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Editorial

D Nel-Sanders

Chief Editor

Woodrow Wilson has generally been regarded as one of the best American presidents, especially for his innovative improvements to the United States (US) economy and government. F Cloete, in his article **‘Woodrow Wilson’s Controversial Mixed Legacies: Ethical Dilemmas for the Discipline of Public Administration in South Africa’**, states that the former US president is highly regarded as the founder of the League of Nations and, as alleged, founder of the Public Administration academic discipline. As the title of this article suggests, Wilson’s controversial mixed legacies have over time reduced his stature as a revered Public Administration hero. The author argues that Wilson was a highly intelligent, competent politician and international statesman. “However, he was also clearly a fundamental racist, opportunist and possibly plagiarist who misinterpreted the essence of parliamentary practice in Britain and the US”, Cloete points out.

A qualitative research approach is followed based on a documentary analysis that was undertaken of Wilson’s most controversial ideas and actions in the available international body of knowledge on his legacies. This entails an exploratory and interpretivist perspective in terms of a combined phenomenological and ethnographic approach. The research findings point to several ethical dilemmas for especially South African Public Administration scholars about Wilson’s influence on the discipline. “While these controversies have been in the public domain for the last century already, South African scholars seem to have paid little attention to them,” notes the author. According to Cloete, “[Wilson] is increasingly rather viewed as more of a public governance villain, similar to what happened to his South African counterparts after the end of apartheid. This has caused several ethical dilemmas for the discipline of Public Administration in South Africa that need further research”.

The unfolding of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa has led to major changes in the higher education (HE) field. Z Ndevu, in the article, **‘The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Employee Working Conditions: Lessons Learnt from Selected Administrative and Academic Staff at South African Universities’** states that tertiary education experienced emerging unpredictability and instability in its core business. As a result, some functions had to be adjusted in all functional domains. There has been a major shift in teaching and learning delivery, by changing the full contact sessions to a virtually-focused learning mode.

To this end, the study aims to assess the extent to which universities’ core business was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The grounded theory-based

qualitative research approach is adopted, while an inductive generalisation approach rooted in evidence-based decision-making theory informs the study. This article demonstrates the diverse experiences of 16 academics and administrative staff at two universities during the pandemic. Findings reveal that operational functions like human resources were affected by the non-existence of policy and leadership-driven capabilities to manage the Covid-19 pandemic. The research indicated that, “despite the collegial relationships between academic and administrative staff at both universities, the migration from physical contact to online teaching and learning was accompanied by an array of problems and challenges”. According to the researcher, “findings from this study aspire to contribute to a new understanding of the key repercussion of the pandemic on the functions, processes, and challenges of South African universities”.

Article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) obliges parties to engage communities in debates to respond collectively to climate change. Likewise, the African Union has prioritised this call for commitment to climate governance by the UNFCCC. In **‘The Quality and Accreditation of Online Public Administration Programs’**, L van Jaarsveldt, M S de Vries and H Kroukamp highlight that Covid-19 has fast-tracked the development of online learning around the world. As a result, state the authors, many universities have transitioned to fully online or hybrid learning (a combination of face-to-face and online teaching). The Covid-19 pandemic has also transformed many traditional programmes in Public Administration into online programs. “It is likely that in the post-pandemic era, many online programs will remain, as universities have recognised the merits of this learning mode, although discussions about the merits also continue”, state the authors.

Accreditation plays an important role in ensuring quality and standards. In Public Administration programmes, accreditation ensures that graduates are equipped to contribute to a responsive, effective and efficient public service. Despite the merits and advantages of online learning, national and international accreditation bodies often only assess the quality of traditional face-to-face programmes. As a result, the accreditation of hybrid and online programs is neglected. According to the authors, “It is important to remember that quality assessments failing to account for the mode of delivery when teaching could result in the non-detection of deficiencies in programmes, which in all other respects, are perhaps excellent”.

This article recommends that specific criteria be added to the existing accreditation standards for Public Administration programmes to assess not only face-to-face programmes but also online offerings. “The quality of those newly developed online courses needs to meet accreditation standards that still have to be developed”, state the authors. International accreditation could provide answers to the questions on the quality of online programs, students’ experiences, technology required, support needed and the readiness of teaching staff.

Municipalities are at the centre of economic activity and should establish a conducive environment for investment in infrastructure development. In **‘Municipal Infrastructure Investment Push and Pull Factors: Selected South African Cases’** G van der Waldt and D Fourie outline the findings of a survey undertaken with the support of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) at selected municipalities in South Africa (SA) to uncover the push-and-pull factors associated with municipal infrastructure investment. They aimed to identify municipalities affected by disinvestment, to document their weaknesses and to identify municipalities able to attract investors and record their winning strategies. Results of the thematic analysis of findings reveal that systemic challenges such as poor service delivery levels, corruption, inefficiencies, failing governance structures, the absence of institutional mechanisms to fast-track investor applications, and the lack of dedicated business management advisory units all act as investment push factors. The practical value of their study is promoted by recommendations for municipal business investment praxis.

D B Jarbandhan, P Pillay and E Mantzaris in their article **‘Corruption in Healthcare Infrastructure Public-Private Partnerships: A South African Case Study’**, focus on corruption in public-private partnerships (PPPs), especially on healthcare infrastructure in South Africa. The article provides a contextual background and analysis of the statutory and regulatory framework associated with PPPs for processes and functions of agreements at the operational levels. According to the authors, concerning health as a basic human right, corruption in the health system – especially its infrastructure and maintenance – has a negative impact on the country’s population (especially the poor, homeless and the marginalised). They argue that government should focus on streamlining anti-corruption entities and organisations to ensure the investigation and prosecution of corrupt individuals from all sectors. These checks and balances will help convince honest, accountable private sector partners of the state’s political will to fight corruption by enhancing all legislative and regulatory processes (including operational functions and processes). According to the authors, “to succeed, legislative and regulatory processes should be supported through integrity, accountability, transparency and institutional capacity”.

The national local economic development (LED) strategic framework emerged in the post-1994 era, mandating local, district and metropolitan municipalities to meet socio-economic growth targets. Key role-players and experts state that the successful implementation of municipal LED strategies will reduce societal challenges such as unemployment, inequality and poverty that pose severe challenges for developing countries such as South Africa. In **‘Reconfiguring Local Economic Development (LED) Strategies: The Case of JB Marks Local Municipality’**, N B Mumba and G van der Waldt state that local municipalities struggle to design appropriate strategies to realise LED targets.

This article reports on findings of an empirical investigation conducted to probe the effectiveness of the current LED strategy of JBMLM, with the purpose of designing a reconfigured LED strategy.

By following a qualitative case study research design, data, method and source triangulation was used to probe the nature, scope, content and effectiveness of the existing LED strategy of JBMLM. Data collection entailed semi-structured interviews with purposively sampled officials and stakeholder groups.

The findings of this study reveal that implementing the existing LED strategy is characterised by poor coordination, misalignment and limited cooperation and involvement of key stakeholders. "To reconfigure existing LED strategies of municipalities, such as the JBMLM, various processes, steps and recommendations are proposed. The reconfigured LED strategy should clearly accommodate roles and responsibilities within the three layers of management, that is strategic, tactical and operational", advise the authors. To this end, a proposed model to reconfigure the existing LED strategy is provided. This model could help introduce positive socio-economic changes to improve the quality of life of local communities. The authors highlight that, "Although the study was based on a single case study, the model for reconfiguration emanating from the findings will benefit all other category B municipalities in South Africa by setting the policy and parameters for more suitable and effective LED strategies".

In their article, **'The Effectiveness of Learner Support in Open Distance Learning at Unisa, KwaZulu-Natal: Critical Considerations'**, J Mouton and M Subban state that distance education in South Africa has changed significantly and this affected some of the distance education institutions within the field of higher education, especially Unisa. Their article focuses on the KwaZulu-Natal regional hub of Unisa as the research setting that embarked on the Unisa Open and Distance Learning (ODL) policy with the goal to promote open access to higher learning. Conceptually and contextually, the article explains the difference between a correspondence versus ODL university, it contextualises ODL for sustainable progress, in terms of learner support, quality assurance and skills development. It also focuses on models in open and distance learning such as Unisa's ODL model and the Bates actions model.

The focus was tuition to include technology, multimedia interaction and consequently, learner support to underpin ODL. The article aims to provide an investigation into the learner support initiatives in the Unisa region of KwaZulu-Natal through the use of empirical methodology to obtain the relevant information on the readiness of the students coming into the ODL university system and their experience of the learner support initiatives provided to them in the region. The article found that students are uncertain, not well prepared for this new environment and that better learner support services are needed to improve the learning of students and also the poor throughput rate in the region.

Currently, the public sector in South Africa is plagued by reports of unethical behaviour and maladministration despite various pieces of legislation, a solid policy framework and several institutions that aim to regulate ethical behaviour and the elimination of corruption. Unethical behaviour manifests itself in a variety of ways, from turning a blind eye to accepting bribes. In their article **“A Conceptual Model to Underpin Ethical Governance in Local Government”**, V Govender, M I Jahed and C J Auriacombe state that the ethical decline within the public sector is also evident in the annual reports of various identified anti-corruption institutions and agencies in South Africa reporting on unethical conduct by public officials and political office-bearers. Within the context to promote good ethical governance in municipalities, the article develops a conceptual model to serve as a measuring instrument to underpin good ethical governance in local government and provides recommendations to improve ethical governance.

The international commodity crisis of the 1980s has inspired the emergence of neo-liberal ideologies predicated on market liberalisation and globalisation. In the article, **‘Managing the Features and Dynamics of a Rural Non-Farm Economy in a Globalising Africa: Challenges and Prospects’**, S Ezeanyika argues that, “This major global event and the policies associated with it have had a tremendous impact on the peasant agrarian political economy in many underdeveloped and developing nations, particularly those in Africa”.

According to Ezeanyika, the information available from recent data and evidence from available studies are beginning to challenge the traditional perception of these nations as being typically agrarian. In reality, states the author, there is a dynamic upsurge of economic activities that are rural but not based on farms. To this end, this article appraises these economic activities, evaluates their contemporary features, and assesses their development dynamics in a globalising Africa. According to the author, “Decisions that lead to the creation of non-farm enterprises and their management are made in pluriactivity rural households. Non-farm enterprises therefore contribute to structuring labour and capital allocations across activities and outcomes”.

According to the article, there are divergent opinions on the reasons why households diversify their activities. The motivation of rural households to diversify and the opportunities available differ significantly across regions. In reality, states the author, it is challenging to isolate different determinants of diversification. “Several factors interact to shape household diversification strategies. It is therefore more realistic and practical to contextualise the analysis of diversification strategies for each unique community”.

Chief Editor

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Tribute

Ignatius Wilhelm Ferreira

29 June 1942 – 9 February 2023

Professor Ignatius Wilhelm Ferreira (known as Naas to all his colleagues) passed away at the age of 80 on 9 February 2023 in his hometown of Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth), after a short illness. Naas was born in Pretoria on 29 June 1942 and grew up in the Karoo towns of Molteno and Noupoort. In summarising Naas's life and career, it is fitting to say that it was dominated by an insatiable appetite to study and to improve himself educationally and ultimately to serve others in the same way, evident from his public service career and his seven educational qualifications. His need to pursue studies in the field of Public Administration resulted from many years of serving as a public servant, engaging in the process and structures of public administration, and observing and understanding the need for improved skills and competencies for public servants. Naas started his working life and career in the early 1960s and spent 28 years as a public servant. In 1989 after lecturing part-time since 1985, he joined the PE Technikon (now part of the Nelson Mandela University) until 2002. He then joined the Cape Technikon and the subsequent Cape Peninsula University of Technology, and was an Adjunct Professor of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) in Cape Town, South Africa. Apart from producing 50 academic articles and chapters in peer-reviewed publications, he supervised and examined 400 student treatises. He spent a lifetime making his students the top priority of his academic career. He was loved and appreciated by his students and colleagues at several universities in the country. He was instrumental in assisting many young or emerging academics to improve their writing and academic skills, and was appreciated for his academic rigour and ability to skillfully work through their academic efforts, which he improved and refined to get them published in accredited journals.

Naas will remain present in the memories of his friends as an exemplary academic servant, always willing to assist, reliable and having a special ability to relate to people from all walks of life. He will be sorely missed as a friend and academic colleague. The association of staff from the schools and departments of the discipline of Public Administration (ASSADPAM) wish to honour him as a valued and appreciated academic.

Naas is survived by his wife, Alta, to whom he was married for 55 years, a son, two daughters, and five grandchildren.

Professor Henry Wissink

Professor Emeritus: Public Governance

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Woodrow Wilson's Controversial Mixed Legacies

Ethical Dilemmas for the Discipline of Public Administration in South Africa

F Cloete

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ABSTRACT

Woodrow Wilson has so far generally been regarded as one of the best American presidents, especially for his innovative improvements to the American economy and the efficiency of the United States (US) government. He is also highly regarded as the founder of the League of Nations for which he was awarded the 1919 Nobel peace prize, and as alleged, founder of the Public Administration academic discipline. Over the years, however, a much more realistic and even negative perspective of Wilson has started to emerge. Both his professional political and scholarly contributions and legacies are now increasingly stained by irrefutable evidence of his alleged racism, personal arrogance, political opportunism and academic dishonesty about his infamous, rigid administration-politics dichotomy. As a result, his overall ranking in the list of best American presidents has already slipped back significantly. In this article, a qualitative research approach is followed based on a documentary analysis that was undertaken of Wilson's most controversial ideas and actions in the available international body of knowledge on his legacies. This approach also entails an exploratory and interpretivist perspective in terms of a combined phenomenological and ethnographic approach. The research findings identified several ethical dilemmas for especially South African (SA) Public Administration scholars about the status that he has gained over time in the discipline. Despite the fact that these controversies have been in the public domain for the last century already, SA scholars seem to have paid little attention to them. The question is why did this happen? The article concludes with tentative explanations that were identified for further research.

INTRODUCTION

The following quote illustrates the problem statement that is addressed in this article.

“Few presidents in American history elicit more mixed feelings than Woodrow Wilson. And why not? His life and career were full of contradictions that have puzzled historians for 70 years. A victim of childhood dyslexia, he became an avid reader, a skilled academic, and a popular writer and lecturer. A deeply religious man, who some described as “a Presbyterian priest” with a dour view of man’s imperfectability, he devoted himself to secular designs promising the triumph of reason and harmony in domestic and world affairs. A rigid, self-exacting personality, whose uncompromising adherence to principles barred agreement on some of his most important political goals, he was a brilliant opportunist who won stunning electoral victories and led controversial laws through the New Jersey state legislature and the U.S. Congress. A southern conservative and elitist with a profound distrust of radical ideas...he became the Democratic Party’s most effective advocate of advanced progressivism...he ranks as (one of) the century’s most aggressive chief executives. An avowed pacifist who declared himself “too proud to fight” and gained re-election in 1916 partly by reminding voters that he had “kept us out of war”, he made military interventions in Latin America and Europe” (Dallek 1991:106).

Woodrow Wilson was the 28th President of the US (1913 -1921). He is generally regarded by the regular American Presidential Historians Survey as one of the best presidents so far in American History. In 2000 he was ranked 6th out of the 40 presidents at that time, but he slipped in 2021 to a 13th place out of the current 45 (C-Span 2021). The main reasons for this fast decline in his historical status are not necessarily due to ‘better’ presidents now, but to historical facts indicating a whitewash over time of critical weaknesses that he had displayed right from the start of his career. These weaknesses include racism and potential plagiarism that have over time been acknowledged and assessed in terms of new contemporary global value systems, trends and priorities (eg. Dallek 1991; Cooper 2009; Manela 2011; Rauchway 2012). This knowledge has recently culminated in a significant re-evaluation of the merits of Wilson’s contributions to governance theory and practice in America and Europe. However, an exploratory investigation into the reaction of SA Public Administration scholars could so far not identify any indication that they have taken note of these developments.

As noted, a qualitative approach and analysis and evaluation were undertaken of the main controversies surrounding Wilson’s professional political and

scholarly careers that are available in relevant scholarly literature on these issues. By implication, this means that the focus of the research was on the evaluation of the contribution to society of Wilson, within a specified time frame as a single individual unit of analysis. His demonstrated subjective views and actions constitute different levels of analysis that influenced the programmes, structures, processes and systems within which he operated (eg. Elias 2020; Bevir & Blakely 2018; Thani 2012; Webb & Auriacombe 2006). The main documentary sources of information which were selected for this evaluation include a selection of Wilson's most relevant own primary publications for this purpose, as well as several other authoritative secondary biographies and commentaries and assessments on different aspects of his thoughts and actions.

This article first summarises Wilson's background and the context within which he operated. It then proceeds to re-assess his historical legacy against the background of evidence that seems to have been totally ignored for various reasons by most SA Public Administration scholars. The article concludes by identifying the main ethical issues posed by this re-assessment for the discipline in South Africa (SA).

WILSON'S BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION

Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924) had an upper-middle class background as the son of a Southern Presbyterian minister who served as a chaplain in the Confederate army during the American civil war (Cooper 2022). He grew up in a very conservative Southern household during the height of the slavery era in the US. He admired his father's visionary preachings on how to create a better society, and tried to emulate him throughout his life. This missionary zeal contextualises and explains many of Wilson's otherwise inexplicable decisions and actions during his career (Ambrosius 2017; Dallek 1991:108). However, he also seemed to have had a dour personality, and exhibited combative and vindictive behaviour at times towards individuals who did not agree with him or opposed him. This frequently resulted in his failure to get the support that he needed to approve his ideas and programmes (Rauchway 2012:295–6).

Wilson completed his undergraduate studies in government at Princeton in 1879 and after an attempt to study and practise law at the University of Virginia, he changed course and completed a PhD in government and history in 1886 at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland. He was a great admirer of the British Westminster system of government, and in his published thesis he compared the American presidential and British parliamentary systems. This was the origin of his ill-fated administration-politics dichotomy concept (Wilson 1887/1941). He proposed sweeping parliamentary-style administrative reforms to the American political system.

Shortly after completing his doctoral studies, he published a little-known article at the time, suggesting that the study of politics and administration are two substantially different activities, because public officials are not involved in politics and do not make policy but just implement policies developed by politicians (Wilson 1887/1941; Fortis 2014:37–40). This conclusion was based on his doctoral research and his growing affinity for the British Westminster governance system that he thought would also be more appropriate in the US (Rauchway 2012:295). Many years later, this viewpoint of Wilson's was broadly regarded as the first attempt to separate Public Administration as a new scholarly field of study, separate from Political Science, and he was generally acknowledged as the founder of this new academic discipline (Raadschelders 2020; Van Riper 1990). Wilson then shifted his focus to different aspects of American history. He published several authoritative books between 1889 and 1908, in which he applied his general theoretical conclusions about how a state should be governed, to the US context. He assessed and re-interpreted different aspects of American history and politics against this background.

