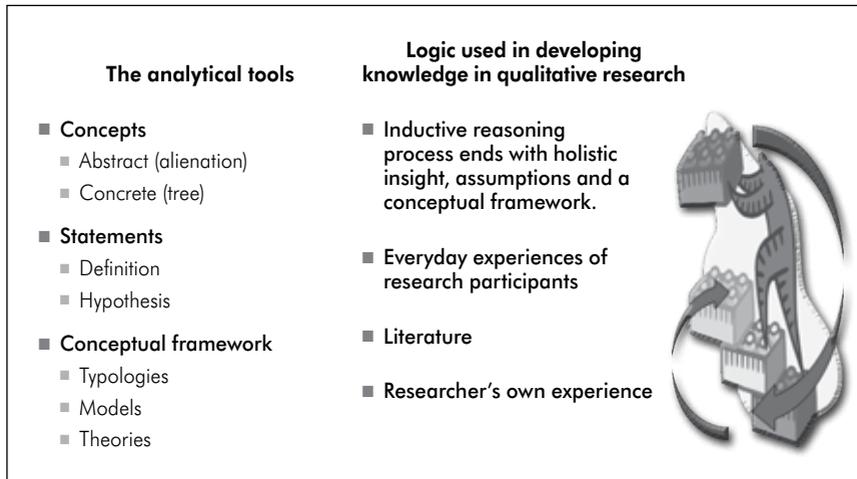
The process of conceptualisation in qualitative research as a craft in the social sciences imply that, “learning is understood as actively constructing knowledge, a process where new information is integrated with the perceptions and prior knowledge of the researcher” (HesseBiber and Leavy 2006:5). Therefore, the researcher enters the spiral of meaning-making where his/her current level of knowledge, insight and understanding is deepened up to a point where conceptual saturation could take place.

In the broadest sense of the word, all research is a systematic and rigorous “study of a subject, to discover (new) information or reach a (new) understanding” that could contribute to the scientific body of knowledge (Definition of research Internet source Undated). Science depends on both new ideas and accumulating empirical findings that challenge prevailing theories (Chapter 9 Research Design: Qualitative Methods. Internet source Undated). Just as any research, qualitative research depends on interpretive frameworks, material practices and analytical strategies. “Accordingly qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, helping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand. It is understood however, that each practice makes the world visible in a different way” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:3).

Qualitative research follows an “interpretive, naturalistic approach”. It locates the observer in the world and makes the world visible through interpretations and representations (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:3) It follows an inductive reasoning process, whereby the researcher’s own experience; the literature; actors’ meaning-perspectives; and specific interrelationships between actors and the environment; and the theoretical and methodological frameworks used are blended into a conceptual framework (See Figure 1).

According to Glaser (Internet source 2004), “Max Weber has suggested that the essence of social theory is in the creation of clear concepts and that many such concepts guide our thinking and theorising” (Glaser. Internet source 2004). Researchers generally have some idea of what and how the study will be conducted (a tentative rudimentary conceptual framework). The conceptual framework gives the researcher a system to reflect on, analyse and interpret observations. It sensitises the researcher as to what to look for next, how to look for new information and to progressively refine the data gathering and analysis processes. A systematic approach helps the researcher to understand the whole, as well as the different parts constituting the whole. By using a conceptual framework, the researcher systematically discovers (new) information, reaches (new) understandings of the relationships between different constructs and

**Figure 1: The process followed and analytical tools used in the inductive reasoning process**



Source Adapted from Mouton and Marais 1996:125–151)

reaches to a deeper level of holistic understanding (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:3). It enables the researcher to move beyond mere “...descriptions of ‘what’ to explanations of *why* and *how*. It explains either graphically, or in narrative form, the main things to be studied – the key factors, concepts or variables – and the presumed relationship among them” (Vaughan Internet source Undated). The ideas on which the study is built changes over time and the conceptual framework develops further as new information is gathered and analysed.

The “... conceptual framework of an empirical study refers to the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories informing the research and is generally regarded as an explanation proposed to reach a better understanding of the social reality/ phenomena under investigation” (Maxwell 2005:34). “The function of the conceptual framework is to assess and refine the goals, develop realistic and relevant research questions, provide substantiation to arguments, clarify the theoretical framework and logic or reasoning used, define concepts, justify decisions, and directs data collection and analysis” (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008:29). The conceptual framework is the operationalisation “of the theoretical framework of a study and therefore forms an intricate part of the research design. Qualitative researchers utilise a conceptual framework to develop typologies, models and theories from the bottom up” (Rossman and Rallis 2012:121) (See Figure 1).

“A conceptual framework is a structure that organises the currents of thought that provide focus and direction to an inquiry project. It is the organisation of

ideas – the central concepts from theory, key findings from research, policy statements, professional wisdom – that will guide the project” (Rossman and Rallis 2012:121).