O'Reilly (1997:121) quotes the eminent Cornell political scientist and historian, Clinton Rossiter's assessment that Wilson was the 'best prepared President, intellectually and morally, ever to come to the White House'. He is the only American president so far with a doctoral qualification (Cooper 2022).

WILSON'S PRINCETON YEARS

Wilson went straight into academic teaching of history and political science. He moved to Princeton in 1900, and shortly thereafter (in 1902) he was unanimously elected as President of Princeton University at the age of 44. He served in that capacity for eight years. Wilson is credited with consolidating Princeton's reputation as one of the best universities in the country during this time (Dallek 1991:109). A self-evaluation of a committee of trustees of Princeton appointed in 2016 to assess his legacy at the university concluded *inter alia* that "(h)is impact on Princeton as president was profound and enduring, as he transformed an intellectually lethargic campus into a renowned institution of higher learning. Many leading colleges and universities of his time adopted his reforms, and many of them flourish to this day: he raised academic standards and established a modern administrative and departmental structure...in an effort to stimulate original thought over rote learning he introduced the preceptorial system...he promoted the library and art museum as teaching instruments" (Princeton 2016:4).

Wilson, however, was clearly a creature of his conservative Southern background. He regarded slavery as beneficial to slaves because their masters generally looked well after them and their needs (Gerstle 2008:103). He also criticised

efforts by congressional leaders and courts for protecting voting rights for African-Americans because they allegedly "...acted out of idealism, displaying 'blatant disregard of the child-like state of the Negro and natural order of life'" (Skowronek 2006:391). He further criticised President Lincoln's reconstruction programmes after the Civil War because they allegedly complicated life for especially Southern white Americans. He also praised the efforts of the Ku Klux Klan to organise formal resistance against these programmes (Little 2020). He actively opposed the admission of African American staff and students at the university right from the start of his Princeton Presidency, and was confident that he could manage them on campus (Benbow 2010:510). O'Reilly (1997:117) relates how Wilson illustrated this by explaining how he dealt with "...a colored cook they had who needed winding up about every three weeks; then he would go down and artificially get into a raving bad temper. She would be frightened, and for a week after would be superb, the next one, fair, and the next abominable again. It is the only way to deal with colored servants".

At this time, all the other Ivy league universities in the US had already started admitting a few black students. However, two years after his appointment as President of Princeton, Wilson alleged in a letter to a colleague that "...while there is nothing in the law of the University to prevent a Negro's entering, the whole temper and tradition of the place are such that no Negro has ever applied for admission and it seems extremely unlikely that the question will ever assume a practical form" (O'Reilly 1997:120). This statement has recently been proven false.

According to new archival research results, an unknown number of black students had in fact studied and graduated at Princeton as early as 1868 already, but their records are sketchy, probably as a result of deliberate attempts to suppress this information (Armstrong 2021). Wilson is now suspected of deliberately lying to create a fictitious justification for a planned enforcement of racial segregation at the university, which was in the end very successful. Wilson's version of this aspect of Princeton's history was uncritically accepted for many decades. The first black student to graduate there after he left in 1910, only achieved that goal 38 years later, in 1947–48 (O'Reilly 1997:120; Benicoff 2005; Armstrong 2021).

Wilson, however, failed dismally in other attempted reforms at Princeton, largely due to his failure to consult university stakeholders about a number of fundamental changes that he wanted to introduce (Rauchway 2012:296; Dallek 1991:109).

WILSON THE POLITICIAN

In 1910 Wilson was elected as Democratic Party governor of New Jersey and successfully implemented a number of sweeping parliamentary system-type reforms

in the government of that state. However, he also turned his back on many campaign promises. Dallek (1991:110) concluded that these events demonstrated "... how an ambitious politician in a democracy bends to the popular will for the sake of personal gain and simultaneously serves legitimate public needs".

Wilson's successful public management reforms in New Jersey, elevated his national political profile. Two years later he defeated Theodore Roosevelt and William Taft who had split the Republican Party. Wilson was elected with a minority of popular votes but with a landslide win in the electoral college, as the first Southern-born US president since the Civil War ended in 1865 (Cooper 2022). His campaign was ironically supported by a number of prominent black leaders, because he undertook to act as 'President of all Americans' (Du Bois 1973; Glazier 1973). "Wilson was the first Democratic presidential candidate in history to receive widespread endorsement from prominent blacks (though largely in protest against the alternative candidates, Roosevelt and Taft). W.E.B. Du Bois considered him 'a cultivated scholar' of 'farsighted fairness...he has brains', Du Bois said" (O'Reilly 1997:117).

As the only resident of the Confederacy ever to become US President, and probably also because of his public views on racial matters, his victory was celebrated by segregationists. His black supporters, however, soon became disillusioned by his failures to implement his racial reform promises (Dallek 1991:113). He was re-elected for a second term by the electoral college in 1916 with a narrow plurality of popular votes.

Domestic policies

During Wilson's first term in office (1913 -1917) he introduced more parliamentary executive practices into Congress, *inter alia* by keeping them in session virtually throughout the year and driving his own successful transformative legislative programme personally in Congress like a British Prime Minister would do (Cooper 2022; Manela 2011:77; Dallek 1991:112). He totally transformed and modernised the US economy through his legislative reforms creating the Federal Reserve system, Trade Commission, various new tax regimes, regulating anti-competitive behaviour and establishing the first eight-hour working day for railroad workers. After initially explicitly opposing the prohibition of child labour and the extension of the franchise to women, Wilson eventually capitulated and complied under increasing societal pressure on him to do it (Cooper 2022; Stern 2015; Rauchway 2012:295).

Wilson also appointed a number of conservative Southern ministers to his first term cabinet. His relatively sympathetic biographer (Cooper 2009 2022) alleged that they pressurised him during his first year in office (2013), to fast-track the resegregation of the Federal Civil Service that had already started

half-heartedly under his predecessors, Roosevelt and Taft, but which Wilson then significantly expanded and institutionalised (Gerstle 2008:109). He initially focused especially on the Post Office, The Government Printing Office and the War Department. In contrast to Cooper's more sympathetic deflective views, O'Reilly (1997:118) relates that "(m)any of Wilson's Cabinet members were militant segregationists who enjoyed the 'darky' stories that Wilson sometimes told in dialect at their meetings".

Wilson's prior record with segregation at Princeton and in New Jersey, as well as his public statements from the White House, however, also indicate that he tried to stall and even reverse President Lincoln's Reconstruction period desegregation gains for black Americans to redress the racial discrimination that they had faced before the civil war. He further enthusiastically initiated programmes to consolidate the resegregation of American government by himself, with a little help from his cabinet friends (Little 2020, Yellin 2013, Gerstle 2008). His verbatim motivation for expanding the resegregation of the federal government as quoted by O'Reilly (1997:118), was that it was "...as much in the interest of the negroes as for any other reason, and with the idea that the friction, or rather the discontent and uneasiness, which had prevailed in many of the departments would thereby be removed. It is...(not) a movement against the negroes. We are rendering them more safe in their possession of office and less likely to be discriminated against".

The total number of African Americans in the Federal Public Service dropped significantly as a result of deliberate measures by the Wilson administration to reduce their ranks. He found it very difficult, however, to undo the desegregation efforts that started to take effect after the end of the Civil War. Strong resistance and open protests from the newly formed National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and progressive members of both his Democratic Party and the Republican Party, also forced him to drop some of the most extreme discriminatory proposals like recreating racially separate toilets officially reserved for 'whites' and 'coloureds' in federal government buildings (Cooper 2022). A young Assistant Secretary of the Navy in Wilson's administration, Franklin D. Roosevelt, was initially given the task to implement such segregated toilets in the Department of State, War and Navy buildings, until this resegregation programme was dropped.

Wilson also angered African Americans by allowing a well-marketed White House show of an extreme racist film 'The Birth of a Nation' (1915), but was forced by black protest to belatedly condemn lynching of blacks by racist whites (Cooper (2022). The film 'Birth of a Nation' is generally regarded as a propaganda film *inter alia* glorifying the activities of the Ku Klux Klan (O'Reilly 1997:119), which Wilson believed was unfairly prohibited from expressing their racist views. Wilson's five-volume textbook titled 'A History of the American People' was also used as a source for the script of the film. It is a romanticised, racist account

sympathetic to the old South, slavery and the Confederation. Wilson wrote *inter alia* in the book that "...white men were roused by a mere instinct of self-preservation...until at last there had sprung into existence a great Ku Klux Klan, a veritable empire of the South, to protect the southern country" (Benbow 2010:519; Wilson 1916:64). The film stimulated a revival of the Ku Klux Klan across the US (Little 2020).

Wilson also actively opposed female franchise, and only agreed to allow women to vote during his second term of office in 1918 (Stern 2015). He further approved the violent suppression of opposition and resistance to his decision to enter the First World War in 1917, which was later generally accepted as an overreach of power and undue restrictions on democratic rights in terms of the US constitution (Cooper 2022). Despite his racist views, Wilson, however, appointed the first Jewish justice, Louis Brandeis, to the Supreme Court. Brandeis developed into a powerful moderate influence on the judicial direction that the court took in its decisions after his appointment (Cooper 2022).

Foreign policy and international relations

Early in his first term, Wilson invaded Haiti and the Dominican Republic and governed them as protectorates. He also unsuccessfully tried to overthrow a dictatorship in his neighbouring state Mexico before deciding not to intervene further in that country's volatile and unstable internal affairs (Cooper 2022). However, he steadfastly refused to become involved in the First World War during the rest of his first term of office, despite losing American citizens in German attacks on British ships.

At the end of 1916, immediately after his election for his second term of office, Wilson started his quest to end the First World War. In his second inaugural speech late in January 1917, he undertook to create a League of Nations to avoid future wars (Cooper 2022). Germany, however, was not ready for peace yet, and tried to persuade Mexico to declare war against the US. This prompted Wilson to also declare war against Germany in April 1917 "...out of the hopelessly naïve belief that he could make the world safe for democracy and end all wars" (Dallek 1991:109).

Wilson is regarded as an effective war-time president. The US's military intervention on the Allied side proved too much for Germany and it accepted defeat in November 1918. Wilson's good performance after he joined the war stood him in good stead with the Allies. He was accepted as the main peace mediator. He personally negotiated the Treaty of Versailles over seven exhausting months in Paris with his main British, French and Italian war partners. It was signed in June 1919. He had to accept much stricter conditions imposed on Germany than he wanted, in exchange for including the Covenant of the League of Nations as part of the deal.

Wilson, however, also continued with his discriminatory behaviour towards Africans. He never regarded Africans to be on an equal footing to himself. He refused to talk to WEB du Bois who wanted to lobby him to specifically address the interests of Africans in the League of Nations (Rauchway 2012:297). He also refused to apply his principles of self-determination and equality among non-European nations and notoriously refused to support a Japanese request to amend the League of Nations Covenant to outlaw any racial or ethnic discrimination in national relations (Ambrosius 2017:56–7,90; Gerstle 2008:114). This refusal of Wilson was strongly influenced by Field Marshall Jan Smuts from South Africa as well as the representatives of Australia and New Zealand (Gerstle 2008:114). Curry (1961) summarises the good personal relationship between Wilson and Smuts during the Paris peace negotiations, and the fact that Smuts significantly influenced not only Wilson's final proposals for the Covenant of the League of Nations to be, but also the technical details of how it was supposed to function. Curry's assessment is borne out by Smuts' complimentary tribute to Wilson on his death (Smuts 1921).

The end of Wilson's presidency

The First World War peace negotiations project broke Wilson's health. Towards the end of the peace negotiations, he probably suffered a light stroke, at age 63 (Curry 1961:985). He suffered another major stroke a few months later (in October 1919). It partially but permanently paralysed the left side of his body. This stroke did not reduce his intellectual and cognitive ability, but seriously affected his judgemental and emotional abilities. His wife, close family and doctors covered up the severity of his physical condition and issued misleading reports about his condition and recovery (Cooper (2022)). He was awarded the 1919 Nobel Peace Prize in 1920.

His physical, judgemental and emotional disabilities detrimentally prejudiced the remaining two years of Wilson's second term of office. In contrast to his former political flexibility and pragmatism, he refused to reach a compromise with Republicans to obtain their approval for ratification of the Treaty. In the end, Wilson failed in persuading the Republicans in Congress to ratify the Treaty of Versailles. The US never joined the League of Nations. Wilson's short-lived successor, Republican President Warren Harding, had to sign a separate peace deal with Germany.

Wilson did not initially accept his debilitating physical and judgemental impairment and initially planned to again contest the 1920 election on a political platform aimed at ratifying the Treaty. However, this was politically a lost cause, as Congress was by that time very concerned about the financial demands that ratification of the treaty and participation in the League would imply for the US.

Wilson's distraction by his European peace excursion also prevented him from realising how negatively the war as well as the violent black backlash against his re-segregation policies had affected the US domestically (Gerstle 2008:112; O'Reilly 1997:121).

Racial tensions and riots had increased and the economy had slumped into a depression as a result of strikes, unemployment, high taxes and inflation in the quest to finance the war. Communist threats started to panic the population. Wilson had lost control of his administration and the American voters increasingly prioritised domestic self-interests. The 1920 election turned out to be a referendum on Wilson's legacy. His wife and *confidantes* eventually persuaded him to retire, and the Democratic Party nominated a low-profile candidate who was not close to Wilson. His Republican opponent, Warren Harding, however, won the election by a landslide, *inter alia* also with the support of black voters who had voted against the Democratic Party government and Wilson's legacy (Cooper 2022).

Wilson maintained a keen interest in politics after his retirement, and never lost hope that the US would eventually join the League of Nations. He died in Washington DC in 1924, at the age of 67. His biographer concludes that "...he is the only president buried in the capital city. His historical reputation at first suffered from his failure to carry the day in his last years and the ascendancy of the Republicans, and it declined further during the 1930s with the 'revisionist' revulsion against World War I" (Cooper 2022).

RE-ASSESSING WILSON'S LEGACY

The above brief summary of Wilson's professional life illustrates a complex personality with major positive and negative characteristics. So far history has generally been kind to him, as is evident from the numerous assessments of and commentaries on his historical record. These reviews have consistently over-emphasised his perceived positive political and scholarly contributions that had global impacts. This refers to mainly three issues, especially his transformative improvements in public sector management in state and federal governments in the US, his foreign policy and international relations contributions to end the First World War and establish the League of Nations to try to prevent similar catastrophes, and his alleged role in founding a separate Public Administration field of academic study.

The negative impacts of his career have all so far been consistently underplayed and even ignored. These negative aspects include his racism on contemporary race relations in the US and elsewhere, evidence that his international political ventures were not so successful as initially thought, and that his role as founder of the Public Administration discipline is over-rated. It prompted Stern

(2015) to ask ‘just why exactly is Woodrow Wilson rated so highly by historians? It’s a puzzlement’. Stern then listed a number of reasons why Wilson’s alleged unduly high rating is according to him undeserved. They are also included in the rest of this section. Wilson’s long-standing positive public image and reputation have recently undergone major reversals.

Backlashes against Wilson’s racism

During 2014–15, a general wave of resistance against Confederate monuments spread across the US in reaction to a number of perceived shootings of black Americans by conservative white right-wing reactionaries and police. Despite Wilson’s acknowledged revamping of the American economy and public service operations for which he received unanimous acclaim, and his Nobel peace prize after the First World War, students at Princeton University protested against the prominence of Woodrow Wilson’s name linked to university facilities, based on his overt racism. The Princeton University Board of Trustees responded by appointing a special committee in 2016 to review Wilson’s legacy at that university (Princeton 2016). The committee concluded that they “... need to acknowledge that Wilson held and acted on racist views and that pernicious racial attitudes and racist actions are part of our institutional history” (Princeton 2016:10). The committee also concluded that “(t)he challenge presented by Wilson’s legacy is that some of his views and actions clearly contradict the values we hold today about fair treatment for all individuals, and our aspirations for Princeton to be a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming community. On the other hand, many of his views and actions – as faculty member and president of this University, as governor of New Jersey and a two-term President of the United States, and as an international leader whose name and legacy are still revered in many parts of the world – speak directly to our values and aspirations for our school of public and international affairs and for the first of our residential colleges”.

In 2020 the university removed Wilson’s name from its public policy school, because of his racist legacy there (Princeton 2020). In 2021 it also changed the name of the Wilson School of Public and International Affairs to the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs. The Board also decided to change the name of its residential Wilson College to First College. The university’s highest honour for undergraduate student performance, the Woodrow Wilson Award, however, did not change because the university had a legal obligation to name the prize after Wilson (Princeton 2021).

Monmouth University also renamed its Woodrow Wilson Hall (Little 2020), as did several other schools that carried his name (*Philadelphia Inquirer* 2022, *Washington Informer* 2022). More name changes are sure to follow. However, the Wilson Center in Washington DC that was established by Congress in 1968 as

the official memorial to President Woodrow Wilson has so far retained Wilson's name. It is an independent (non-partisan) policy forum that provides a public platform to research and debate various global issues in order to inform policy improvement on those issues. The Wilson Center was in 2019 regarded as the #1 regional studies think tank in the world (Wilson Center 2021).

Wilson's international relations

The initial accolades that Wilson received for his interventions to stop the First World War and to establish the League of Nations did not endure for long. The unresolved issues among Allied representatives during the negotiations for the Treaty of Versailles negatively impacted on the subsequent operations of the League of Nations. Its failure to prevent the Second World War and the controversial political fallouts that the Treaty of Versailles' re-distribution and management of German-occupied regions across the world had, were increasingly blamed on Wilson's rigidity and lack of negotiation skills (Stern 2015; Rauchway 2012:298). Curry (1961) argues that Jan Smuts should in many respects receive more credit for the successful conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles than Wilson, who was largely reactive and accepted most of Smuts' proposals and compromises. The renowned economist John Maynard Keynes, who was a British participant in the Versailles negotiations, commented devastatingly afterwards that Wilson "... had thought out nothing; when it came to practice his ideas were nebulous and incomplete. He had no plan, no scheme, no constructive ideas whatever for clothing with the flesh of life the commandments which he had thundered from the White House" (Stern 2015).

Wilson's decision to forcefully repress domestic protests in the US against the war, and his inability to persuade his own domestic constituencies to accept his decision to enter the war and to accept the economic and financial consequences of that decision, significantly contributed to a more negative contemporary assessment of his legacy (Hochschild 2022).

Wilson's scholarly contributions

It is now also clear that Wilson's good scholarly reputation so far is not fully deserved. The reasons for this conclusion include the following issues:

Founding a discipline on the alleged Politics-Administration dichotomy

Contrary to the popular impression that Wilson was the first scholar to take the view that politics and administration are in principle different types of activities, it was not the case (Raadschelders 2002:580). This 'honour' seems to be shared by a number of British, other continental and American scholars who published similar

thoughts earlier than Wilson did (Van Riper 1983; 1984; 1987; 1990). Van Riper concluded that the young, ambitious Wilson inevitably had to have been familiar with their work, because they had frequently interacted on scholarly issues. Martin (1988) re-examined Woodrow Wilson's contribution to public administration and arrived at four conclusions: (1) The study of public administration was developed in Europe. (2) Wilson's politics/administration dichotomy was different from the European model. (3) His dichotomy was based on an incorrect translation of continental sources. (4) Wilson realised his dichotomy was not valid and abandoned it three years after his infamous 1887 article already, which explains the fact that he never tried to promote it further during his lifetime. It was only resurrected by his successor academics in the 1930s and 1940s and found to be a potential remedy for the over-politicisation of American administrations at the time.

Raadschelders (2002:580) and Van Riper (1987:404) agree that Wilson's infamous 1887 article was first quoted only in the 1930s and it acquired an elevated status only after the Second World War. They also agree that Wilson never referred during his first political election campaign in 1912 to the politics-administration dichotomy (Raadschelders 2002:591). It was not an important principle that was universally accepted in Wilson's circles during his life and for a long time after his death. It has also by now been thoroughly discredited as a factually incorrect interpretation of the British Westminster system and the general relationship between politicians and public officials (Fortis 2014:49–58; Raadschelders 2002:580). This makes the high status and legitimacy that this doctrine has achieved so far in scholarly circles globally as well as in SA, difficult to explain as Uwizeyimana (2013) also concluded.

These considerations imply that Wilson's reputation as the single founder of Public Administration as a separate discipline is undeserved. He can at most be credited as one of a number of possible 'founders' of that discipline, although his views were based on incorrect assumptions (Martin 1988; Van Riper 1990). The honour of founding American Public Administration should rather be awarded to Leonard D White (White 1926; Raadschelders 2002:595).

Wilson's opportunism, bias and plagiarism

Wilson himself acknowledged that he liked making sweeping statements and did not give much attention to academic rigour and references (Raadschelders 2002:586–588). He did not like "...the tedious toil of what is known as 'research'; I have a passion for interpreting great thoughts for the world" (Cooper 2009:51 in Rauchway 2012:295). Raadschelders (2002:595) noted that Wilson rarely bothered to cite original, primary sources, but that he mostly used secondary sources when he wanted to cite something.

Stern (2015) regards Wilson's historical assessments of American life as "egregiously biased and largely fabricated 'history'". Raadschelders (2002:589) regards

him as someone with visionary dreams, but also as an opportunistic political animal. This probably describes most successful politicians very well.

Wilson's omission to acknowledge his sources for the idea of the alleged politics-administration dichotomy, can from a contemporary academic writing perspective further be regarded as plagiarism. This also stains Wilson's high scholarly reputation and integrity, and is just another example of his opportunism in trying to achieve his own goals.

MORAL AND ETHICAL DILEMMAS

The above re-assessments of Woodrow Wilson's historical, political and scholarly legacies give rise to several uncomfortable moral and ethical issues especially for scholars in the fields of Public Administration, Management and Governance in SA with its apartheid history. They include the following issues:

The American Supreme Court's ruling in *Plessy vs Ferguson* (1896) that 'separate but equal' facilities for different races are acceptable and legal, was delivered during Wilson's university teaching stage, just before he was appointed at Princeton. This judgment created the foundations for successive American administrations at all governmental levels to voluntarily apply racial segregation in the US (Ware 2021). When Wilson became US President in 1913, he was not mandated by this judgment to segregate the US, but he voluntarily kick-started a systematic, ideologically determined segregation policy system at federal level, which was applied only in *ad hoc* ways by his predecessors. A systematic and comprehensive system of separating white people from black people was established over decades thereafter in the US, initiated by Wilson (Ware 2021). The 'separate but equal' doctrine was also used by the National Party (NP) from 1948 to 1994 as a core justification for apartheid in SA. Wilson's ideas and actions were very similar to especially Malan and Verwoerd's systematic modernisations of the SA Public Service and their systemic intellectual and ideological expansions of the *ad hoc* racial segregation policies and practices that existed in SA before the NP took power in 1948 (Koorts 2014).

Despite his re-segregation of American state and federal government, Wilson is also credited with excellent improvements in the administrative and managerial efficiency and effectiveness of those administrations, that contributed significantly to the later success of the US which became a world leader with the strongest global economy. Wilson also established himself as a competent and successful manager and global politician. Similarly, SA's Prime Minister, Jan Smuts, was generally accepted as one of the most competent and experienced international politicians and strategists. His ideas and proposals for the creation of the League of Nations significantly influenced Wilson. Smuts' contributions to

the establishment of the League of Nations and its successor, the United Nations in many respects totally overshadowed that of Wilson during the Paris peace talks in 1918–19, as Curry (1961) found. Malan, Verwoerd and their NP successors also developed apartheid into a formidable, relatively effective administrative and management system in SA. One practical difference was probably that the US only created a relatively cheap two-fold parallel racial system, while SA did not have the resources of the US to fund and subsidise the inefficiencies that were caused by the sometimes dozen-fold duplication of expensive facilities and services as happened within the tricameral parliamentary system and also in the respective black homelands.

Nevertheless, the NP's leaders and their segregation policies have rightfully been totally discredited politically, both internationally and in SA, while Wilson has so far escaped this condemnation despite his blatant racial discriminatory prejudices and actions in the USA. These double standards also seem to have been practised by SA-based scholars in Public Administration, Management and Governance up to now. Wilson is still seemingly highly regarded because of his alleged intellectual contributions to these fields of study, as well as his domestic and international performances. This, despite irrefutable historical evidence of his extreme racist nature and the fact that the originality and validity of these contributions are also increasingly suspect. No mention of the controversial activities of Wilson that have been summarised above, has so far been found during the data collection and assessment stages of this research project, in the scholarly Public Administration literature published by SA scholars in the discipline.

The absence of any critical academic assessment of this is puzzling, given that Wilson's scholarly influence in SA has been as influential as abroad. As illustrated below, his politics-administration dichotomy had been regularly cited, analysed and critically assessed by SA-based scholars in the past, without any mention of the negative contextual impact that his other views and activities have had on his own country and possibly also on SA. This is still the case. The recent contributions of Uwizeyimana (2013) and Du Plessis (2022) illustrate this conclusion. Uwizeyimana (2013) is the only SA-based scholar in the discipline so far that has already referred to some of the issues addressed in this article.

S.X. Hanekom (1983:10–59) reported the results of probably one of the most intensive investigations by a SA scholar into the origins of the discipline of Public Administration internationally and in SA. However, he does not mention any of the issues dealt with in this article that had by that time already been recorded and critically assessed in great detail since the 1920s in the American media and scholarly publications.

The Proceedings of the Winelands Conference on the Past, Present and Future of Public Administration in South Africa (Gildenhuys 1988), celebrated the centenary of Wilson's notorious Public Administration 'foundational' article. In that

volume, Hanekom (1988) and Coetzee (1988) summarised their respective relatively comprehensive assessments of Wilson's contribution to the discipline and its application in the SA context. Both authors acknowledge that European and British scholars mentioned the fact that Public Administration should be systematically studied separately from political science before Wilson. Neither of them, however, again questioned the prevailing consensus at that time that Wilson is the founder of the discipline, or referred to his controversial weaknesses summarised above. Even more problematical, though, is the glowing appreciation that Gildenhuys (1988:7–8) expresses for Wilson as a “man to admire” for being the founder of the discipline and for his other sterling contributions to domestic and international politics and governance. This admiration also totally ignores the SA implications of the controversial issues around Wilson's legacies. These sympathetic assessments of SA scholars are contrary to other international centenary assessments which took a totally different, critical line (eg. Van Riper 1983; 1984; 1987; 1990), and confirmed later also by Raadschelders (2002) as reported above.

These findings pose a number of moral and ethical dilemmas, especially for SA scholars in these fields. The obvious first question is what role does and should values play in Public Administration, Management and Governance? Wilson's politics-administration dichotomy implies that the implementation of political decisions is a value-neutral act, based on the traditional notion of the British Westminster system's so-called ‘neutral/impartial’ civil service. This idealistic view of the British system has, however, been thoroughly falsified and discredited by empirical evidence (eg. Fortis 2014). It is also illustrated by the experiences of the various SA public services from the establishment of the four independent European settler states and colonies before unification in 1910, to their functioning after unification under Botha, Herzog, Smuts and eventually when the Malan NP government took over for the first time from the Smuts SAP government in 1948. It is also evident in the new post-apartheid public service after 1994, when the new African National Congress (ANC) government alliance took over from De Klerk's NP government in 1994. In all those cases the public service concerned was closely aligned and sympathetic to the government of the day, as Fortis also found in the alleged ‘politically-impartial’ British system (Hanekom 1983:23–38, 56–59). Each new political alliance that came to power consistently appointed people that it felt shared its views and that it could trust. The fiction of a non-partisan public service cannot hold water anymore.

A second question that has serious moral and ethical implications and that does not have a clear answer, is whether one should assess the ideas and actions of historical figures only in their historical contexts, or can and should one also assess their merits and demerits within contemporary perspectives? Although racial nationalism has been an inherent feature of American politics right from the start of the US in 1776, Gerstle (2008:115) concluded that Wilson's “...progressivism

aimed to ensure that America would continue to be a white republic". One of Wilson's biographers also concluded that "Wilson was a liberal white supremacist like so many northern academic people of his day" (Link in O'Reilly 1997:120).

If the answer is that one should not assess past decisions and actions outside of their historical contexts, can Wilson then be forgiven for his racist views? If that is the case, should not Malan, Verwoerd and their apartheid successors' political and moral approaches also be judged less harshly in the SA context? However, if current values and norms apply uniformly in all cases, then Woodrow Wilson must also be criticised on the basis of current knowledge, in the same manner as the apartheid ideologues as well as other morally and ethically suspect historical and contemporary figures are viewed. One interesting case in point is the question what the modern relevance and application of the ideas of Niccolò Machiavelli in contemporary governance theory and practice should be. Cloete (2022a, 2022b) concluded that historical context is important, but it is inevitable that historical ideas and actions will be interpreted in the prevailing modern idiom and context.

CONCLUSIONS

Woodrow Wilson clearly was a highly intelligent, competent politician and international statesman. However, he was also clearly a fundamental racist, opportunist and possibly plagiarist who misinterpreted the essence of parliamentary practice in Britain and the US. He was "...a complex, multidimensional subtle and careful thinker who was nevertheless afflicted with glaring blind spots, a canny and effective politician who still suffered colossal failures" (Manela 2011:80). The Wilson Center that was established to honour his legacy as a statesman, recently declared that he was "a complex, even paradoxical president...a person who was at once an international idealist, a structural reformer of the nation's economy, and a policy maker who was simultaneously accommodating, indifferent, resistant, and hostile to racial and gender reform" (Wilson Center 2021).

As the title of this article suggests, Wilson's controversial mixed legacies have over time reduced his stature as an acclaimed Public Administration hero. He is increasingly rather viewed as more of a public governance villain, similar to what happened to his SA counterparts after the end of apartheid. This has caused several ethical dilemmas for the discipline of Public Administration in SA that needs further research.

A final moral or ethical dilemma then is whether one can and should still continue to award Woodrow Wilson an elevated status as the main foundational hero of the discipline of Public Administration despite all the controversies around him that negatively influence his various legacies. It is also still an open question why

no SA scholar has up to now publicly identified and assessed Wilson's controversial racial biases yet. This also needs further investigation.

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The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Employee Working Conditions

Lessons Learnt from Selected Administrative and Academic Staff at South African Universities

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ABSTRACT

The unfolding of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa exacerbated major changes in the higher education (HE) world of work. Tertiary education experienced emerging unpredictability and instability in its core business, as a result, some of its functions had to be adjusted in all functional domains. There has been a major shift in teaching and learning delivery, by changing the full contact sessions to a blended learning mode that is mainly on virtual learning.

The study aims at assessing the extent to which the core business of a university has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The grounded theory-based qualitative research approach is adopted, and an inductive generalisation approach rooted in evidence-based decision-making theory informs the study. 16 representatives of upper and middle administrative and academic management of two South African universities with direct experience of all aspects, structures, and processes of Human Resources Departments since the first week of lockdown were interviewed telephonically and electronically through an unstructured in-depth interview. Content analysis of the transcribed interviews led to the analysis of data through a thematic analysis.

This study revealed key areas where the universities were affected mostly as elements of research functions, structures processes, employee relationships, scheme of work, remote telework monitoring and supervising challenges; student/academic mentoring/teaching and learning problems;

social and intellectual isolation; compliance with perpetually changing rules and regulations and academics' and administrators' confusion over them and managements' implementation strategies able to protect the safety and health of employees as well as those of the students.

Findings from this study aspire to contribute to a new understanding of the key repercussions of the pandemic on the functions, processes, and challenges of South African universities.

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has virtually affected every single world social reality and universities globally were no exception. Governments had to adjust to maintain balance and control the spread of the Covid-19 virus. The South African government and the Department of Higher Education (DHET) maintained order and stability in HE through lockdown and restrictions. Within an environment dominated by instability and anxiety, the world of tertiary education in South Africa experienced emerging unpredictability and instability at almost all operational and institutional levels. With the disruptions caused by the pandemic, universities were forced to adjust in all functional domains. Such adjustments were made in teaching and learning through technology and digital means. In several institutions, this was against the backdrop of perpetual financial weakness. Du Plessis, Jansen van Vuuren, Simons, Frantz, Roman and Andipatin (2022) assert that it is imperative for universities to reflect on the effects of Covid-19 and make sense of their experiences to move forward. The realities suggest that the efforts of tertiary institutions to reinvent themselves cannot come to a halt. Without their contributions to teaching and learning, research, and knowledge production every sector of society suffers (O'Brien & Linehan 2014).

It is against this backdrop that this study focuses on a qualitative exploration of the realities faced by both administrative and academic staff at South African universities in their efforts in the post-Covid-19 era. The implication is that human resources (HR) management was affected as one of the key foundations of success or failure in a university support structure. Also, HR drives the plans, orientation, practices, behaviour, and actions that determine the success or failure of key university outputs especially during and after the era of a pandemic. This means that accountability, transparency, collaboration, cooperation, synergy, competence and widely accepted transformational leadership can lead to functionality, thorough collective supervision, legislative and regulatory compliance, as well

as united and collective planning and implementation (Finlan, Selter & Watkins 2016).

In the context of Public Affairs, this study will also reflect on accountability, transparency, collaboration, cooperation, synergy and competence which are the keys leading to organisational success as empirical research has shown. The structural and functional realities and HR-based dynamics are fundamentals for a solid professional performance as they are based on planning and implementation that are both measurable and easily assessed and evaluated. These elements are the microcosm foundations of the wider society with diversities, contradictions, and power relationships in the process of a successful or unsuccessful transition towards transformation. This is because structures, functions, processes, and human and professional relationships are the foundations of strategic and tactical plans and priorities at all organisational levels (Popescu, Com nescu & Sabie 2016:169–170).

This article also reflects on the experience of administration and academia during the pandemic such as performance management systems' imperatives, succession planning, training opportunities, loss of shared trust and legitimacy, and the serious and multi-dimensional realities facing them in the workplace (Willcocks & Griffiths 2014).

The article explores these realities and staff workplace activities, agreements and contradictions as well as their impact on the operationalisation of their key duties and responsibilities at two South African universities.

DECISION THEORY

Decision theory and its purpose is important as part of the theoretical framework to underpin the context of this article. Change is inevitable and a fundamental aspect of modern-day organisations and their surrounding environments. Changes in the environment range from predictable, and risky to unpredictable at times. Change in the environment is sometimes very significant as it can affect the operation and decisions of an organisation. How well an organisation responds to the changes in the environment will determine its success. Alexander, Kumar and Walker (2017) state that the lack of contingent responses to the changes in the environment renders aspects such as performance management and measurement ineffective.

For a theoretical elaboration of how instability and unpredictability in the external environment affected the HR decisions and functions in the Covid-19 context, the study is based on decision theory. Decision theory is the interdisciplinary study of choice that helps to examine the complexity, uncertainty, and unpredictability of the environment (Samson, Foley, Gan & Gloet (2018). It is divided into two aspects: the descriptive and the normative aspects.

The descriptive aspect of decision theory deals with describing the underlying psychological patterns that determine behaviour patterns. The normative aspect of decision theory deals with how an individual should make decisions; how an individual ought to choose between various options when faced with a decision (Elliott 2019).

Decisions carry a range of different outcomes depending on the state of the world. Each decision is assigned a subjective value by the individual that portrays the strength of their preference to obtain the outcome. The theory assumes that the individual is likely to make the choice that maximises their utility (Samson *et al.* 2018). However, where there is uncertainty about the actual state of the world, the individual is also uncertain about which decision will likely lead to the maximisation of utility (Elliott 2019).

Table 1: The distinction between a descriptive and a normative approach

Decision-making theory	University leadership works through the scenarios and institutional realities to determine possible plans, debates, solutions, possible consequences and results. Leaders share the model with all role-players in the path of success.
Descriptive approach	The use of the descriptive approach is related to the university's senior leadership's determination and efforts to describe efficiently the functional, structural, institutional dimensions, regulations, characteristics, and challenges of the institution.
Normative approach	The normative approach is related to the leaders' decision to study the guidelines for action and train all staff, as well as formulate and defend the principles of energy, commitment, ethics, evaluation and choice among competing alternatives, proposed as rules.

Source: (Author's own interpretation)

The Cynefin framework is a useful and effective model for relating decisions and their context. The framework helps in understanding that every situation is different and requires a unique approach to decision-making (Alexandar, Kumar, & Walker 2017). The model categorises situations into five domains, each domain has a specific decision-making approach that helps individuals to make better sense of the situation and choose the most appropriate decision.

The first domain is the obvious/simple context. This is a context in which decision options are clear and where the cause-and-effect relationship is apparent. In such a context, the decision-making approach involves assessing and categorising the problem and then responding to the problem based on the best practices or standard procedures (Alexandar *et al.* 2017).

The second domain is the complicated context/problem. This entails that there is a relationship between cause and effect, but it is not as clear. The

decision-making process in this domain involves assessing and analysing the decision and then responding to it using good practice (Du Plessis, Jansen van Vuuren, Simons, Frantz, Roman & Andipatin 2022).

The third domain of the framework is that of the complex context, this is a domain in which it is impossible to identify the correct solution. This context is often unpredictable and the best way towards deciding is to look for patterns and facilitating solutions to emerge (Du Plessis *et al.* 2022).

The fourth domain of the framework is the chaotic domain. The chaotic domain is a domain in which there is no cause and effect; no one knows what is going on and which actions will prove to be the best. This domain is characterised by crises and emergencies. The primary goal of this stage is to establish order to stabilise the situation. The approach to decision-making is to ensure action is taken to stabilise the most pertinent situation while assessing where there is stability and where there is no stability (Alexandar *et al.* 2017).

The last domain is the disorder domain. This is the domain in which organisations are not certain of what domain they are in. The decision-making process in this domain is to break down the situation into small parts and then make decisions accordingly (Du Plessis *et al.* 2022).