In order to provide a clearer understanding of the conceptual framework of a study, Denzin and Lincoln’s (2005:4–6) ‘quilter’ could be used as an example. They compare the qualitative researcher to a quilt-maker. The quilter creatively stitches, edits, and “puts slices of reality together” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:4–6). “This process brings psychological and emotional unity to an interpretive experience.” Just as a quilt maker creates his/her quilt; the researcher uses tools and techniques to piece together new information to design a ‘quilt’ of new understanding. Although the quilt-maker follows an overall design, the choices of what tools to use and what pieces to stitch together is not made in advance. He/she adds a new colour or shape and then stands back to interpret and to reflect on the whole, trying to uncover what is already there and what should still be added. Qualitative researchers are thus constantly interpreting and comparing new information to what is already known and understood. The ultimate aim is to experience the phenomenon they are studying as fully as possible in order to decide what step should be taken next (Lamont and White Internet source 2005).

However, our interpretations are not free of our own perceptions, world-view, the influence of our previous knowledge and experience, as well as our cultural influences and expectations (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008:16). This will be the subject of the next section.

## **THE ROLE OF PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE AND THEORY IN MEANING-MAKING**

It is a well-accepted fact that qualitative researchers have their own ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological assumptions (Guba and Lincoln 1994:105). The questions social scientists pose have different answers depending on their ontology, epistemology, methodology, axiology and teleology (Mouton 2001:137). “There is no bias-free point of view in any approach to research. We all filter our view of phenomena through our theoretical lens” (Vrasidas Internet source Undated).

A researcher can never enter a setting as a ‘fly on the wall’. Instead, the researcher enters a setting and views the research setting through a specific lens (world view). Depending on this perspective, the different researchers will view the research setting differently. Researchers could never disown the role that their previous knowledge and experience play in their perceptions. Therefore, as research instrument, the researcher must be acutely aware of how his/her view of the world (ontology) and perception of how research should

be done (epistemology) mould the research and determine the interpretation of the phenomenon under study. (Vrasidas Internet source Undated). However, qualitative researchers should not only be aware; they should also be open and explain to their readers how their accounts were produced. In this way, they make a methodological contribution to the body of scientific knowledge (Lamont and White 2005:16).

Table 1 provides a better understanding of the qualitative research dimensions within the three broad research approaches, namely positivism and interpretivism and realism. The table highlights that, “there exist alternative answers to each foundational question” (Auriacombe 2009:89). Different beliefs of ontology (meaning how you see reality), and epistemology, (how you think social phenomena could be studied), will influence the way that a researcher will go about doing the research. The same phenomenon could thus be investigated, analysed and interpreted differently depending on your belief (Auriacombe 2009:89).

**Table 1: Dimensions of qualitative research within the three broad research approaches**

Research traditions/ paradigms	Logical Positivism (Objectivism; Empiricism)	Pragmatism/ Critical Realism	Constructivism (interpretive; naturalist; subjectivist)
<p><b>Ontology</b> is the researcher’s ideas about the existence of, and relationship between, people, society and the world.</p>	<p>There is a real world or truth out there (outside the mind) that can be discovered and studied scientifically and independently.</p>	<p>Holds an advocacy and participatory world view.</p> <p>Social reality exists independent of the human mind, but is shaped by social, political and cultural factors. The role of power and ideology is critical. What we observe is bound to our life experience.</p> <p>The real world could be discovered through a systematic, interactive methodological approach.</p>	<p>Asserts that social actors continually construct social phenomena and meanings.</p> <p>Reality is internal; truth depends on the knower’s frame of reference. The researcher and what is being researched is inseparable.</p> <p>Knowledge of the world is the result of how the researcher intentionally tries to make sense of the world.</p> <p>There is no real world or truth out there – only a narrative truth</p>

Research traditions/ paradigms	Logical Positivism (Objectivism; Empiricism)	Pragmatism/ Critical Realism	Constructivism (interpretive; naturalist; subjectivist)
<p><b>Epistemology</b> is knowledge or evidence of things in the social world. What are the principles and rules by which you decide whether and how social phenomena can be known and how can knowledge be demonstrated?</p>	<p>Objective point of view. Only knowledge gained through experience and the senses is acceptable.</p> <p>Social phenomena and their meanings exist independently of social actors.</p>	<p>Both objective and subjective points of view.</p> <p>The viewer and the viewed collaborate to create knowledge.</p>	<p>Subjective point of view.</p> <p>Knower and known are inseparable.</p>
<p><b>Axiology (role of values in inquiry).</b></p>	<p>Inquiry is value-free.</p>	<p>Values play a large role in interpreting results.</p> <p>Values, human action and interaction precede the search for description, theory, explanation and narrative.</p>	<p>Inquiry is value-bound.</p>
<p><b>The teleological dimension</b> of social research refers to the goal driven nature of social science.</p>	<p>Predicting, controlling, explaining and understanding social reality</p> <p>Theoretical goals include (basic research) and theory-building.</p>	<p>Understanding and gaining insight into social reality.</p> <p>Practical goals (applied research) includes developing programmes or models aimed at improving people's quality of life and empowering oppressed or exploited members of society, such as women and children.</p>	<p>Understanding and constructing social reality</p> <p>Understanding and reconstructing human behaviour; explaining and predicting human behavior; and gaining insight into social reality.</p> <p>Giving a voice to the marginalised and improving lives.</p>

Source Adapted from (Guba and Lincoln 1994). See also <http://www.evaluate-europe.net/projects/eval3/>.

A researcher's "philosophical beliefs are more than just conceptual tools enabling him/her to collect particular types of data and answering particular research question(s). Taking a specific philosophical stance means that one is

making certain assumptions about the nature of truth, human behaviour and representation of the “other”. A philosophical approach can always be contested by those who hold a different approach to the representation of the truth” (The Philosophy of Qualitative Research Internet source Undated).

Researchers conduct their scientific studies and derive their interpretations from their existing experience of the natural world. However, in the process they also make use of existing knowledge and theory to conceptualise and interpret their research. Notably, the literature review should offer a synthesis of what has already been written on the topic. Importantly, it links literature, core concepts and the research question. A properly conducted literature review should show where the gaps are and how the researcher aims to fill the gaps with the study. “It shares with the reader the results of related studies and relates the study and the reasoning of the study and the conceptual framework used to the larger, ongoing dialogue in the literature” (Creswell 2009:25). Through the literature study, the researcher also aims to clarify and show how the proposed research would address the ‘gap’ or weakness in the existing knowledge-base. It is a critical study of the “state of the art on a research topic. One should not only track down what scholars have written about a subject but should provide one’s own personal and professional assessment of both the content and quality of the text” (Creswell 2009:25).

Based on their life experiences, everyone is constantly conceptualising and thus using interpretation to make sense of the world. Qualitative researchers who follow a paradigmatic approach use critical analysis, reflexivity and inductive theory to develop a conceptual framework for their study. In essence, an inductive strategy implies that one starts off with the data you have collected from the phenomena under study and from that infer general principles or theoretical statements.

Therefore, qualitative research should be designed within a conceptual framework by placing the study within the context ongoing and major research in the area; entering into a dialogue with the relevant literature and related fields; and making methodological and theoretical contributions (Nagel in Lamont and White Internet source 2005:161).

The main aim of qualitative research is therefore “to produce conceptual theory that explains fundamental social patterns within the substantive focus of inquiry” (Glaser Internet source 2004 Undated). The conceptual framework is the methodological and theoretical “glue that holds all ... design decisions together” (Saldana 2011:81). The conceptual framework will develop further as the research is further designed and participant views and issues are gathered and analysed.

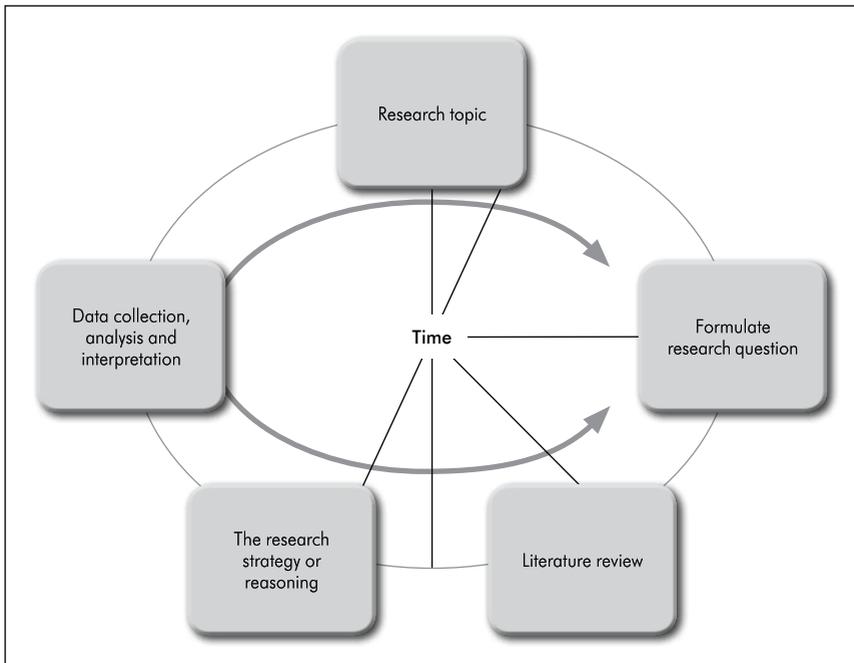
It is clear from Figure 2 that designing a qualitative study is not like following a set recipe for a chocolate cake that requires specific ingredients, directions and prerequisites, such as an oven that should be set to a specific heat to get a desired result. Designing qualitative research is more like making salad to your own liking, where you keep analysing the dish and add different amounts and kinds of

ingredients until you are satisfied with it. Literally, ‘design’ is a researcher’s plan of how to execute a particular study, from identifying the topic to interpreting the results. “Unlike the quantitative paradigm, its qualitative counterpart is more than a set of data-gathering methods; it is a way of approaching the empirical world” (Taylor and Bogdan 1984:5).