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

According to empirical research, accountability, transparency, collaboration, cooperation, synergy, competence and widely accepted transformational leadership are keys to organisational success. These can lead to functionality, thorough collective supervision, legislative and regulatory compliance, as well as united and collective planning and implementation (Finlan, Selter & Watkins 2016). Structures, functions, processes, and human and professional relationships are the foundations of strategic and tactical plans and priorities at all organisational levels. These elements are regarded as a microcosm of the wider society, with diversities, contradictions, and power relationships. These are fundamental in the process of a successful or unsuccessful transition to a transformation route (Popescu, Com nescu & Sabie 2016:169–170).

Functionality, cooperation, and synergy among employees at all levels of administration and academia are challenged for various reasons. These reasons are a range of serious and multidimensional issues such as disagreements on performance management systems imperatives, succession planning, training opportunities and loss of common trust and legitimacy (Willcocks & Griffiths 2014).

The research explores the effects of the pandemic on workplace activities and the operationalisation of key duties and responsibilities at two South African universities. The legal and regulatory frameworks and instructions that followed

South Africa's first lockdown on 26 March 2020 were instrumental for the tertiary institutions attempting to manage the duties and responsibilities of all staff, stakeholders, and role-players with limited resources available. Such initiatives were instrumental in re-shaping roles, duties, and responsibilities in the quest for continued function and survival of the HE landscape. Core capabilities such as careful planning, and deeply rooted alliances among all operational and professional sections were necessary for success at all institutional levels.

South African initiatives and realities

In the sphere of higher education, it must be widely accepted that during a pandemic the most important priorities are the continued health of all tertiary education key players (students, staff, and their families) and a safe, well-planned, and functional academic programme. In the initial stages of the pandemic, the Universities South Africa (USAF) (2020) and the DHET issued a 'risk-adjusted programme' that was guided by the lockdown strategy of the Department of Health and the government to guide HE on how to respond to the restrictions and control the access to campuses. This was undertaken to provide HE institutions with guidelines to function successfully. Pondering the impact of Covid-19 as an example to highlight the importance of adjusting the strategy, Singh (2021:6108–6117) asserts that the justice system was loaded with work due to the number of demands posed by criminal offences reported and needs deeper interrogation of the victims' lived realities during the Covid-19 lockdown.

The programmes and guidelines were structured to allow universities to ensure that all sections of their community received appropriate guidelines and instructions. These adjusted the annual planning with details of the duties and responsibilities of staff and students. The new programmes and guidelines allowed the universities to plan and implement critical interventions such as multi-model remote learning systems that are effective at all levels, and the implementation of Covid-19 protocols. Academics were responsible for creating and distributing learning materials efficiently through physical and digital means. While students waited to receive all relevant material for instruction, all NSFAS-assisted students received laptops and other devices (IOL 2020). Students and staff underwent training on the use of Management Information Training.

Given the challenging circumstances at the beginning of the pandemic, virtually all universities in the country ensured rigorous initiatives were taken. Most of the universities introduced Covid-19 Coronavirus Task Teams (Makupe 2020). Final year medical students were exempted from the ministerial instructions, they were instructed to return for service training under strict conditions dictated by the universities. The institutions provided this initiative in consideration of their safety and that of their families. The decision created a great degree of resistance

among students who felt that there was a need for debate and transparency on the rationale for the directive. The final year students' position was opposed by the Junior Doctors' Association of South Africa which in a public statement ordered the final year medical students to complete the in-service training that would enable them to assume their internship posts at the beginning of 2021. The return was to take place despite the high risks involved (Naik 2020).

The burden of the initiatives, plans, and undertakings presented challenges to poorly resourced institutions, despite the government's financial support. The key issues evident from the start were related to functional weakness in technological and employee work process flow. The issues were also related to the continuous utilisation of new technologies and remote teaching/learning. The DHET's position was that such circumstances would and should lead to synergetic and cooperative alliances among institutions. This would ultimately lead to the sharing of resources and existing knowledge about functional and operational issues. The thought was that such a reality would enable the fulfilment of vital teaching and learning priorities. The sector's target was to solve common technical and financial problems and challenges associated with special difficulties facing sections of the less advanced and resource-deprived students (USAF 2020).

At the beginning of the pandemic, the general attitude and actions of the universities followed the government's guidance and directions to the best of their abilities in terms of their core functions. The state authorities, the education designated entities, the biomedical industries, relevant international organisations, and organs of civil society carried out strong efforts to find solutions to the pandemic. Universities implemented extensive steps to address operational problems caused by the pandemic and to sustain the functionality of online, remote teaching and learning (USAF 2020).

On 8 June 2020, *Government Gazette* No. 43414, released the government instruction provided in terms of the Disaster Management Act 57 of 2020 (Republic of South Africa 2020). It outlined the criteria for the return to public and private HE campuses as part of a risk-adjusted strategy phased-in return from Level 3 of the national Covid-19 lockdown. These directives were the result of a process developed in consultation with the sector's key stakeholders and role-players: SACPO (the South African College Principal Organisation), USAF (Universities South Africa), the Council on Higher Education, trade unions, and SAUS (the South African Student Union) (Republic of South Africa 2020).

Each institution adopted unique strategies for the event with its institutional plans and strategies, readiness, risk management, and teaching and learning plans. It was calculated that under Level 3 up to 33% of students returned to campuses throughout the country. A bi-monthly monitoring process was set by the DHET to receive reports from all public institutions. The DHET announced the death of 80 members from the virus in the public HE terrain: 35 staff members, nine students

from universities, and 36 from TVET colleges (11 students and 25 staff members) (Nzimande 2020).

A monitoring report in early August 2020 indicated that there were 1 552 deaths at all the university institutions (975 staff, and 577 students) in the country, we do not know the actual number of deaths in the two institutions under investigation. Only 20% of the 33% expected students (115 555) had been issued permits to enter campuses for research, teaching and learning purposes; only 29 624 staff and students were screened when entering university campuses daily; 33 985 students returned to residences by early August; 33 985 students were living in university-owned residences, only 28% of the residence capacity by 6 August. It was reported that even though the systems faced several challenges, all universities indicated that there was significant progress in teaching and learning, and safety. The progress consisted of the implementation of a variety of online and remote learning, the distribution of data and devices to students, the distribution of learning materials in different forms directly to students, and staff (Nzimande 2020).

The students who were able to return under Level 2 included those who required technical and laboratory equipment to complete the academic year; first-year students in undergraduate programmes and those who required practical placements work to complete the academic year.

A risk assessment of universities during the period concluded that 14 universities were at low risk, six were at medium risk, and six were at high risk. The latter category included three Universities of Technology and 63 comprehensive universities. It was reported that several universities had not appropriately resumed academic teaching and learning for a high proportion of their students since March following the directives for recess; this was a serious risk (Nzimande 2020).

University human resources organisational realities during the pandemic

Globally, the Covid-19 pandemic forced the world of tertiary education to urgently adjust to the necessity of remote learning. Remote learning played the crucial role of a lifesaver for all sections of university life. Those who predicted the outcomes and challenges of the 4th Industrial Revolution with the belief that the system would be the lifeline of the future and the solution for education at large were correct. Digital technologies are offering a wide variety of new answers to the process of teaching, learning, and fresh knowledge production.

Technology has become instrumental in not only accessing books but the access to specialised materials that enrich the knowledge of students and teachers not only at universities but at all educational levels. The adaptability of the system

expands the learning experience of the students. Virtual laboratories provide opportunities for students to learn and design experiments. The levels of academics are elevated to new heights, as students become creators of knowledge, teachers, and evaluators. An Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD) (2019) study showed that a quarter of school principals interviewed believed that shortages of digital technology were a serious barrier to learning (OECD 2019). According to TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) (TALIS 2018), 53% of teachers let their students frequently or always use digital assistance before Covid-19. On the other hand, 60% of teachers had received specialised skill development in information communication technology (ICT) (TALIS 2018 quoted in OECD 2019).

Recent research highlights academics' need to upgrade their technological skills frequently to enable innovation of their practices and adaptation to the transformations inherent in the era of the 4th Industrial Revolution. This becomes more significant in the present context because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has necessitated academics to adapt very quickly, especially in countries and institutions that lack the expected technical skills. It allowed these institutions to integrate digital tools and realities into the learning processes.

These realities point to South African academics especially those at several comprehensive universities and Universities of Technology with limited IT skills to take additional learning processes through participation in seminars or courses to upgrade their existing knowledge. ICT skills have become extremely important due to the inevitable shift towards online teaching due to the Covid-19 lockdowns.

A recent empirical research project by Harvard University and the OECD dealing with the approaches deemed appropriate for sustainable educational opportunities during Covid-19 has indicated that the learning that took place during the pandemic when schools were closed was only a small proportion of what students would have learned in school (Schleicher & Reimers 2020). This was attributed to the lack of online training facilities and/or lack of skills on the part of teachers.

Administrative staff at universities were faced with challenges during the pandemic because on many occasions they were obligated to operate in a radically different environment. They faced various pressures within the institutions as they were forced into completely new circumstances and responsibilities. These were new circumstances in which virtual and online learning plays an enabling role to new facets of the curricula requirements for students who should not be left behind. Administrators are expected to be the sole or joint facilitators of processes associated with other key service elements of quality assurance and application to online teaching and learning. Within circumstances of uncertainty especially when operating from home, the significance of skill acquisition, determination, knowledge, and resilience become necessary realities (Mickey, Clark & Misra 2020).

Collective thinking and action are of paramount importance among both administrative staff and academics for success in such an environment. Sharing collegiality and debating the best solutions to problems inevitably become the best life practice under the present conditions. The redesigning of administrative processes is a collective need because the university leadership, the Deans, the Heads of Departments, academic and administrative colleagues, and above all students expect the best in both collective and individual performance. This shows a need for the complete revitalisation of day-to-day strategies and tactics that are fully effective in the effort to meet the expectations and needs of colleagues and students (UNESCO 2020).

The use of Microsoft Teams and other such tools was uncommon among many of the administrative staff before the pandemic; however, the present knowledge and use of these new skills have become critical resources for the job. Knowledge is a result of the support and shared experiences among colleagues. Academics and administrators can only succeed as a unit when united in mutual respect and professionalism. There is a need for administrators to become aware of the dynamics of teaching, learning, and research to guide the acquisition of knowledge instrumental in helping academics and students alike (World Bank Group 2020).

The collegial and mutual support between academics and administrators is a guarantee for efficient and successful service to students hence, a need for them to continue being resilient, informed, and responsible at all organisational and scholastic tasks. The internet is a crucial educational resource, providing key information for all disciplines. It is instrumental in enhancing not only wide knowledge but also scarce skills while also providing vital tools accessible to everyone at tertiary institutions. Limited access to the internet among students, academics, and administrators is perhaps one of the major impediments to a better way forward; it is a challenge that needs to be faced decisively.

There can be no success in such duties, responsibilities, and learning processes without work ethos, transparency, accountability, ethical collegial relationships, and mutual support at all levels. Additionally, there is a need for perpetual utilisation of all communicative alternatives, and sheer accountability among academics, administrators, and students for success (Wilson 2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on a qualitative, inductive-theory generalisation approach rooted in an evidence-based decision-making theory. Of the upper and middle academics and administrative managers of two South African traditional universities situated in two different provinces, 16 representatives were interviewed. The study utilised a judgemental sampling technique. There were eight interviewees

per university (four academics and four administrators in each institution). All the representatives had direct experiences of all aspects, structures, and processes of HR departments since the first week of lockdown. They were interviewed telephonically and electronically through an unstructured interview on Zoom. Content analysis was used to analyse the interviews.

The number of officials interviewed was in line with the positions of Marshall, Cardon, Poddar and Fontenot (2013) and Dworkin (2012:1319), who advocated for the use of a smaller number of interviewees in the process of qualitative research. The interview as the method of data collection was based on phenomenological principles as the interviewees' first-hand experiences in the workplace were shared. The interview questions were based on experiences in the various structures, functions, and processes in place at their universities. The experience was also about the key foundations of success or failure in these elements.

Through a common agreement between the parties, recordings and handwritten notes were kept with the consent of the interviewees. Content analysis of the transcribed interviews was used for the organisation and analysis of data. For each interview conducted, trends, themes, and categories were developed.

In terms of research ethics, it is felt that the research findings of the study are trustworthy. Credibility has been established as the research was conducted according to the principles of good practice; the interview transcripts and research findings were submitted to all informants electronically to confirm their authenticity. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed to all interviewees.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

As expected, both universities released performance management directives to all staff members, especially for the majority working from home. This was to ensure professional continuity during the period of Covid-19. The directives were described as initiatives ensuring the discipline and collaboration of all staff instrumental in guaranteeing the institutions' integrity and societal contribution. The directives included several carefully structured adaptations to the existing teaching and learning processes concerning perceived under-performance cases.

Biographical details

The choice of the 16 interviewees (four academics and four administrators in each institution) was based on the knowledge and connections of the researcher in the two universities. Two academics in each university were in the social, and administrative sciences and two in the pure sciences. The administrative sample consisted of two HR and two technological and financial and technical employees. Five

of them (two academics and three administrators) were included. All interviewees were directly related to key positions and responsibilities associated with the core plans, rules, regulations, structures, processes, functions and responsibilities associated with the plan and implementation of operations leading to success.

Academic planning and functionality

Respondents alluded to challenges they faced during the lockdown restrictions. They indicated that challenges facing academics at the two institutions were different in several ways as it became evident in their areas such as functionality, resources, and environmental and infrastructure that circumstances were different.

In both cases, even though the groups agreed that the respective leaderships had to follow all state directives, there were necessities at all levels that were not fulfilled. One of the senior academics alluded to the Covid-19 challenges and said:

“We had to change the way we teach from face to face to online as we were working home during the epidemic”.

“This led to both administrative and academic challenges. Teaching and learning faced several problems throughout the period which management had to deal with at different levels in the respective institutions”.

One of the key challenges facing both institutions was poor connectivity of the respective technological learning domains which did not allow the students to complete their online assessments on time. One of the universities addressed the challenge through the introduction of new and technologically advanced online tools but this was not the case with the other one and said:

“The situation was so critical that academics who taught Physics and Mathematical Science modules struggled for long periods searching for solutions. We experimented with various alternative resources, and tools on the market after consultation with the relevant university leaders and managers”.

Six of the interviewees indicated that they were key attendants of national and international webinar presentations to address the problems. One of the lecturers also alluded to the seriousness of the impact of Covid-19 and said:

“The challenges were never blamed on the IT department but rather on departments such as Finance. It was evident that there was respect in the sector for the technological knowledge and commitment of the IT section and its staff”.

Another major problem mentioned was about students having ‘exceptionally high expectations on turnaround time’ meaning that students expected an immediate response when they posted a question on the discussion forum. Accounting and Mathematics students were the most active and persistent in their demands. This created a serious gap in communication because of the absence of tutors and the problematic functionality of the existing facilities. On many occasions students were unable to find information and then sent out numerous emails which led to extremely congested email inboxes. This seriously increased the amount of time needed for the academic staff to perform their weekly work per module.

Teaching resources

Most academics in both institutions faced serious challenges concerning first-year students who faced a ‘serious struggle’ adapting to the online tools. Academics in the science modules failed to respond to relevant email correspondence for weeks. They failed to reassure students of the university’s commitment to assist them through direct and continuous contact about their challenges with the modules; there was only a handful of responses.

In both universities, there were confirmed reports that several modules were not structured clearly. This was established and reported repeatedly in feedback from staff and students.

Academic interviewees at both universities indicated that the workload throughout the period under investigation multiplied to a serious degree.

One of the interviewees said:

“To address the challenge of overload of work, we had to outsource the external markers at one of the most popular departments; this was described as an outstanding success on the part of the IT section of the university. However, this was only for assessments and the new contract employees”.

Both academics and administrators were aware of the lack of laptops; only one of the institutions addressed it. In both cases, the university leadership recognised reports that good numbers of students had data constraints. Only one of the institutions convinced their academic staff to perform a serious amount of work of adding notes on slides and providing support and guidance to the students through the new content. In addition, both universities faced serious challenges and problems concerning the assessment process and outcomes, especially in the effort to ensure validity and honesty. Asynchronous learning resulted in many students struggling to manage their work schedules because of the non-existence of structured lectures.

One of the administrators pinpointed one of the issues she described as a ‘hourly, not a daily’ event.

“All of us, both academic and administrators operate in an environment that is extremely similar but diversified, because of the differences in applying the existing plans at different levels of operations. Both of us are obligated to follow general definitions and standards by the laws, rules and regulations of the university leadership but our operational performance can only be successful when we have opportunities to cooperate by sharing information regularly and agree on initiatives and operations. However, in both cases of operational professionalism the realities that escapes the senior leadership is that the most important need is to improve the systems, structures, and processes required to manage integrated performance information. This means continuous collegial coordination of the two sectors in agreeing in planning and implementing the defined and agreed upon roles and responsibilities for the management of performance commonly agreed information and operationalisation. In case these details become a reality the promotion of good performance management will become a reality”.

Globally, it is well known at all universities that a key ingredient of success is the level at which the administrative section is prepared to keep pace with the new terrain of challenges. They are challenged by new ways of living, learning, and working due to a different environment that demands high production levels. There are new demands associated with new operational modes of teaching, learning, and research. All these intellectual and professional terrains are facing dramatic transformational changes, it is up to the administrators to be substantially equipped to support the demands, wishes, and imperatives of university leaders, managers, academics, and students.

Administrators are responsible for all significant foundations of a well-oiled and performing machine. Their lack of competence results in serious negative impacts at all operational and institutional levels. Administrators at both universities accepted the realities they faced. Their deep understanding of the existing circumstances underlined their commitment to being one of the thousands who worked collectively to maintain the quality education offered by the respective institution. They also worry about the future of the students. According to Tarkar (2021), the timing of the Covid-19 eruption was not perfect for the graduates who were waiting to get a job offer but could not get it since the companies postponed their placements.

Infrastructure and environmental factors

Respondents shared their experience with the change in the learning environment when working at home. The first significant point of departure was the exploration of the virtual study domains and the relationship with the other sectors including leadership, management, and academics. The first and most common

response of both groups was that in both universities the most important aspect of functionality and excellence was to help all staff and students succeed in considering the dictates of the DHET. It was felt that this noble belief and commitment was the cornerstone of every policy, planning, and action. They also believed that working from home was only a temporary impediment. The initial response to working with other sectors was slightly different as the attitude in one of the universities was positive while problematic in the other. The latter responders indicated that the senior leadership of the university refused to be accountable to staff and students; the university has faced serious financial problems in the last few years that were rooted in its past and continue today. It was said that striving for quality service among academics, students, and the rest of the administrative staff without sufficient budgets, could not achieve the most important aims and objectives of the university under such challenging circumstances. International and local research has shown that such realities and conditions positions have similarities both in South Africa and developed countries such as the United States of America (Menon and Motala 2020; Edmondson 2020).