But if there is no recipe to follow when doing qualitative research, why then is it important to gain an understanding of qualitative research design? Mason (1996:9) correctly points out that this is particularly important, since qualitative research has a more unstructured, flexible or fluid character. This implies that, “... an all-encompassing research design cannot necessarily be completed before the research is begun” (Mason 1996:9).

Not following a specific recipe does not mean that the chef has no plan of how he/she is going to proceed when making a salad. Bogdan and Biklen (1998:50) write in this regard: “How (qualitative researchers) proceed is based on theoretical assumptions (that meaning and process are crucial in understanding human behaviour, that descriptive data are what is important to collect, and that analysis is best done inductively), on data-collection traditions (such as participant observation, unstructured interviewing, and document

**Figure 2: Research design: The structure of the inquiry**

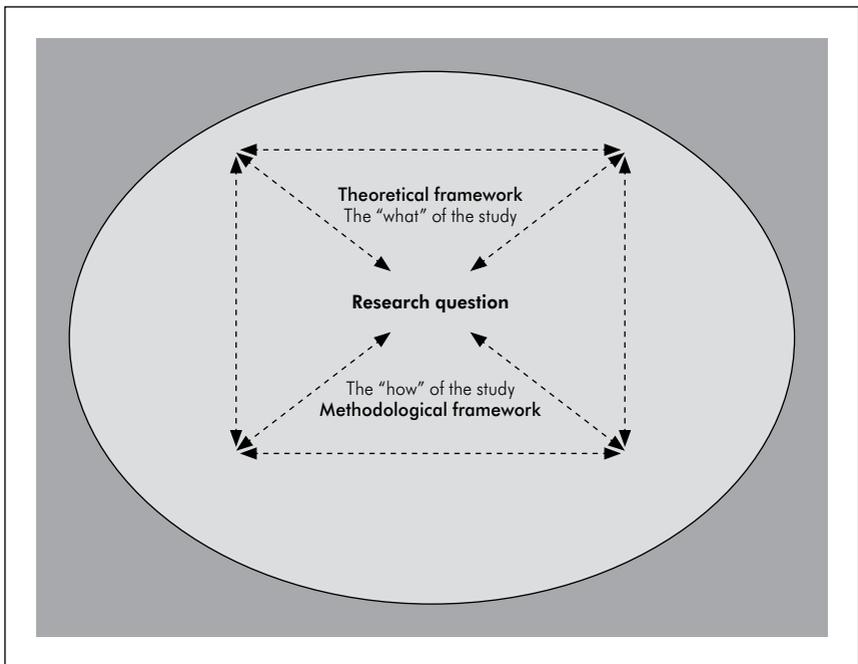


analysis) and on generally stated substantive questions ... It is not that qualitative research design is nonexistent; it is rather that the design is flexible”.

The conceptual framework is an essential component of any research. It serves as a development tool that could be used to help collect and analyse data in a rigorous and systematic way. A conceptual framework could therefore provide rigour to the research process “helps data cohere and enables researchers to go beyond an aimless, unsystematic piling up of accounts” (Mason 1996:142).

Not only does it provide guidance to the study, but also helps the researcher to examine and constantly reflect on the basic theoretical and methodological assumptions made. Designing and executing the research conceptually (within a holistic systemic conceptual framework) enables a researcher to not only gain an understanding of the feelings, perceptions or behaviour of individual research participants, but also to see the relationships between participants’ realities, as well as how these elements relate to the total phenomenon (bigger picture) under study. By looking at social phenomena through a holistic, analytic or reductionist lens, and by seeking systems-integrated solutions based on the interconnections between theory, methodology and practice could deepen

**Figure 3: The interrelated parts of the conceptual framework**



our understanding of social phenomena. Furthermore, it could provide viable solutions to social problems (Patton 2008:5).

Although all the elements of the research design are inter-related when placing the design within a conceptual framework, two parts and a central core can be identified (See Figure 3). The first part of the design forms a closely knitted unit that focuses on the theoretical framework (Maxwell 2005:123). The core of the research design is the research question, while the second part focuses on the study's methodological framework. "It connects the 'what' with the 'how'" (Rossman and Rallis 2012:121). Stated differently, the first part of the research design generally deals with the 'what' of the study, while the second part focuses on the 'how'. These two parts should not be seen as separate units, as they are interlinked with the research question.

In practice there is a direct relationship between the research question(s) and a study's theoretical and methodological frameworks. Therefore, the research question is informed by the theoretical and methodological dimensions to be applied to "gain an understanding" of the phenomena under study, while "decisions about what theory and knowledge are relevant" depend on the research question (Babbie 2007:122). Thus, as already stated, the conceptual framework provides the structure for a coherent study (Babbie 2007:122).

However, in reality the relationships and the possibilities for meaning-making are far more complex. "There are many layers of overlap and connection" (Auriacombe 2009:96). Importantly, the researcher's perspective will vary depending on where he/she stands in the meaning-making process. This conceptualisation process is a lot like an artist taking three balls of clay with different colours and shapes, and mixing it together gradually to create a new colour and shape. During the meaning-making process, the researcher's own perspective and experience are integrated with existing theory. Importantly, the study findings aim to create new insight and knowledge. This evolving spiral of meaning-making allows for adding new cycles of understanding to gain an ever better understanding of the phenomenon, as well as to reflect on various possibilities of answering the research questions. This is the subject of the next section.

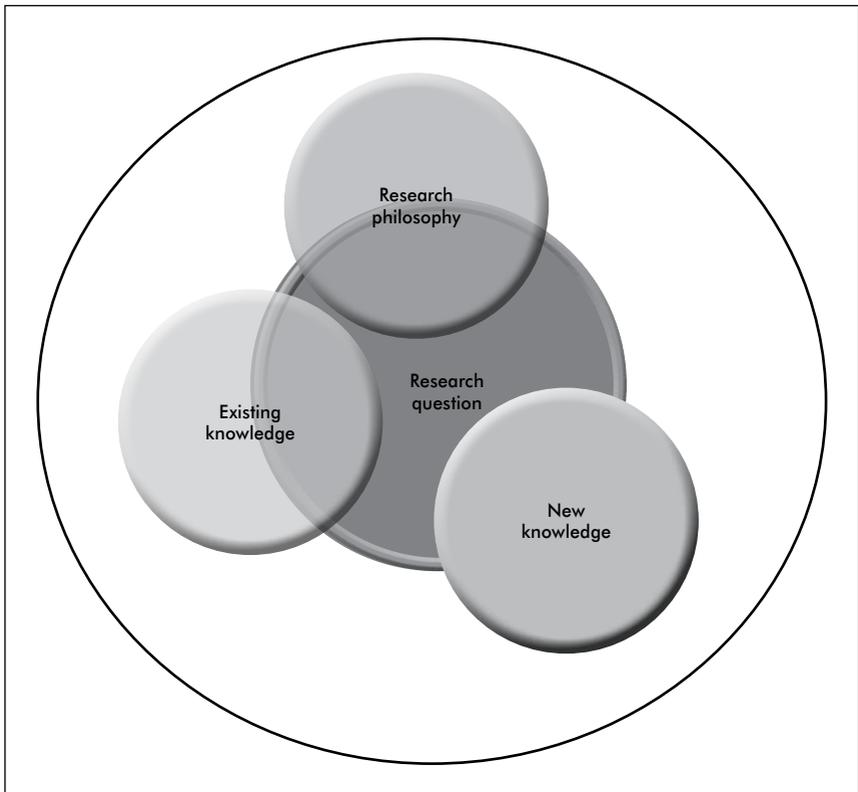
## **GENERATING NEW KNOWLEDGE AND THEORY TO CREATE MEANING**

The holistic conceptualisation process referred to above, where researchers like artists continuously reflect on their 'making', allows for understanding the different elements (existing knowledge and new knowledge) or pieces of the puzzle, as well as a holistic insight into the entire picture to develop new knowledge and theory. "The aim is to have an evolving research design that allows for diversity and

change, where appropriate methods and methodologies can be used or drawn on as is appropriate to the context of the research problem, the research question and the issues or themes within them. The researcher is thus able to through the process of critical reflection, analysis and evaluation make new connections between the components and in doing so, is able to spiral to a deeper level of understanding and meaning-making” (Vaughn Internet source Undated).

Part and parcel of the qualitative research design is accepting that the research is guided by a clear set of research questions that aim to understand the meaning of events, situations, actions, and accounts of lives and experiences; the context with which participants act and the influence that this context has on their actions; unanticipated phenomena and influences and generating new grounded theories; understanding the process through which events and actions take place; and causal explanations (Qualitative research design Internet source Undated).

**Figure 4: The conceptual nature of qualitative research**



However, qualitative researchers must realise that while trying to answer the research question they must at the same time be open and responsive to new opportunities, insights and connections within the findings, as the project has unfold. "The connecting thread of the design and the subsequent realisation, is in the search for meaning that is appropriate to our needs and context" (Vaughn Internet source Undated).

The above mentioned statement highlights the fact that designing qualitative research is a dynamic process. Therefore, it is not only important for qualitative researchers to properly plan their studies, but also to provide a reflexive account of how it was done, such as constructing natural histories, research stories, or internal audits, and/or defending the logic of their decisions. In this way, the conceptual framework is not only used to guide the researcher, but also to help manage the entire research process (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008:16).