Administrative interviewees at one of the universities indicated that there was an effort by the leadership and senior management to change and redesign operational functions through IT-designed virtual track tasks and folders. These were seen to be signs of innovations; they were used to facilitate frequent communication with academics and co-workers. Administrators in the IT section were impressed with their relations with academics in training sessions and almost daily communication. One lecturer explained their experiences and said:

“Daily communication was however affected by the frequent and untimely interruptions of the internet and the lack of data among administrators and students in our faculties throughout”.

There was a general agreement among all interviewees that the communication in all administrative sections was collegial.

“There was a serious effort for IT training that could be instrumental in elevating administrative talent and acquiring the best practices and knowledge available.

There was strong support for the colleagues who were registered for higher degrees.

There was a strong feeling that several of the administrative staff at both institutions utilised their spare time to upgrade both knowledge and skills in an ever-changing work and societal environment”.

The key role of university senior leadership and their challenges both academically and administratively at performance levels during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis have been researched and analysed by Fernandez and Shaw (2020) and Strielkowski and Wang (2020) in considerable detail. Even though their findings were in different geographical areas the findings are similar with those appearing in the findings produced above.

Most respondents indicated that on many occasions they were ready and eager to assist some academics who communicated their confusion on the choice between online A2 and A3. The academics indicated their wish to be enriched by watching appropriate webinars. Their request was fulfilled in a minimal amount of time as their heavy workload in most departments and faculties was well known. The IT department interviewees also mentioned the support provided to academics who diverted technologically-based questions by students. It was acknowledged that some of the mailed questions, mainly by technology and science postgraduate students, were very challenging. This entailed that they had to do their research to respond. They did this consciously as it was an integral part of their job. They also added that it increased their knowledge accordingly. There was also a significant collaboration of academics and administrators that led to ultimate achievements in terms of continuous regulation changes for student assessments as several academics needed serious assistance when new regulations arose. The use of A2 or A3 systems in seeking the determination of the final mark was a problem to be solved with the help of the IT personnel for modules in all disciplines.

Similar challenges of technical and teaching and learning as well as research-based challenges and problems among academics, researchers, and students as well as leadership have been described in seminal research of Marinoni *et al.* (2020) that covered a very wide spectrum of universities globally.

CONCLUSIONS

This article demonstrated the diverse experiences of academics and administrative staff in two universities during the pandemic. Findings reveal that operational functions like HR at a university were affected primarily by the non-existence of policy and leadership-driven capabilities to manage the Covid-19 pandemic. These experiences compromised the university's operations in planning, resources and infrastructure as the university's responses to the inevitable priorities and services to academic and administrative staff and students created a new normal. The financial capacity of institutions was also compromised and is instrumental in boosting such capabilities because limited resources lead to organisational dysfunction.

The research indicated that despite the collegial relationships between academic and administrative staff at both universities, the migration from physical contact to online teaching and learning was accompanied by an array of problems and challenges. These problems and challenges ranged from technical to infrastructure and scholastic problems associated with data realities, connectivity, financial affordability, as well as curriculum misunderstandings. The key issue differentiating the two universities' success or failure was that one was able to afford the required services while the other was not. What was interesting was that the administrative interviewees never mentioned relations with private service providers responsible for supplying key online programs and infrastructure facilitating the online functions and processes.

Given the fact that both institutions are in the traditional 'research' category and have never faced the realities of lack of government funding, one would expect that both would be capable to face the expenses of services and procurement. There seemed to be a dilemma for one of the universities coupled with the subsequent difficulties in the implementation of systems and services required by academics and students.

The existing disfunctions identified were very few cases of academics not completely ready for the realities and challenges of online education, and the occasional lack of the appropriate model for the online demands. Technical problems faced were described as a barrier to clear understanding between academics and students, especially due to the students' social and economic conditions.

Universities are at the heart of the nation as they are an institution that produces future leaders, scientists, and knowledge producers for the country. Given the financial realities of South Africa, during the present period, a careful examination of the institutions' present state points to the necessity of renewed thoughts and plans associated with additional funding as one of the state's priorities.

This necessity was confirmed from the first day of the universities' migration to the online terrain; an urgent transformation to a possible future adventure. The migration was instrumental in exposing the social and economic differences between institutions of higher learning and the wider South African nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The challenges and uncertainty in the world and South African universities are still imminent and demand an array of practical, innovative, and strategic initiatives for a better future. These relate to new designs and practices of curricula, learning, teaching, research, and community engagement. To begin with, there is a need for a fresh path in collaboration and partnerships among universities, the

private sector, the state, and communities. Once these initiatives are cemented, the universities' services to the communities will improve substantially as the opportunities for students to elevate their thirst for lifelong learning and skills development will be fulfilled. Within this context, there should be a serious rethinking and actions in historically underdeveloped institutions lacking infrastructure, financial stability, technological and science laboratories, lecture theatres, libraries, and student accommodation.

Given the challenges related to remote teaching and learning and its financial and technological implications, a future alternative could be a combination of on-line education and physical participation, especially for historically disadvantaged institutions.

Research shows that strategic university alliances especially in research collaboration, sharing knowledge, capabilities, expertise, and existing services have many advantages at all operational and intellectual levels.

Honest, transparent, accountable, effective, and strategic leadership is necessary for success given the existing challenges facing all institutions at present.

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The Quality and Accreditation of Online Public Administration Programs

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 accelerated the development of online learning around the world. As a result, many universities transitioned to fully online or hybrid learning in which face-to-face and online teaching are combined. Many universities indicated that they will continue with online or hybrid learning in a post-pandemic world indicating that online programs will remain a constant feature of the education landscape. This is also applicable to public administration programs at present, a total of 216 Master of Public Administration (MPA) degrees are available for online study at the StudyPortal (2022), offered by a variety of different universities. However, with the exception of the USA, national and international accreditation bodies often only assess the quality of traditional face-to-face programmes and neglect the accreditation of hybrid and online programs. This also applies to public administration programmes resulting in a large number of online programs not being assessed in terms of quality and standard. Accreditation plays an important role in ensuring quality and standards are adhered to. In terms of public administration programmes accreditation ensures that graduates have the knowledge and skills to contribute to a public service that is responsive, effective and efficient. This article argues that in a post-pandemic work it is important to assess the quality and standard of online educational programs in all disciplines but specifically in

public administration to ensure the provision of quality public services. This article recommends that specific criteria be added to the existing accreditation standards already being used for public administration programmes to assess not only face-to-face programmes but also online offerings.

INTRODUCTION

The development and implementation of quality public services require senior public servants to be well-educated and trained. Consequently, the need for quality public administration programmes of a high standard. However, this raises the question of who and what determines the quality and standards of such programmes. Peer assessments, national and international accreditation are seen as powerful instruments to determine the quality of higher education programmes (*cf.* Harvey 2004). As stated by the New England Commission of Higher Education (2018), becoming accredited is a status granted to an educational institution or a programme, indicating that quality standards have been met or exceeded. The origin of accreditation dates back to the late 1800s, while the first professional accreditation bodies were created in 1905 (Matthews 2018:33). These professional accreditation groups were formed to prevent the uneven delivery of professional education programmes (Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications 1995). Such accreditation concentrated on classic academic programmes; for example, medicine; with other disciplines, for instance, public administration that received its first accreditation from NASPAA (the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration) only in 1980 (NASPAA 2023).

However, since accreditation started it has predominantly been face-to-face programmes that formed the focus of assessment, excluding hybrid and online programs. It was only in 1996 that the first online accredited and fully web-based university was developed (Online Schools 2022). Since then, many models, standards, and requirements were developed for the accreditation of online education programs. The exponential growth of online education during the Covid-19 pandemic amplified the need for accreditation to determine the quality and standard of these offerings. This drastic increase in online programs is supported by Rungta (2022), who states that in 2017, the BlackBoard platform was used by 30% of all higher education institutions for online education. By 2020, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, in approximately 90% of all countries, a digital online learning process was adopted, with many higher education institutions indicating they would stay (at least partly) online after the pandemic. This view is also supported by Toquero (2020), who mentions that universities around the world that closed

due to the pandemic recognised the benefits of moving classes online and intend to keep an online presence. Garcia, Perez and Hayashi (2021) call this 'the new normal in learning and education'.

Without a doubt Covid-19 presented an opportunity for many universities to review their higher education programmes and to become more innovative (Rapanta, Butturi, Goodyear, Guardia, and Koole 2021). In addition, in some instances, students performed better in online education than in traditional face-to-face environments (Rapanta *et al.* 2021). The pandemic was the driver accelerating the uptake of hybrid forms of and full online education, resulting in the question of whether the design and delivery of these programs represents quality. At present, 216 MPA degrees are available for online study at the StudyPortal (2022) from a variety of universities. These include the University of Birmingham, the University of Illinois, the University of Virginia, the University of Sydney, the University of Malawi, and the University of South Africa. In addition, Keystone (2022) has 47 fully online MPA degrees offered by a variety of universities, including the University of Delaware, Hawaii Pacific University, and The University of North Carolina. The prestigious Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University also offers a fully online MPA for students (Syracuse University 2022). This indicates that many universities have seen the benefit of online programs in public administration and students are benefiting from enrolling for these offerings available seven days a week regardless of distance from the university.

Notwithstanding popularity many public administration programmes with online delivery are not being accredited. Accreditation of public administration programmes offered by professional public administration organisations such as the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA), the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) or the European Group for Public Administration (EGPA), is done mainly on traditional, face-to-face programmes (Raffel, Maser and Calarusse 2011) while online programs are being neglected.

Quality-assessment and accreditation are not only important for public administration programmes and academic departments but also for students. Students will be assured of quality when enrolling for an online program knowing that such programs provide the knowledge and skills required for effective and efficient governance and service delivery. As Garcia *et al.* (2021) state, "accreditation is a process of quality control and can differ by context and mode of learning, thereby requiring some standardisation. This includes concerns related to the quality of online learning, which varies significantly from one provider to another". Such accreditation concerns the mission of the program, the fit thereof with the contents, pedagogical concerns, the organisation and staff, the formative and summative assessment of students, and the evaluation of the program by the students (*cf.* Van Jaarsveldt *et al.* 2019). Standards are set to ensure conformity and criteria that

need to be exceeded in order to get accredited. Accreditation is an assurance of the quality of programs. If a program is not accredited, students are unsure about its quality, subsequently the absence of accreditation of public administration programs delivered through online technologies results in questions being asked about their quality by students and employers (*cf.* Gaston 2013).

This article argues that in times of crisis, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic, online or hybrid public administration programmes have become more widely adopted. This implies that it is becoming increasingly important that online public administration programs should be assessed in terms of quality and standard. Such assessment should be facilitated by public administration organisations that conduct accreditation. This could promote excellence and best practices in online public administration education. To support this argument, we first examine the differences between traditional programmes and online programs. We then focus on the importance of accrediting online public administration programs and determine the additional criteria required to conduct an online accreditation. The main research question addressed below concerns the importance of accrediting online public administration programs and asks what aspects should be considered when accrediting an online public administration program? Before, however, examining these aspects, it is necessary to describe the methodology used in this article.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative methodology to explore the concept of accreditation in higher education and the requirements for the accreditation of online programs in public administration. The article starts with a literature review. According to Gasa, Mafora and Maphalala (2020:133), this involves examining existing knowledge on, for example, theories, critiques, research findings, assessments and the evaluation of a specific topic – in this instance, accreditation in higher education.

Second, the article uses componential analysis to determine the attributes of the main terms relevant to the research. According to Feza (2020:467) componential analysis determines characteristics and qualities by clarifying the meaning of concepts. The concepts used include accreditation, accreditation in higher education, online accreditation of educational programmes, and requirements for the accreditation of online public administration programs.

Third, this article investigates the current role and functions of public administration organisations in terms of their role and responsibility for the accreditation of online academic programs in public administration. This was done by analysing current public administration accreditation processes to determine how these differ from the standards required for the accreditation of an online education program. Thus, a comparative study was conducted between the different

accreditation standards to determine what aspects should be considered when accrediting an online public administration program.

THE QUALITY OF TRADITIONAL AND ONLINE PROGRAMMES

The main difference between traditional programmes and online programs (i.e. distance learning) is, of course, the way interaction occurs between lecturers and students and between students themselves. There are also differences in the way students need to incorporate the contents of the study material (Moore 1989). This implies that the quality of interaction is the main issue at stake (DeLacey and Leonard 2002). Ping (2011) concludes that “the quality of interaction between learner and online content, as well as learner-teacher-peers, has to be ensured in achieving efficacy of web-based teaching and learning towards the creation and maintenance of sustainable learning communities” (2011:70). To quote Harasim (1989:55), “knowledge building occurs as students explore issues, examine one another’s arguments, agree, disagree, and question positions. Collaboration contributes to higher order learning through cognitive restructuring or conflict resolution”. High-quality interactions between students are thus essential to positive learning outcomes (Keefe 2003). Whether online programs are superior to traditional programmes in establishing such high-quality interaction, is still a matter of debate; unfortunately lacking much empirical evidence.

Wang *et al.* (2019) mention that not being present in the same location at the same time during online teaching could create feelings of isolation, frustration, anxiety and confusion as well as disengagement and higher withdrawals due to a lack of social interaction and instructor presence (Capra 2011; Rovai and Wighting 2005; Trello 2007; Wang *et al.* 2019). Others point to the challenges of online programs in terms of community-building, providing skills to integrate verbal and non-verbal communication, and the socialisation of students in an academic environment (Rovai and Jordan 2004). Still others point out that traditional programmes would be superior in imparting analytical and synthesis skills, whereas online programs would be superior in imparting comprehension and reproducing knowledge (Wang *et al.* 2019).

Research has established that traditional programmes and online programs differ in the students’ perception of the clarity of instruction (Chen and Jones 2007), their perception of the dullness of the teaching, its efficiency and appeal (Vamosi, Pierce and Slotkin 2004), but not in the effectiveness of programmes in providing knowledge.

Important for our argument is that in academia, one has to distinguish between students acquiring knowledge, becoming skilled, and developing an academic

attitude. Empirical research is positive about online programs creating knowledge, that is, the transformation of facts and information into knowledge (Zull 2002). However, opinions are more varied when it comes to becoming skilled and developing an academic attitude. These considerations result in additional criteria for the assessment of the quality of online programs (*cf.* Zull, 2002; Vamosi, Pierce and Slotkin 2004).

According to the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE 2015:10), the specific criteria to be included in assessing the quality of online programs need to determine whether such programs are:

- multifaceted, including the strategy, policy, online infrastructure and processes to be used;
- dynamic, including flexibility to accommodate rapid changes in technology;
- mainstreamed and used as a tool for reflective practice by members of staff in their daily work;
- representative of stakeholders' views, including students, staff, government, and broader society;
- multifunctional and provide a roadmap for future improvement;
- supporting professional development, in particular through best practice and the exchange of information;
- supporting communication and knowledge transfer; and
- supporting research and scholarship.

A 2017 discussion paper published by the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum examines quality assurance in online learning and proposes standards to ensure quality in such programs. These standards include leadership and management developing strategic plans, creating performance indicators, and providing professional development for staff to ensure effective student learning. The standards also highlight the need for reviews and constant improvement to ensure program quality. Resources and information should be regularly updated for students. Structures should be put in place to ensure quality educational and personal support for students. Furthermore, the standards emphasise student experiences that should allow students to interact with each other and to interact socially. Curriculum design should include sound educational principles to support learning, while assessments should provide students the opportunity to show the knowledge they have gained. Lastly, learning outcomes should ensure that the qualification level is in place (APEC 2017:30).

The National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPSA:2022) states that to ensure quality in distance online education, specific criteria need to be met in terms of standards. These standards include the vision, purpose, and mission of the institution, the governance of the institution, as well as its structure to support the needs of students. Furthermore, a quality-designed curriculum and qualified

staff is needed, as well as a comprehensive online delivery system. Administrative and technical support to ensure the readiness of academic staff to teach online is critical, student services should be available online to support the needs and progress of students, and evaluation and assessment of student success and learning, are required. The proposed criteria for the accreditation of online programs are included in Table 1.

Table 1: Common quality and accreditation criteria for online educational programs

Theme	Indicator
Governance	Clear vision, purpose, goal, strategic plans, budgeting, time and quality leadership with an institutional readiness and policy
Teaching and Learning Effectiveness	Quality student-lecturer interaction, knowledge transfer, prompt feedback, support for critical thinking and student retention
Student Support and student satisfaction	Responsiveness to student needs and support services to assist with student needs and resources, promote social interaction between students
Technology	Online delivery readiness, technology infrastructure, ability to be flexible and adapt to new technology
Curriculum Design	Quality designed curriculum, pedagogy, learning outcomes, purpose and assessment, level of delivery, quality standards, knowledge and skills required
Staff and professional development	Staff must be trained, skilled and ready to teach online and facilitate online learning
Evaluation and Assessment	Program evaluation and assessment (formative and summative) for student learning, reflection to ensure online quality was achieved or could be improved
Organisational/ Institutional-Impact	Institutional support (both technical and administrative) and institutional resources (budget, human resources, time, internet connections and computers/laptops) strong rationale for distance education and planning for the future

Source: (Adapted from Shelton 2011; the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (WCET) 1995; Institute for Higher Education Policy 2000; Lee and Dziuban 2002; Lockhart and Lacy 2002; Osika 2004; Moore and Kearsley 2005; International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) 2015 and Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) 2017).

Table 1 indicates that the criteria for the accreditation of online educational programs include a variety of aspects. Although adequate technology is a key requirement for online educational programs, it is also important to ensure that the governance and planning of online educational programs meet the criteria as outlined in Table 1. Students should be supported in an online environment and staff should be trained with the skills required to support student success.

This section addressed the question of which criteria could be included in an accreditation of online programs. The next section will address the implications thereof for the possible accreditation of such programs.

THE ACCREDITATION OF ONLINE PROGRAMS

The accreditation of higher education programmes dates back to the late 1800s in the United States (US). It was a way for colleges and universities with high academic standards to distinguish themselves from institutions that claimed to be colleges but had curricula similar to high schools (Harclerod 1980). Accreditation standards and procedures continued to develop as accreditation bodies in many academic disciplines were created around the world (Matthews 2018:32).

It is widely accepted that the accreditation of higher education qualifications helps to ensure quality (Alstete 2007; Blaich 1959; Charmonman and Chorpothong 2004; Philips and Kinser 2018; Pollard 2017; Schritter 2022). However, it is impossible to conceptualise the term ‘accreditation’ without first examining the concept of quality. According to Mukhopadhyay (2016:9), quality is a metaphysical concept comprising of specific attributes. In terms of quality in education, Mukhopadhyay (2016:9, 22–23) lists the following attributes of quality: excellence in education, value added to education, achieving outcomes and experiences, conformity with outputs as well as meeting and exceeding expectations. Quality is a holistic process that should pervade all stages of education, from planning an educational programme to the delivery of the programme, communication, addressing student concerns, assessment as well as staff responsible for the delivery of the programme. Quality-assessment requires all the aspects mentioned by Mukhopadhyay to be present in an educational programme being accredited.