In this sense the qualitative researcher is, as already indicated, like a quilt-maker. In the process of crafting and creating images and understanding, they creatively blend together, shape and define one another to form a new creation. The colours and shapes used depend on the overall design, as well as the quilt-maker's previous knowledge. Therefore, the researcher's previous knowledge, skills and beliefs, as well as the approach that is taken, the strategy that is implemented and the tools/methods used all blend together to discover themes and patterns. This creates a new understanding of the meaning the research participants attach to their world and connects the parts to the whole (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:4). "All these themes mesh together. Meaning itself is an interactive process – it emerges out of interactions. The self is a process built out of encounters and endowed with shifting meaning. Social objects assume their meaning according to how they are handled in joint actions. Societies are a vast matrix of 'social worlds' constituted through the symbolic interactions of 'self' and 'others'. Only in the grounded empirical world open to observation can self, encounter, social object, meaning, be investigated. There is, then, behind symbolic interactionist sociologies a pervasive imagery – of symbol, process, interaction, and intimate familiarity. All of which helps to shape its theoretical work" (Plummer Internet source Undated).

As quilt-maker, the qualitative researcher therefore understands that qualitative research is a creative and interpretive "process shaped by his or her own personal history", background, personality, emotional disposition, knowledge, experience, skills, culture, as well as by the very people he/she is trying to study (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:4).

However, it should be clear by now that the conceptual framework is not static, but a dynamic deepening spiral that starts off with rough ideas that are further developed through the literature and turned into a researchable question. During the research process, more insights are gained; the research question is

refined; the literature is revisited; the research design is reconceptualised; and theoretical ideas are re-examined (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008:29).

“The categories of the framework are not fixed, but instead are changing and evolving during the course of the study. From the traditional research perspective, the conceptual framework is rigid and consists of a fixed number of categories with all the relationships among those categories identified in advance. Such an approach relies on the belief that ‘truth’ exists out there and the researcher can know in advance what it takes to find it by following the step-by-step ‘scientific method’. In interpretive research the conceptual framework is neither fixed, nor sequential. It is rather fluid and it evolves as the study proceeds” (Vrasidas Internet source Undated).

## **THE ROLE OF REFLEXIVITY IN DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Before outlining the role of reflexivity in developing a conceptual framework, it is necessary to stress the importance of systems thinking. The systems thinking process refers to the ability to draw boundaries, identify core elements and link them in meaningful ways. Ultimately, it implies that, “... construing the meaning of the whole meant making sense of the parts and grasping the meaning of the parts depended on having some sense of the whole” (Schwandt 2001:112).

The crux for understanding a system lies in the ability to consider and reflect on multiple perspectives. According to Imam, LaGoy and Williams (2004:10), “A systems thinker always looks inside, outside, beside, and between the readily identified systems boundary”. Therefore, this approach demands a paradigm shift from reductionist thinking to thinking in a holistic manner. As in the case of systems theory, it aims to portray the phenomenon under study as part of the larger system of previous and new knowledge and perceptions.

Reflexivity has become increasingly important in qualitative research. Researchers reflect on the process as a whole and relate each step to previous ones. Therefore, the reflexivity procedure forms part of the circular research process. In practice, this means that the qualitative researcher has to reflect critically on his/her way of knowledge production. What kind of knowledge it is and how this new knowledge could be related to older knowledge. The “... construction of knowledge in research is therefore a reflexive process that could bring rigor to the study” (Guillemin and Gillam 2004:274). More specifically, this means that the researcher must rigorously reflect on each action made to help him/her to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under study; decide whether it is the best possible action to answer the research question truthfully; and to decide what to do next.

This argument could be taken a few steps further by reasoning that researchers that rely on interpretive methods could only make sense of their data if they continuously reflect on the decisions made during the research process. Furthermore, they should have a heightened awareness of their epistemological, theoretical, and ontological perceptions, as well as how this influences their research practices (Mauthner and Doucet 2003:415). Mauthner and Doucet (2003:424) suggest that, "...the more researchers can be self-conscious about, and articulate their role in research processes and products, the more readers can engage in symbolic dialogues with the author(s) and the more credible their research studies will become". More specifically, it could help the researcher to be reflexively interconnected in the research process and particularly when analysing his/her data.

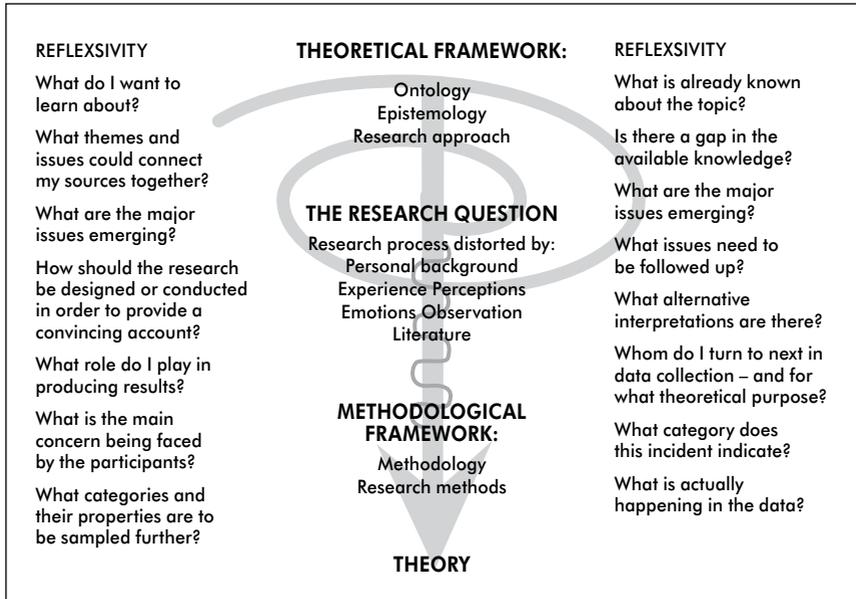
Data analysis is often regarded as a mechanical process of comparing, sorting, categorising, organising, and indexing the information obtained. In reality (as is clear from Figure 5), researchers are all but invisible, since they have their own ontological, epistemological and "theoretical assumptions", as well as their own backgrounds, "personal, emotional" and interpersonal influences that they bring with them to the research process (Mauthner and Doucet 2003:415).

The successive stages of reflexivity within a conceptual framework enable researchers to continuously reflect on their ontology, epistemology, theoretical framework, research questions, methodology, quality of the study and ethical considerations. Reflexivity represents a refinement process whereby the different elements of the research process are integrated with each other to form the conceptual framework for the study. This framework could be used as research tool intended to order the researcher's thinking, decision-making and actions taken during the entire research process.

Therefore, the researcher's conceptual framework forms the heart of the study and it guides the research process from the beginning to the end (Goetz and LeCompte 1984:201). Such a practice forms an important tool that could be used to enhance the quality of qualitative research.

Reflexivity occurs on different levels. Ontological and epistemological reflexivity concerns "our assumptions about what we can know and how we can claim to know it" (Auriacombe 2009:102). Reflexive analysis exposes the underlying assumptions on which qualitative researchers could build their arguments (Holland 1999). Notably, it helps researchers to "... become more consciously reflexive by thinking about our own thinking, by noticing and criticizing our own epistemological pre-understandings and their effect on research, and by exploring possible alternative commitments" (Johnson and Cassell 2001:127). A researcher's epistemological assumptions are reflected by his/her philosophical beliefs. However, all ontological and "epistemological stances have weaknesses. Consequently, awareness, debate and reflection" are crucial if we want to enhance the quality of qualitative research (Auriacombe 2009:168).

**Figure 5 Reflexive learning within the conceptual framework**



Reflexivity could thus help the researcher to create meaning on his/her research journey. It has therefore become more important for qualitative researchers to reflect on the research process in terms of what assumptions are implicated in the theories that drive their research and are produced as a result of their research. It is equally important to reflect on the practices and procedures for research (methodology) and how these elements influence the conclusions reached because it renders the research process transparent and accountable (Johnson and Cassell 2001:127). In this regard issues such as the following should be dealt with: How and why the research was designed, conducted and analysed; and how this led to particular conclusions. According to Johnson and Cassell (2001:127), more specifically, the researcher should ask the following questions:

- “How should the research be designed or conducted in order to provide a convincing account?
- What alternative interpretations are there?
- What role do I play in producing results?
- What choices were made and what were the reasons for them?”

These questions keep the researcher theoretically sensitive when “collecting and analysing the data. They force him/her to focus on patterns and to rise conceptually

above detailed description of incidents. Research participants must be chosen according to theoretical criteria. These criteria are applied in the ongoing joint collection and analysis of data associated with the generation of theory. As such, the data is continually tailored to fit the data" (Glaser Internet source 2004:14).

The reflexive process is very helpful to relate occurrences, such as words, expressions, interactions and social processes to people, events, other occurrences, as well as the values and norms of particular groups of people. Discovering such linkages are important in selecting further theoretical incidents, persons and behaviours, as well as to establish and verify evolving ideas, themes and typologies.

The essence of reflexivity is that it enables a critical appraisal of the knowledge produced and how that knowledge was generated (Guillemin and Gillam 2004:262). "This ensures that the research is developed and produced in the tensional field of theoretical, conceptual, practical and methodological creativity and methodological rigour when studying phenomena. Therefore qualitative research should be located in the tensional field between being rigorous and being flexible" (The Philosophy of Qualitative Research Internet source Undated).

On a deeper level, reflexivity also means conceptualising, organising, continuously questioning your understanding of the phenomenon, constantly comparing incidents to new incidents, making abstract connections, visualising, synthesising the data by identifying patterns, theorising by developing explanations that fit the data and re-contextualising by relating emergent theory to established knowledge. The process of continuous reflexivity should help researchers to understand why they frame questions in particular ways; why they investigate them in a certain manner; how they gain an understanding of the meanings research participants give to their life world; how they gather sufficient data to make our research credible; and how such approaches lead them to interpret the data the way they do (Johnson and Cassell 2001:140). In this way reflexivity helps the researcher to (like the quilter) piece the data together creatively.

It helps the researcher to make "the invisible obvious, of recognising the significant from the insignificant, of linking seemingly unrelated facts logically, of fitting categories one with another, and of attributing consequences to antecedents. It is a process of conjecture and verification, of correction and modification, of suggestion and defence. It is a creative process of organising data so that the analytic scheme will appear obvious" (May 1994:10).