Alstete (2007) explains that the word ‘accreditation’ is derived from the Latin word ‘credito’, which means trust. One needs to trust the quality of the education being provided, trust the quality of the institution providing the education, and trust the quality of the staff providing the programme. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2020:10) and Katsamunskaja and Rosenbaum (2019:30), accreditation refers to the official approval provided by an organisation that specific standards have been met. In his book entitled *Accreditation in Higher Education*, Blaich (1959) writes that accreditation indicates the assurance of a minimum level of education quality. He continues by stating that accreditation in education refers to the recognition that an institution receives for achieving a standard or meeting criteria, as confirmed by a competent agency or association. Accreditation refers to a set of quality standards for all educational institutions or degree programmes to achieve and ensures accountability within universities and degree programmes.

In many instances, accreditation is a voluntary process of self-regulation and peer review (Philips and Kinser 2018:3). In South Africa, the Council on Higher Education (CHE 2022) states that accreditation takes place when specific accreditation criteria are met by an academic programme. Accreditation involves both self-evaluation and external evaluation. Eaton (2010) states that accreditation includes the establishment of standards, institutional self-review and peer-review, confirmation that accreditation has been achieved and the awarding of the accredited status. In terms of self-evaluation, an institution may reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of educational programmes and accordingly judge their quality. According to the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE 2019), self-evaluation allows institutions to determine their weaknesses and address these before an external evaluation takes place.

External evaluation during the accreditation process takes place when an educational programme is evaluated by an external body or organisation. During the external evaluation process data is collected, interviews are conducted, and evidence is gathered (ASHE 2019). This type of evaluation is carried out by a team of external experts or peers. At the end of the external evaluation, a report is compiled highlighting aspects that need improvement. Once an educational programme is accredited, it receives academic recognition. With successful accreditation, a student has the assurance of receiving a quality education, while prospective employers can be assured of the quality of the course or degree completed by the prospective employee.

According to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (2022), accreditation is especially important when considering non-traditional forms of instruction such as distance or online learning. According to Shelton (2011), online education has been criticised as being of poor quality and inferior to traditional education. Thus, as the number of online educational programs has increased, the need to ensure quality has become more important. The first attempts to assess quality in the accreditation of online education were developed in 1995 by WCET, which issued the Principles of Good Practice for Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programmes. These principles focused on three categories for quality evaluation, namely, (i) curriculum and instruction, (ii) institutional context and commitment, and (iii) evaluation and assessment. Under the second principle, 'commitment' was further divided into five areas: (i) role and mission, (ii) faculty support, (iii) resources for learning, (iv) students and student services, and (v) commitment to supporting them (WCET 1997).

Several procedures have been developed for the evaluation and quality assurance of online educational programs. The Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP 2000: vii) states that "distance learning can be quality learning". IHEP identifies 24 criteria, which are divided into seven themes to determine the quality of online programs: (i) institutional support that includes the reliability of

the technology infrastructure, (ii) course development, creating online course materials that engage the learner, encourage critical thinking and support revision, (iii) teaching and learning systems that allow interaction between the student and the lecturer as well as constructive feedback, (iv) course structure, which should include the objectives and outcomes of the course, (v) student support, for example, information provided to students about course enrolment, online services and where to find resources and assistance, (vi) faculty support to ensure that staff are trained and ready to teach online, and (vii) evaluation and assessment.

Further contributions to the accreditation and quality assurance of online educational programs have been made by researchers such as Lee and Dziuban (2002) and their Quality Assurance Strategy. This strategy supports thorough planning of online programs through discussion, evaluation and analysis. The Assessment Model by Lockhart and Lacy (2002) determines seven components to assess online education, namely, (i) institutional readiness/administration (budgets, priority and management), (ii) faculty services (support, outcome measurement and training effectiveness), (iii) instructional design/course usability (technology must be user-friendly and accessible), (iv) student readiness (assessment for student readiness and preparation), (v) student services (effectiveness of provided services), (vi) learning outcomes (measurement of learning outcomes), and (vii) retention (comparing rates with face-to-face delivery and enrolment monitoring). In addition, Osika (2004) developed the Concentric Model, while Moore and Kearsley (2005) put forward recommendations for online program accreditation stressing student achievement, student satisfaction, faculty satisfaction, program or institutional reputation, and the quality of course materials.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ACCREDITING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMMES

In light of the above discussion, it is necessary to consider the implications for online programs and the assessment of their quality through accreditation. Two possible trajectories are proposed. The first possibility is to maintain the current status quo, that is, ignoring the assessment of the quality of online programs. Although some arguments support this option, there are many counterarguments provided by accreditation agencies.

The first counterargument is that the criteria in use by existing accreditation agencies such as the International Commission on the Accreditation of Public Administration and training programmes (ICAPA), the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) and the European Association for Public Administration Accreditation (EAPAA) can also be easily applied to

online programs. As stated by Katsamunskaja and Rosenbaum (2019:25), whatever the programme in public administration, it requires:

- a clear commitment to the public service
- advocacy and support of public interest values
- combining scholarship, practice and community service
- commitment by the academic department and quality academic staff
- inclusiveness of all stakeholders
- a responsive and relevant curriculum
- adequate resources
- balancing collaboration and competition.

These elements drive public administration programmes to excel and create a desire to meet, even exceed world-class standards of excellence. These elements remain important for public administration programmes regardless of mode of offering.

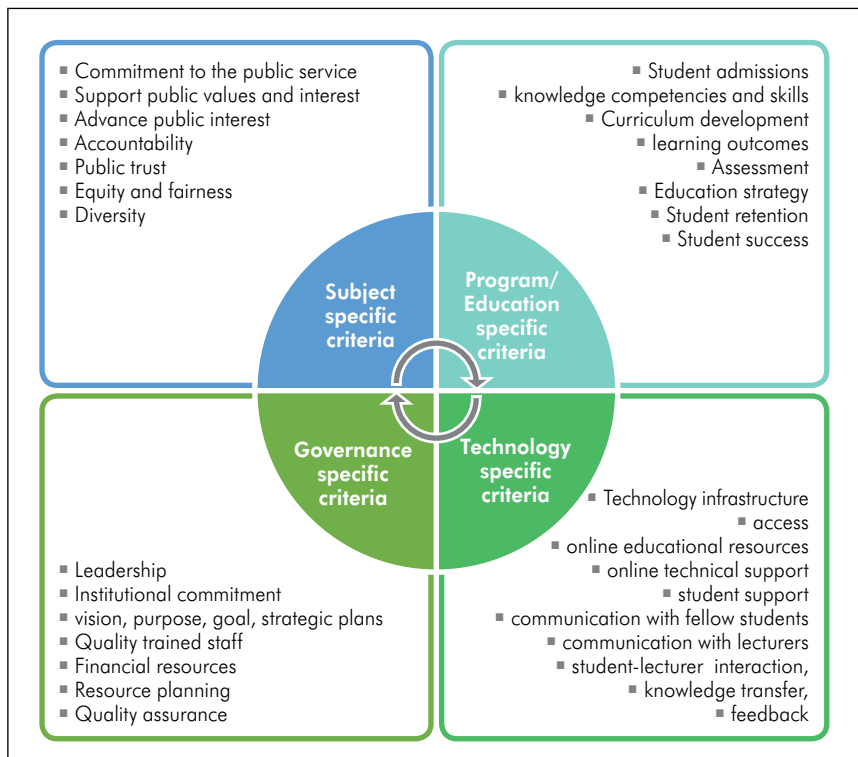
The second counterargument is that students studying an online program receive the same title (bachelor, master) as students in traditional programmes. This implies that the online program offers similar content and is of comparable quality to traditional programmes. This refers to, among others, the nature of the course offered and the study load. Empirical studies have found only small differences in learning outcomes between traditional courses and distance courses (Alsaaty, Carter, Abrahams and Alshameri 2016). Scholars have argued that the mode of instruction is the least important predictor of students' performance (DeLacey and Leonard 2002; Hatcher, Henson and LaRosa 2013). Many moderating factors influence the relative effectiveness of traditional and online programmes. Research points to the importance of students' knowledge base and technical capabilities; characteristics of the programmes (i.e. how they are designed, and the assignments involved); communication between the lecturer and students and students among one another; and the technological infrastructure required (*cf.* Alsaaty *et al.* 2016:34).

The third counterargument is that already before the Covid-19 pandemic, many traditional universities started offering online courses, recognising the merits of this mode of teaching. Consequently, many programmes are now being offered as a hybrid form of education, blending online elements with face-to-face lectures (Alsaaty *et al.* 2016). This implies that the strict division between traditional learning and online learning is fading and that it would make sense to assess the quality of such hybrid programmes and pure online programs compared with traditional programmes. Thus, assessors could determine whether suitable conditions are in place for online learning and whether their quality meets the stated standards. The last counterargument has to do with debunking myths, prejudice, and the reputation of online programs compared

with traditional programmes. As Alsaaty *et al.* (2016:31) state: “For decades, scholars have debated which mode of education is superior. Some argue that online is superior and others argue that online is less effective than traditional face-to-face courses. Still others suggest that the hybrid mode (e.g., online blended with face-to-face lectures) is the most desired and productive content delivery method for students”.

This question about the quality of online programs can only be settled if the quality of online programs is as systematically assessed as the quality of traditional face-to-face programmes. To do so, the current quality assessment criteria need to be modified. In public administration, quality assessment needs to examine more than just subject content and the governance of the programme; education-specific and technology-specific criteria also need to be added. Given the specifics of online programs as discussed above, the proposed criteria for the accreditation of online public administration programs are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Criteria for the accreditation of online programs



Source: (Authors' own construction)

As shown in Figure 1, the accreditation of online public administration programs can be divided into four equally important criteria. Subject-specific criteria focus on the values in public administration that students need to acquire, while programme- or education-specific criteria focus on the development of the curriculum and education strategy to ensure student success. Technology-specific criteria focus on the online facilitation of learning and student support. These criteria represent the only difference between traditional programmes and online programs that need to be adjusted during the accreditation process. Governance-specific criteria conform to the 2021 UNESCO recommendations on the application of quality standards for blended and distance learning programmes.

These criteria address the main prerequisites to assess the effectiveness of such programmes. They distinguish between technological, financial, pedagogical, quality assurance, examination, and evaluative aspects of online programs. Questions asked are, for instance, “What are the main challenges in terms of access, quality and equity?”, “What guidelines or requirements are developed by the universities to ensure pedagogical quality?”, “Do we have the financial resources required for the development of online programs?”, “How are the skills and knowledge of academic staff enhanced to ensure the quality of online teaching?”, “How is online quality monitored” and “How are evaluation and examination issues addressed?”

Figure 1 also raises questions on the quality of technology infrastructure, access, student-student and student-lecturer communication, knowledge transfer in the way students absorb content, and feedback provided. The main differences between traditional programmes and online programs are the mode of knowledge transfer, the possibilities to acquire the skills needed and the development of an academic attitude. The way programmes deal with such issues should have a prominent place in the quality assessment of any online public administration program.

CONCLUSIONS

The Covid-19 pandemic has transformed many traditional programmes in public administration into online programs. It is likely that in the post-pandemic era, many online programs will remain, as universities have recognised the merits of this learning mode, although discussions about the merits also continue. The quality of those newly developed online courses needs to meet accreditation standards that still have to be developed. Much has yet to be organised, technological facilities are not always sufficient, and the interaction between lecturers and students and between students themselves has to be ensured.

The main research question of this article examined the attributes of online teaching, the additional issues at stake compared with traditional face-to-face teaching, and the criteria that could be used to evaluate the quality of such programmes.

It was argued that the three main differences between traditional programmes and online programs were the mode of knowledge transfer, the possibility to acquire skills, and the development of an academic attitude. At present it is not known whether different modes of knowledge transfer have implications for the absorption of information, or the knowledge, skills, and academic attitude acquired.

This results in prejudice about the quality of online, hybrid, and traditional programmes. Programme accreditation based on international standards could confirm whether these prejudices are informed judgements or baseless claims. However, in public administration, the leading accreditation agencies such as NASPAA, ICAPA and EAPAA conduct virtually no assessments of online programs. In this article, we argued that this policy should be changed and that this could be achieved by adding additional criteria to existing accreditation standards to effectively assess all three types of programmes.

International accreditation could provide answers to the questions on the quality of online programs, students' experiences, technology required, support needed and the readiness of teaching staff. Research on these issues as published in journals mostly focuses on student satisfaction, whereas much more is at stake, for example, the isolation of students, frustration, self-discipline, and community-building. All these factors are of the utmost importance for performance. Not all universities that transitioned to online teaching due to the pandemic considered these aspects as well as the readiness of academic staff to teach online. Yet, many universities continue with online teaching in a post-pandemic world, sometimes in a hybrid way, blending traditional modes of teaching with online teaching. This in turn results in questions about the quality of these online programs. It is important to remember that quality assessments failing to account for the mode of delivery when teaching could result in the non-detection of deficiencies in programmes, which in all other respects, are perhaps excellent.

NOTE

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Municipal Infrastructure Investment Push and Pull Factors

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ABSTRACT

According to the World Bank Group's 2020 Ease of Doing Business Index, South Africa ranks 84th out of 190 countries with a score of 67 points. Relative positive factors as far as business attractiveness is concerned include aspects related to starting a business (81 points) and the protection of investors (80 points). A key indicator of the country's economic status is municipalities' performance. Municipalities are at the centre of economic activity and should establish a conducive environment for investment in infrastructure development. This article outlines the findings of a survey undertaken with the support of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) at selected municipalities in South Africa (SA) to uncover the business push-and-pull factors associated with municipal infrastructure investment. The aim of the study was to identify municipalities that have been affected by disinvestment and to document their weaknesses. Furthermore, the study set out to identify municipalities that have been able to attract investors and record their winning strategies. A situational desktop analysis by means of a SWOT analysis was undertaken. Results were then triangulated with findings of semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire distributed to seven target groups consisting of representatives of sampled municipalities, stakeholders (i.e. district and provincial investment development agencies) and organised business. Results of the thematic analysis of findings reveal that systemic challenges such as poor service delivery levels, corruption, inefficiencies, failing governance structures, the absence of institutional mechanisms to fast-track investor applications, and the lack of dedicated business management advisory units all

act as investment push factors. The practical value of the study is promoted by recommendations for municipal business investment praxis.

INTRODUCTION

Municipal infrastructure investment has a significant influence on broad-based local economic development (LED). The close interface between infrastructure development and economic prosperity is mainly driven by the significance of sound infrastructure for economic sectors such as agriculture, energy, transport and manufacturing. Furthermore, infrastructure investment plays a key role in achieving greater productivity and competitiveness, to reduce spatial inequality, and to support job creation.

The SA economy exhibits dualism, with marked racial and spatial inequalities in the distribution of income. This situation suggests the probable consequences of disinvestment for the economy, and particularly for the growth rate of income and employment, as seen in municipalities. Municipalities in SA have a constitutional mandate and statutory obligations to promote LED.

The purpose of this article is to report on findings of a survey conducted within selected SA municipalities to identify push and pull factors for individual municipalities in their efforts to attract and retain business investments. The methodology used in this survey is based on secondary data obtained through desktop surveys and document analyses, as well as primary data obtained through semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire to seven target groups. The selected municipalities were sampled based on the successes and weaknesses pertaining to infrastructure investment. The comparative analysis between municipalities enabled the identification of investment best practice and winning strategies. By identifying push and pull factors relating to investment attraction, municipalities can share lessons learned to address weaknesses and exploit potential business investment opportunities. Finally, measures are proposed and related recommendations are made to enhance infrastructure investment prospects in the local government sector.

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have revealed that the quality of infrastructure (i.e. availability and quality of roads and ports, telecommunications, power, water supply, electricity, and transportation) plays a key role in attracting investment both in the short and

longer term (Abamu 2019; Bigen Group 2022; Canare 2018). These studies show that 1% growth in infrastructure is associated with 1% growth in per capita gross domestic product (GDP). Research has also illustrated that especially low-income countries significantly benefit from infrastructure development and maintenance by contributing on average 6.5% to GDP (Bricenco-Garmendia and Estache 2004; Gurara, Klyuev, Mwase and Presbitero 2018; Kirchberger 2020). A further significant factor is that countries with sufficient and well-maintained infrastructure generally receive higher foreign investment. As a way of contributing towards public investment, municipalities in SA currently contribute 27.7% of capital expenditure relating to residential and non-residential buildings, roads, bridges, airports, canals, pipelines and tunnels, port facilities, sewerage and sanitation, community and social works, refuse sites, water and other new construction works (StatsSA 2021).

According to Jedwab, Christiaensen and Gindelsky (2014), a country's statutory and regulatory framework generally plays a central role in the ability to attract and retain foreign investment. National policies usually influence investment-related decisions, since it significantly influences business operations once they have established a footprint in a country. This includes regulations concerning registration, labour, taxation and competition. The statutory and regulatory framework may also have unintended consequences for businesses by unnecessarily increasing the risk and cost of doing business. Vakulich (2014:31) summarises the significance of policies and regulations as follows: "Reviewing and streamlining inefficient and burdensome policies, snipping red tape and fostering competition can encourage new international investment and enhance the economic performance of existing players".

Revenue deficits and rising government expenditure threaten the SA government's ability to develop and maintain public infrastructure. The country's National Development Plan (NDP): Vision 2030 targets capital investment of 30% of GDP. To realise this goal, private sector investment in infrastructure would need to grow from 12.5% of GDP in 2020 to 20% in 2030 (National Treasury 2020). As such, it has become vital for municipalities to attract foreign and domestic investment. This has led to increased competition to attract the inflow of investment, forcing national and local governments to adopt marketing practices for investment promotion (Abamu 2019). It is acknowledged that especially foreign direct investment is crucial for municipal infrastructure development and economic prosperity (Aitken and Harrison 1999; Harding and Javorcik 2011).

When assessing the ease of doing business at municipal level, investors not only consider business-related factors prevailing at municipalities. Broad-based, systemic factors are also considered given the inherent link between national and local governance (Asongu and Odhiambo 2019; Canare 2018). This interface is emphasised because credit-rating agencies consider business risk factors in individual municipalities (i.e. sub-sovereign risk) when determining national risks (Moody's Investors Services 2020; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2021).