## **CONCLUSION**

When designing a conceptual framework for a study, answering the following key questions are of the utmost importance: "How do you view social

reality (ontology)?”; “How do you think social phenomena should be studied (epistemology)?”; “What theories, beliefs and prior research findings will guide or inform your research?”; “How does your proposed research fit into what is already known (relationship between theory and research)?”; “What assumptions underlie your research questions?”; “How do your questions link to larger theoretical constructs?”; and “What is the relationship between your theoretical framework, the research question and the methodological framework? (Johnson and Cassell 2001:127).

The above discussion highlighted that qualitative researchers typically construct “analytical tools” or “...concepts, typologies, models and theories that are grounded in or reflect intimate familiarity with the people in the setting under study” (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008:16). Theory thus emerges from the bottom up (rather than from the top down); and from many different pieces of collected evidence. Therefore, the theory is not grounded in data by putting together an already known puzzle, but by constructing a new picture that takes shape as the researcher collects and examines the parts.

The ability to make sense of data or generate ideas is attributed to the qualitative researcher’s conceptual skills and ability to interpret the innermost meanings people give to their everyday lives. More specifically, four main sources are used to construct the study’s conceptual context, namely the researcher’s:

- own experience and knowledge including research background and personal experiences;
- existing theory and research;
- new information gained from research participants; and
- critical reflection on knowledge production and how this new knowledge could relate to older knowledge and theory.

This spiral of meaning-making relates to the idea of the hermeneutical circle of understanding, constructing and deepening the meaning that the researcher has of the phenomenon being studied and relates to the concept of *verstehen*. This means that with qualitative research, a deeper understanding of human behaviour is only possible from “an insider’s point of view (emic) where more and more insight into the meaning (*verstehen*)” of the subject’s life world could be gained by conceptualising, understanding and interpreting (Cole and Avison 2007:78).

This interpretation process involves being part of the hermeneutic circle where the preliminary versions of knowledge are modified and changed continuously as more insight is gained during the research process. “This spiral of meaning-making is thus whole to the parts and vice versa” (Vaughn Internet source Undated). Every time the circle is completed, the researcher’s

perceptions and the findings and interpretation of the phenomena changes. Subsequently, a more holistic understanding is reached. It is an evolving cycle; a spiral of continuous exploration; a process of growing understanding starting from what is known and moving to a deeper understanding to make meaning (Vaughn Internet source Undated).

“The prior knowledge is interpreted by the researcher and in that process the tradition (prior knowledge) can be modified and changed ... We interpret things not in a vacuum, but in a hermeneutic process ... as the researcher’s knowledge base grows and changes, so also, therefore, does their position towards prior knowledge change” (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008:16).

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# Book Review

## **J J N Cloete's *South African Public Administration and Management* as revised and updated by Chris Thornhill, 2012**

H G van Dijk  
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Chris Thornhill has ensured that each person interested in the field of public administration and management has a valuable resource book which provides an easy-to-follow and understandable overview of the South African public sector. Of particular value is the detailed description of the various spheres and branches of government as well as the subsequent discussions on how the administrative and managerial functions of the state are implemented in each sphere of government. As is described on the cover of the book, this is the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of *South African public administration and management* which was first published in 1981 as *Introduction to public administration* by J J N Cloete. Chris Thornhill, as student and colleague of J J N Cloete, is in a unique position to offer not only a revised edition of the text, but also, due to his own professional career, an updated text which reflects the current context within which public administration and management functions are implemented.

The book is divided into three sections, namely:

- Section 1: Legislative, governmental, judicial and administration institutions and functions
- Section 2: Administrative and managerial functions
- Section 3: Auxiliary, instrumental and functional activities

Each section's chapters offer students and practitioners helpful guides for understanding the context of the chapter (through learning outcomes), understanding the application of the text (through examples and activities) and assessing your own understanding (through self study questions). Throughout the text as well as at the end of each chapter references and further reading suggestions enhance the comprehensive nature of the text.

Throughout the book, the reader is encouraged to learn more by accessing government websites, which results in the added benefits that the reader not only learns about the practical application, but becomes au fait with the environment and vocabulary specific to the public sector. The reader should understand that

opening this book means an increase in their knowledge of public administration and management, but also a challenge because of the detailed and comprehensive nature of the information. Readers should expect that they will not only learn about a current situation, but will be made to understand why public administration and management is done this way and what led to the current context within which the administrative functions are implemented. In our world where public governance is becoming more evident, it is important to understand the administrative system which supports public governance, and this is a particular message which is carried throughout the book. Professor Thornhill emphasises the particular network or joined-up government system which is so characteristic of public governance. He ensures that all readers understand the responsibility of government in the implementation of its own administrative and managerial function, while purporting the reality that an active citizenry and engaged private sector are integral parts to the effective and efficient provisioning of goods and services. Professor Thornhill builds on the legacy created by Professor Cloete, but makes sure that each and every reader is well aware of the complexity of today's public administration and management function.

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ISSN 1015-4833