SA's economic freedom score is 65.7 (categorised as "mostly unfree"), making it the 112th freest in the 2022 Index of Economic Freedom (The Heritage Foundation 2022). South Africa is ranked 17th among 47 countries in the sub-Saharan Africa region. The country's overall score is above the regional average but below the world average. Especially recent attempts made by government to restrict foreign ownership of land and the relative high potential for expropriation of property seriously influence investment decisions (The Heritage Foundation 2022). Observers such as Awan, Ahmad, Shadid and Hassan (2014), Égert and Wanner (2016), Gal and Hijzen (2016), and McGowan, Andrews and Millot (2017) pinpoint the following additional factors affecting the SA investment arena:

- The high levels of crime: SA is ranked 131st out of 140 countries in terms of the risks and costs associated with high incidences of crime and violence (World Economic Forum (WEF) 2019).
- Slow progress as far as land reform programmes and private ownership are concerned, leading to business investment uncertainties.
- An inadequate skilled labour force.
- Poor municipal service delivery and governance performance.
- A restrictive statutory and regulatory framework acting as barriers to business entry.
- Poor municipal infrastructure and limited access to clean water and sanitation services.

To overcome these challenges, the SA government has established the Budget Facility for Infrastructure Task Team to improve investment prioritisation, planning and financing. The task team was allocated ZAR 625 million in 2019 for its operations. Government is also strengthening municipal infrastructure development by encouraging private sector investment. The aim is to mobilise an additional ZAR 20 billion per annum for municipal infrastructure development and maintenance (National Treasury 2019).

Another important step taken by government to promote infrastructure development was the establishment of the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission in 2014. This Commission serves as a coordinating forum to enhance infrastructure development within all spheres of government. This was followed by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure's National Infrastructure Plan 2050 that was published in 2021. A further positive development is the Ease of Doing Business Bill that was introduced in Parliament in February 2021. The primary objective of the Bill, which is still under deliberation by the relevant portfolio committees, is to reduce red tape for businesses (Ease of Doing Business Bill 2021:5).

The introduction of the Bill can be regarded as acknowledgement of, and appreciation for, business concerns pertaining to municipal investment. The Bill

should also be interpreted against the backdrop of SA's response to the United Nations' New Urban Agenda (UN Habitat 2020). Notably, the SA Agenda makes provision for municipal service excellence and well-governed cities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aims of this study were to identify municipalities that have been able to attract investment and document their investment winning strategies; to assess and document the investment attraction pull and push factors in municipalities; and to propose practical recommendations on municipal infrastructure investment and business retention practices based on findings.

The research methodology followed a qualitative design towards conducting a situational desktop analysis of disinvestment and investor attraction factors in local government. The same approach was used to triangulate the desktop analysis results with findings of semi-structured interviews and a self-administered questionnaire. The questions posed in the interview schedule and questionnaire were similar. The survey focused on selected municipalities and relevant stakeholders as sources for primary data collection. Table 1 outlines the respective target groups, data collection method and total number of purposively sampled participants and respondents.

Table 1: Data collected: Target groups

Target group	Data collection method	Sample size (n=)
Target group 1: Organised business	Desktop analysis	4
Target Group 2: Municipal LED Officials and Councillors	SWOT analysis and semi-structured interviews	25
Target group 3: District and Provincial Investment Development Agencies	Questionnaire	7
Target group 4: National and Provincial Departments	Questionnaire	8
Target group 5: South African Local Government Association (SALGA) representatives	Semi-structured interviews	7
Target group 6: Municipal Entities and Agencies	SWOT analysis and questionnaire	6
Target group 7: Local Government Experts	Semi-structured interviews (Delphi)	9
Total		66

As far as organised business is concerned, companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) were sampled based on recent media reports of decisions to relocate (disinvest) in certain municipalities. Underlying reasons for these decisions were identified and analysed. The sampled businesses were:

- Astral Foods Limited Poultry Processing Plant;
- Clover SA;
- Famous Brands Limited; and
- Volkswagen Group South Africa.

The situational desktop analysis was guided by a specific set of questions, including the following:

- Which municipalities were affected by disinvestments within SA?
- What are the results of their SWOT analyses (i.e. strengths and weaknesses)?
- Which municipalities were able to attract investment?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of selected individual municipalities in their efforts to attract and retain business investment?
- What is the investment attraction pull and push factors in selected municipalities?
- What are the distinguishing factors (push and pull) that made investment initiatives succeed?
- What are the underlying factors that caused initiatives to fail?

To select a sample of municipalities for evaluation, the focus was on those with specific and unique characteristics which could prove to be beneficial from an investment perspective, such as mining, tourism, proximity to international and national transport hubs, agricultural development as well as the development of coastal and marine areas. SA has 257 local, district and metropolitan municipalities. For this study the following 11 municipalities were purposively sampled:

- Sol Plaatje Local Municipality;
- Polokwane Local Municipality;
- Rustenburg Local Municipality;
- Mbombela Local municipality;
- Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality;
- uMhlathuze Local Municipality;
- Sarah Baartman District Municipality;
- Kouga Local Municipality;
- Fetagomo Tubatse Local Municipality;
- Newcastle Local Municipality; and
- Midvaal Local Municipality.

After completing the data collection phase, the results of the respective target groups were collated and analysed.

RESULTS

This section outlines the responses obtained from the respective target groups. Table 2 represents factors cited for disinvestment, as perceived by organised business (target group 1).

Target group 1: Organised business

Table 2: Sampled cases of organised business

Cases	Location	Factors cited for disinvestment
Astral Foods Limited (poultry production)	Lekwa Local Municipality, Mpumalanga Province	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disruptions in the supply chain caused by disintegrating municipal infrastructure; ▪ Irregular electricity supply; and ▪ Limited access to water.
Clover Industries Limited (consumer goods and products)	Ditsobotla Local Municipality, North-West Province	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular power cuts; ▪ Poor water services; and ▪ Poorly maintained municipal infrastructure (especially roads).
Famous Brands Limited (food services franchisor)	City of Johannesburg, Gauteng Province	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Insufficient water provisioning; ▪ Unsteady power streaming; ▪ Poor political and administrative governance of the municipality; and ▪ Poor maintenance of municipal infrastructure such as roads.
Volkswagen Group South Africa (VWSA) (vehicle-manufacturing plant)	Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality, Eastern Cape Province	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unstable power supply, especially so-called “power spikes”, which damage equipment.

It is evident that reasons cited for disinvestment primarily concern issues of poor municipal service delivery and failing infrastructure.

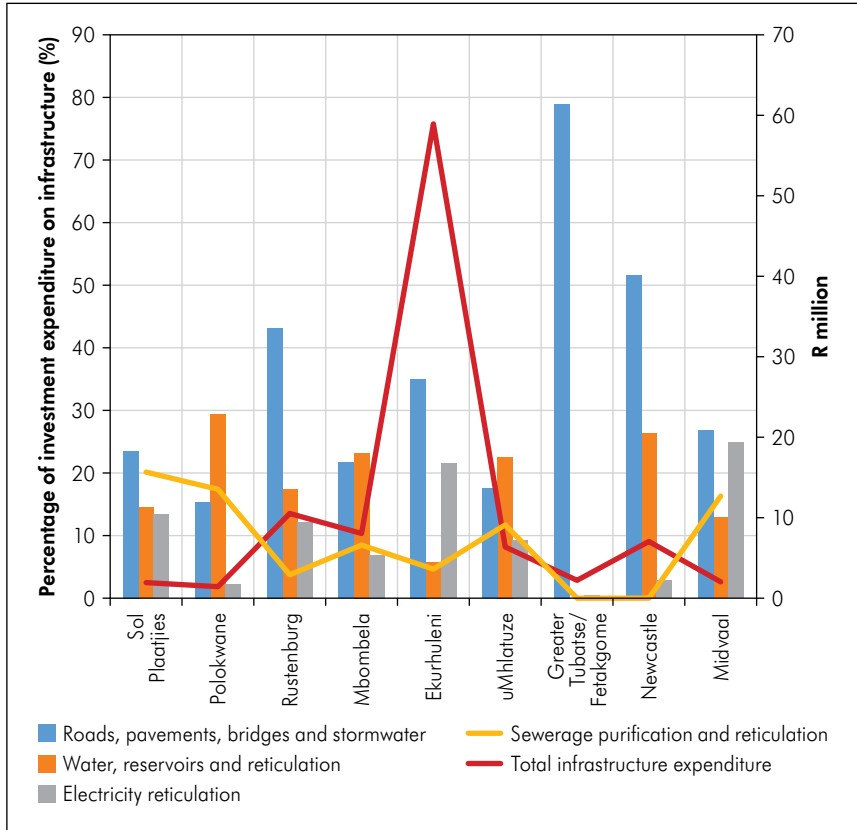
Target Groups 2 to 7

For analysis purposes, responses obtained from target groups 2 to 7 were combined. Results below are reported in the three categories according to the main aims of the study.

SWOT analysis of sampled municipalities

Participants were requested to complete a SWOT analysis template pertaining to the investment attractiveness of the sampled municipalities. In addition to

Figure 1: Percentage of investment expenditure on infrastructure

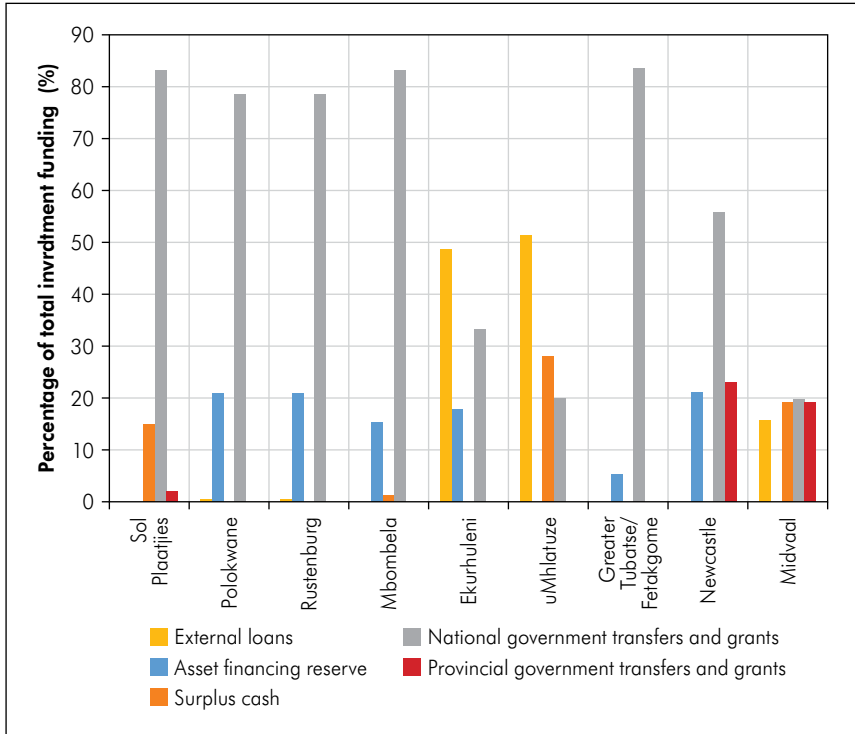


Source: (Analyses based on National Treasury municipal finance data 2021)

the SWOT analysis, a comparative analysis was done based on dependence on revenue sources, expenditure priorities, the stance of infrastructure and funding thereof, ageing of debt (outstanding payments by debtors) and the profile of debtors. Given the difference in size of the municipalities involved and for comparison purposes, the focus is on sharing different components rather than the absolute amounts involved to compare the proverbial apples with apples.

Expenditure on infrastructure and its maintenance is of great significance for investment decisions. The infrastructure register of a municipality is an indication of the monetary value of infrastructure spending and its funding. Also important is the nature of such infrastructural expenditures which is an indication of the sustainability of commercial activities in the area. Figure 1 shows the percentage of investment expenditure on infrastructure for the sampled municipalities.

Figure 2: Investment funding (Percentage of total)



Source: (Analyses based on National Treasury municipal finance data 2021)

From an investment perspective, the comparative share of infrastructure items is of vital importance to investors. This could point to lack of infrastructure or sub-standard, dilapidated existing structures. In this regard, the proportional share of Greater Fetakgomo in terms of Roads, Bridges and Storm Water is highest (close to 60%), followed by Newcastle with just more than 40%. Next is expenditure on Water Reservoirs and Reticulation, in which case the share of Polokwane is highest, followed by Newcastle. The only municipalities where the share of investment expenditure in electricity structures exceeds the 20% level are Ekurhuleni, followed by Midvaal. Given the energy crisis which SA experiences and the dilapidated condition of relevant infrastructure, the relatively low share by other municipalities might be a concern to investors.

Given the importance of sustainable investment levels, the sources from which such spending is obtained is of concern to potential investors. Because of the lack of data, the Sarah Baartman and Kouga municipalities have been excluded from this analysis. Figure 2 outlines the importance of Government Transfers for

funding investment projects (more than 80% in the case of Sol Plaatje, Polokwane, Rustenburg, Mbombela and Greater Tubatse/Fetakgomo).

Interestingly, the relevant shares of Newcastle, Ekurhuleni and especially Midvaal, are much lower. Midvaal reflects a relatively even share between Surplus Cash, Government Transfers and to a lesser extent External Loans. Ekurhuleni and uMhlathuze also portray a relatively high share of external loans, but with uMhlathuze funding a proportionally larger share from Surplus Cash. The proportional share of Asset Funding Reserves varies between 15 and 20%, which could be an indication of the soundness of financial management and investment interest. The lack of such funding in the case of Sol Plaatje, uMhlathuze and Midvaal is noticeable.

Investment pull and push factors

Participants and respondents were requested to list at least five investment pull and push factors. Their responses, as outlined in Table 3, are listed in descending order based on frequency of responses to some degree. It is evident that far more push factors are prevalent, which distorted the analysis of the status quo. What became clear, is that all municipalities face certain systemic challenges, while certain factors are municipality-specific. The responses were subsequently categorised into generic, systemic factors and more business investment-specific factors.

Table 3: Municipal investment pull and push factors

Pull factors	Frequency (%)	Push factors	Frequency (%)
Generic, systemic factors			
A positive image of the municipality facilitated by good marketing strategies and service delivery excellence	75.8	Failing municipal governance structures resulting in poor service delivery	85.4
Maintenance of existing municipal infrastructure (especially roads)	72.5	The lack of ongoing maintenance of infrastructure results in the municipality having to spend additional funds on old infrastructure networks such as water and sanitation	75.8
A clear business investment vision driven by economic development strategies, programmes and projects	61.2	Limited access to funding for infrastructure development (eg, electricity and water supply infrastructure) due to the reduction in infrastructure grants from national and provincial government	67.7

Pull factors	Frequency (%)	Push factors	Frequency (%)
Integrated spatial planning to make provision for business development zones (land, property, infrastructure)	59.6	Unplanned informal settlements and urban sprawl place pressure on natural resources and leads to urban decay, infrastructure backlogs and service delivery challenges	58.0
Political will and administrative leadership to champion LED	56.4	Restrictive statutory and regulatory frameworks, as well as the duration of environmental regulation processes. Some municipal by-laws and administrative red tape hinder the ease of doing business and investment in municipalities	45.1
Adequate mechanisms to fast-track investor applications	45.1	Over-reliance on single economic activities such as mining exposing municipalities to volatility and long-term economic downturns	37.0
Extension of business support commodities, such as internet bandwidth and Wi-Fi hotspots	37.0	Industrial sectors are stagnant, with very few new industrial developments; private investment patterns remain isolated in certain economic nodes, resulting in a general decline in investment	29.0
Inclusion of local stakeholders in local supply chain deals and transactions that improves sustainability, legitimacy and business cooperation	29.0	Slow finalisation of land reform processes and pending land claims	25.8
		Unemployment, poverty and inequality fuelled by the concentration of employment opportunities in urban areas	24.1
		Lack of a service culture and ethos exacerbated by corruption and a lack of financial accountability	19.3
		Poorly qualified and inexperienced officials to drive the economic agenda and investment programme of the municipality	14.5

Pull factors	Frequency (%)	Push factors	Frequency (%)
Business investment specific factors			
Clear roles and responsibilities within the municipality that promote responsiveness and accountability, supported by performance and consequence management	61.2	Lack of a dedicated business management advisory unit	56.4
Provision in the budget and integrated development plans for the allocation of resources for marketing leading to business investment	56.4	Inability to respond to business interests and concerns	29.0
Municipal support structures for entrepreneurs and local small- and micro- enterprises	45.1	Lack of skilled and dedicated municipal officials	29.0
		Poor political oversight and limited monitoring and evaluation of business investment initiatives	24.1
		Run-down tourist attractions and assets, such as battlefield sites and sports and recreational infrastructure	14.5
		Inadequate access to accurate and relevant information pertaining to LED	9.6
		Inconsistency in addressing business issues within the municipality	9.6
		Virtual breakdown of the public transport system, including road and railway networks	6.4

Municipal investment winning strategies

Participants and respondents confirmed that an attractive investment environment is essential for municipalities. The following is a summary (in no particular order) of the most prominent winning strategies identified by the respective target groups to attract investment.

- **Strategy 1:** The majority (72.2%) of participants and respondents emphasised the need to focus on unique economic nodes, hubs and corridors for growth, urban renewal and city regeneration projects. For example, Rustenburg Local Municipality focuses on Special Economic Zones (SEZ) and Logistics Hubs to include other industrial activities such as manufacturing and the establishment

of a green economy park. Municipal spatial plans and human settlement plans should make provision for business development. In particular, spatial plans should make provision for industrial development such as zoned industrial sites.

- *Strategy 2:* Some 58% of participants highlighted that winning municipalities should follow an integrated approach to LED by incorporating business support and development, entrepreneurship, job creation, skills development and sustainable growth. For example, Polokwane City's Department of Economic Development and Tourism has designed a comprehensive strategy to combine the strengths of the municipality, local business and civil society organisations so that they can work together to improve the economy.
- *Strategy 3:* Municipalities must be financially and institutionally viable to promote economic development. Municipalities must be an attractive destination for investment and must leverage available economic opportunities (45.1% response rate). Newcastle Local Municipality, for example, developed a growth and development strategy titled "Vision 2035" to become an inclusive city. The strategy places particular emphasis on the establishment of public-private partnerships.
- *Strategy 4:* Overcome the over-reliance on a particular economic sector (eg. mining) for growth. This creates complacency that may negatively impact future economic prospects of cities. Participants representing LED officials ($n=25$) and respondents from district and provincial investment development agencies ($n=7$) emphasised that municipalities should diversify their economic sectors by incorporating and developing areas such as tourism, agriculture, manufacturing and skills development for targeted growth. Municipalities such as Sarah Baartman and Greater Fetakgomo experience significant challenges, given their almost full dependence on government transfers. As such, self-sufficiency and financial sustainability play a key role in attracting investment. Three participants from target group 2 highlighted the potential of the domestic and foreign tourism market. Municipalities that promote and market ecotourism, historical sites, and cultural and heritage sites create a positive image that helps attract investment.
- *Strategy 5:* A respondent from a municipal entity and a participant from the local government expert group emphasised that a well-developed local skills base is essential to attract investment. It also promotes skilled migration to municipalities, which further establishes a local skills-based labour market.

DISCUSSION

Municipalities encounter numerous systemic and institutional challenges. As a result, they are unable to capitalise on possible investment opportunities. It is evident that broad-based national concerns such as the high levels of crime and a relatively restrictive legal framework limit funding, while a volatile political

environment often leads to negative business perceptions of the country. On an institutional level, poor municipal governance, limited cooperation and alignment between municipal departments, a low skills base, as well as inadequate spatial planning often leads to poor service delivery. The cases analysed (JSE-listed companies) highlighted poor service delivery as a key reason for disinvestment and relocation. Poor service delivery could be seen as the cause of poor municipal infrastructure and inadequate maintenance of existing infrastructure.

It is evident that the financial viability of municipalities significantly influences investment decisions. Low investment further leads to financial unsustainability by negatively affecting municipalities' revenue base and their ability to attract new and retain existing businesses.

It is further evident that LED, the ease of doing business and a positive investment climate should be underpinned by specific legislative framework that guides how municipal infrastructure investment should be conducted. Municipal by-laws and regulations can influence investment location by raising the cost of doing business. The domestic policy framework plays a significant role in municipalities' ability to attract and retain business investment. Within this context, it is essential that current policies and regulations be reviewed and adjusted to cut administrative red tape associated with business operations.

In most municipalities, investment expenditure is mostly reserved for roads, bridges and storm water projects, followed by water reservoirs and related spending. From an investment perspective, a concern may be the relatively low share of expenditure reserved for electricity reticulation infrastructure. Although the electricity generation capacity of most municipalities is limited, the reticulation thereof is of interest to commercial longevity.

From an investment point of view, the more stability is evident in a municipality's finances, the more likely it is that investment will follow. Too high levels of dependency on government funding (grants and transfers) because of a poor local revenue base act as push factors, which, in the longer term, cause severe hardship because of lack of economic activity and subsequent job creation. An analysis of the municipal state of finance in an area could be of great importance to locational decisions by investors.

Recommendations for attracting municipal infrastructure investment

Emanating from the data sets (i.e. desktop analysis, SWOT analysis, interviews and a questionnaire), the following recommendations are made to attract infrastructure investment.

The results of the survey confirm that it is imperative to create a conducive investment climate. This should be done by streamlining and ensuring more efficient

internal processes that support and address the needs, concerns and aspirations of businesses. Such processes relate to issues such as tender procedures, the issuing of business permits, payment of rates and taxes, the issuing of construction permits, as well as a stable electricity supply. A dedicated business advisory and support unit should provide a one-stop, specialised turn-key service to new and existing businesses. Such units should also serve as incubation hubs for enterprise development and employment placement programmes in partnership with local businesses.

The SWOT analysis illustrated the need to review and streamline unsuitable and arduous policies, by-laws, and regulations to fast-track business development and to encourage new investment. It is recommended that municipalities continuously conduct a situational analysis (eg. SWOT analysis) of their business environment and design suitable investment and marketing strategies to attract investment and promote local economic activities, such as tourism, underpinned by unique local commodities and attractions. It is also essential that local business risks be mitigated. Certainty about land claims, property rights and longer-term business prospects should be addressed. It is essential that municipalities earmark specific areas (eg. special economic zones) for business development in sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, energy and textile industries.

Municipalities should lobby existing industries, such as mining houses, to jointly fund and support catalytic investment projects in domains such as tourism, agriculture and manufacturing to create alternative economic activities for sustainable economic development. It is also evident that municipalities that succeed in investment usually established partnerships with the private sector, non-profit organisations and civil society organisations.

It is imperative that municipalities address issues related to good corporate governance and focus on aspects such as a service delivery ethos, the prevalence of corruption, poor service delivery, institutional performance, and the appointment of qualified and experienced staff. Poor corporate governance, coupled with political commitment and leadership, can be regarded as key in improving municipal service delivery.

CONCLUSION

This article provided insight into the push and pull factors applicable to attracting and retaining business investment within SA municipalities. The results show that a positive image of the municipality facilitated by good marketing strategies and service delivery excellence is the most significant (75.8%) pull factor, while failing municipal governance structures (85.4%) and the lack of infrastructure maintenance (75.8%) are the most significant push factors. Fortunately, there

are already signs of some successes or so-called “pockets of excellence” that can be used as examples and from which valuable lessons can be learnt. This best practice should also be shared between municipalities in especially developing countries.

Going forward, it is essential that both generic, systemic investment concerns, as well as municipal-specific issues, be analysed and addressed to promote investor confidence. By continuously analysing the push and pull factors influencing investment decisions, municipalities can identify appropriate performance indicators and set targets to track the improvement of municipalities in increasing their pull factor levels. The push factors should be addressed to attract investment and stimulate growth in the local economy. These factors can also be used to populate a Municipal Investment Competitive Index by using evidence-based investment indicators.

The local government sphere in SA is designated to play an essential role in rebuilding local economies as a basis for a more democratic, integrated, and prosperous society. This role can only be fulfilled successfully if municipalities succeed in attracting sufficient business investment.

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Corruption in Healthcare Infrastructure Public–Private Partnerships

A South African Case Study

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ABSTRACT

A key characteristic of corruption in South Africa and on the African continent is the multiplicity of its types. Several sectors, from mining to construction and agriculture to electricity attest to the fluctuating levels and realities of the phenomenon. Because of the disastrous consequences and repercussions associated with corruption, it has become the centre of attention for everyone. This article focuses on research and analysis of corruption in public-private partnerships (PPPs), with specific reference to healthcare infrastructure in South Africa. The opening context is followed by a comprehensive analysis of the legislative and regulatory framework associated with PPPs, namely processes and functions of agreements at the operational levels. Health is globally considered as a basic human right. As such, corruption in this system – especially its infrastructure and maintenance – has a negative impact on the country's population (especially the poor, homeless and the marginalised). This article adopts the qualitative, interpretative empirical framework and is based on an analysis of content comprised of secondary and primary sources. This is supplemented by face-to-face interviews with purposely selected senior health administrators and a political office bearer.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The development of infrastructure has a positive impact on the lives of people at all levels of society. Infrastructure development plays a crucial role in boosting economic and social growth, job creation and business initiatives. A study conducted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2014 in Heathcote 2018), revealed that increasing levels of investment in public infrastructure result in higher outputs in the short term due to an increase in demand, while in the long term, it increases an economy's productive capacity.

Throughout history, Africa has faced major infrastructure weaknesses associated with basic human needs, for example, potable water, electricity, roads and transport (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 2020). Health infrastructure, in most countries including sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa in particular, faces dire shortages of public hospitals and clinics in both rural and urban areas. It has been estimated that the current investment to remedy the infrastructure shortfall on the African continent is approximately US\$100 billion per annum (Tshombe & Molokwane 2016). Infrastructure plays a crucial role in economic and social development, especially in the healthcare sector. However, many infrastructural projects have become terrains of waste, fraud, corrupt collusion, political and/or administrative greed, inefficiency and organisational deficiencies.

The key objectives of this study are rooted in the investigation of corruption in PPPs in South Africa and the resultant negative impact on healthcare infrastructure. In this empirical effort, the relationships between politicians, and administrators with elements of the private sector are identified. Such relations are associated with a wide variety of corrupt acts. This includes interventions by 'mediators', and collusion among key construction and infrastructure companies, politicians, and administrators. Such relationships between state employees and the private sector result in a monopolistic or oligopolistic consortia that dictates infrastructure market prices, conditions, and circumstances. Another aim of the study was to disclose the methods and means corrupt parties use to violate South Africa's anti-corruption legislation as well as its negative repercussions on public health. These violations, which result in revenue losses, include the manipulation of tender processes, 'cover pricing', and the persistent failure of South Africa's many anti-corruption agencies.

In the article, the analysis was based on a firm understanding of the dynamics of organisational weaknesses and gaps in PPPs. Thus, limited attention was paid to issues linked to selected individuals and/or social realities, political and economic power relationships, party factionalism and the alliances/connections between politicians and/or state administrators with mediators and private sector service providers (Szeftel 2000; Southall 2008; Thorlakson 2009;

Masiko-Kambala 2010; Mantzaris & Pillay 2014; Rotberg 2014; RSA, Presidential Health Summit Online source 2018; AfDB 2017). The analysis did not include the complexity and multiple faces and types of corruption. Nor did it investigate the social causes of the phenomenon, which is rooted in a clear understanding of legal, economic, political, psychological, and sociological disciplines and realities (Woods & Mantzaris 2012).

CONTEXTUALISING CORRUPTION AND DEVELOPMENT

The latest confirmed data on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) shows that African governments have made significant efforts to incorporate the SDGs and Agenda 2063 goals into national priorities and development plans (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 2022). Across all African member states, the average score to achieve the SDGs has shown an upward trajectory. However, the African continent is only halfway towards achieving the 2030 SDG targets and goals. A key reason for the slow advancement is the prevalence of corruption at all levels and in most countries (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 2022).

Corruption erodes the very ethos of development and democracy and ‘corruptors’ on the African continent have become involved in bribery, fraud, collusion, unofficial payments, and various criminal offences (Transparency International 2019; Ofusori 2020; Lewis 2020). According to the 2022 Corruption Perception Index published by Transparency International, “Corruption has made our world a more dangerous place. As governments have collectively failed to make progress against it, they fuel the current rise in violence and conflict – and endanger people everywhere. The only way out is for states to do the hard work, rooting out corruption at all levels to ensure governments work for all people, not just an elite few” (Rubio in Transparency International 2022:8). In line with this, research by Sobjak (2008) points to the “disastrous repercussions” corrupt activities have on infrastructure investments in sub-Saharan Africa. Corruption across African countries escalated during the Covid-19 pandemic even in South Africa.

For development to be realised at all levels, government budgets need to be founded on realism, transparency, solid planning, and rigorous implementation. In addition, budgets within all government spheres should be realistic, transparent, and comprehensive. Research by the OECD (2020) showed that expenditure in two out of three countries was within 10% of their budgets, while more than one in seven deviated by at least 15%. However, research by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2015) showed significantly higher levels of budget reliability and enhancement in eight of 10 countries in Eastern and Southern Asia and the Pacific.

DISSECTING HEALTHCARE INFRASTRUCTURE

Empirical research has revealed that infrastructural development could play a key role in Africa's prospective growth and development at all levels. The lack of good governance principles is one of the key impediments of transparent and effective planning and implementation of infrastructure in Africa (Ofusori 2020). This reality has become a significant problem for policymakers and an impediment towards transparent and effective infrastructure implementation in the last decade (United Nations 2017).

Infrastructure development plays a central role in Africa where more than 20% of the population do not have access to safe drinking water or modern transport (African Development Bank (AfDB) Group 2020). In sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 35% of the population have access to electricity. Internationally, it has been accepted that investment in public infrastructure increases short-term output because it generally boosts demand; it also increases an economy's long-term productive capacity at a number of levels. Heathcote (2018) states that an investment spending of 1% in a country's gross domestic product (GDP) increases the output level by approximately 0.4% during the same year and by 1.5% four years after the increase.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN PERSPECTIVE

A PPP is an official contractual agreement between a private entity (in most instances companies) and the state. In the negotiations between the parties, the private entity (primarily in the construction and maintenance industry) agrees to provide a service that is traditionally planned and implemented by a government institution (Rebeiz 2012). The agreement binds both entities to the construction and maintenance of facilities, such as clinics (Ng, Wong & Wong 2013). Through the years, a variety of PPP formalities have been implemented in terms of contractual obligations, rules and regulations that determine the functions, processes, outputs, and outcomes, both globally and in South Africa. These include leases, concession and funding agreements, risk management guidelines, transfer responsibilities, capital investments and shared responsibilities among partners (Gatti 2008; Rebeiz 2012; Kodongo 2013).

A key element of ensuring the success of such initiatives is related to managing risk (eg. financial, environmental, political, business or technical risk). Within this context, the management of corruption as a risk factor is of vital importance (Gatti 2008; Ke, Wang, & Chan 2012; Mahalingam 2011; Byoun, Kim & Yoo 2013). Such risks are prevalent throughout the PPP cycle. Thus, the parties' commitment towards the successful and transparent completion of a specific project

is very significant (Mahalingam 2011; Republic of South Africa (RSA) 2018). A crucial issue in a PPP process, especially in Africa, is the initial negotiation to undertake a specific infrastructural initiative. The planning, designing and initiation of a project is focused on devising an overall strategy. This, in turn, revolves around governance, policy, rules, regulations, and processes that determine the framework of the proposed undertaking (AfDB & New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) 2013; Kodongo 2013).

South Africa has followed 'the World Bank Infrastructure PPP best practice framework' which recommended the establishment of dedicated PPP oversight units within government (National Treasury 2018). The primary responsibility was to create initiatives, for example, best practice structures and roles in relationships. These were based on operational plans, duties and responsibilities and best practice preparation and option project evaluation. The World Bank's best practice framework prescribes that both parties agree on the processes of market engagement and research, project procurement guidelines and potential risk at all levels. Such initiatives could provide security against financial, economic, and social risks (Ahwireng-Obeng & Mokgohlwa 2002; Yescombe 2017).

Supply chain and procurement dynamics play a significant role in the corruption cycle, as these aspects are considered instrumental in project development costs (Gatti 2008). Market risk has also been linked to corrupt practices, especially in developing economies. Market evaluation can easily be replaced with political and administrative corruption – especially in substantial infrastructure projects (Klompjan & Wouters 2002; El-Diraby 2006; World Bank 2020).

SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP LEGISLATION, RULES AND REGULATIONS

This section identifies the legislation, rules, and regulations upon which PPPs are based in South Africa. It also discusses the processes involved in financial and risk management framework processes and its role in successfully completing a project. The section builds on the argument that the success or failure of such infrastructure-based undertakings rely on the attitudes of the public and private sector representatives.

The PPP functions and processes are rooted in financial, legal and risk management frameworks, which determine their success or failure. Human behaviour (both individual and collective), as well as audit, supply chain and procurement and financial control mechanisms determine the prevalence of corruption and the subsequent impact on the nature, outcome, and output of the project in question. In this context, the guidance provided by Treasury Regulation 16 of the Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999 (PFMA) (RSA 1999), as amended,

could be implemented. The Standardised Public-Private Provisions, as stipulated in Section 76(4) of the PFMA, prescribe the processes, functions and regulatory imperatives for the parties involved. As such, it plays an important role in the project's completion.

Health facility services are guided by the Division of Revenue Act 1 of 2005 (RSA 2005). As outlined in Section 13.2 (a) and (b), the Act is structured to connect the Departments of Health, Transport and Public Works. All three departments are legally responsible for the maintenance and development of infrastructure in collaboration with the private sector. Both the PFMA and the Division of Revenue Act 1 of 2005, complement the undertakings of the *Constitution of the RSA 1996* (the Constitution 1996). Section 27(1) of the Constitution, 1996 stipulates that, "Everyone has the right to have access to healthcare services, including reproductive healthcare", while Section 27(2) prescribes that, "The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these rights".

For implementation imperatives, the National Health Act 61 of 2003 is clear on the state's obligation towards the healthcare needs of the country's citizens. The Act calls for a "co-ordinated relationship between private and public health establishments in the delivery of health services" (RSA 2003). Legislation describes the responsibilities and rights of all role-players and stakeholders. Regulations are prescribed, followed by prioritising a national health system that is affordable and based on honesty, accountability, and transparency at all operational levels.

For decades the country has faced healthcare infrastructure problems nationally, provincially, and locally. These challenges were exacerbated by high levels of corruption despite the introduction of ambitious initiatives such as the Health Revitalisation Programme (HRP) (Mantzaris 2014; Mantzaris 2016; Mantzaris & Pillay 2016a; Mantzaris & Pillay 2016b). This reality underscores that the PFMA 1 of 1999, which stipulates the importance, responsibility, accountability, transparency, and risk management, has not been able to guarantee its good intentions. The same can be said of the Municipal Finance Management Act 53 of 2003 (MFMA); and the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000. The Treasury Regulation 16 guidelines under the PFMA outline the checks and balances required by public service organs for budgetary imperatives, state property, payments, and the collection of fees. This includes all aspects of the PPP processes and undertakings.

National Treasury is the final adjudicator of this process, while a PPP 'licence' is not granted before a feasibility study is conducted (National Treasury 2018). The procedural steps of a PPP initiative commence with several rules and state regulations. Here Treasury's guidelines on specific terms of agreements are used to determine whether a feasibility study will be conducted. These are related to strategic and tactical objectives; the plot of land's dimensions and realities; parties' financial commitments; risk management planning and risk allocation to the

partners; and partners' capacity to plan, design and implement the project (World Bank Online source 2004).

The same rigorous process is followed with the procurement procedure. Equity, equal cooperation, cost-effectiveness, and transparency are key elements of the agreement. This is followed by steps relating to supply chain management, for example, bids based on limited risk, price affordability, and operational, technical, and substantial issues (World Bank Online source 2004). A detailed, reliable, and transparent procurement process agreement, which pays attention to details relating to the future project, should be drafted, and signed by the Treasury. The Accounting Officer of the state entity is responsible for the effective management (implementation, assessment, and monitoring) of the agreement. The public official in question represents the state and has to sign a binding agreement (World Bank Online source 2004).

The responsible officials play a vital role in the PPP chain, because various tiers of government utilise a variety of grants designated for provincial or municipal health. These grants include the Provincial Infrastructure Plan; the Hospital Revitalisation Grant; the Provincial Infrastructure Grant (PIG); and the HIV/AIDS Grant. Guided by the Department of Health, the relevant state health leadership uses these conditional or full grants for specific purposes. The use of such grants is determined by the Division of Revenue Act 1 of 2005, as well as the state entity's performance, financial stability, and cash flow throughout its years of operations. The primary objective of the Competition Act 89 of 1998 is to maintain and promote competition in the country, which culminates in competitive pricing and a choice of products. A key clause of the Act relates to the establishment and functions of the Competition Commission. The Competition Commission has had several successes in the past by revealing collusion and corruption in various sectors, including those associated with PPP in the health sector (construction and engineering).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The research methodology for the current research falls within the qualitative paradigm. Qualitative data collection techniques included the analysis of primary and secondary documents, official reports, accredited journal articles, and unstructured interviews with state officials and a politician. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. Version 10 of the NVivo software, a tool to facilitate organising, sharing, and analysing data, was used.

A variety of interpretive and descriptive techniques were used to decode, describe and analyse the existing material on key role-players' functions in PPP, and the associated realities and processes. The use of existing sources was based on the unique roles of administrators and politicians in the healthcare

sector, with specific reference to PPPs. Seven of the selected administrative officials at the Provincial Departments of Health and Public Works and a senior politician agreed to be interviewed when their anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. No private sector or Treasury officials were prepared to cooperate with the researcher.

CORRUPTION IN HEALTHCARE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONUNDRUM

Although PPP undertakings have been considered relatively successful in South Africa, there has been a decline in new project transactions over the last eight years, from an estimated R10.7 billion during 2011–2012, to R5.6 billion in 2019–2020 (National Treasury 2021). In 2019, National Treasury conducted research on regulatory framework applicable to all spheres of government which fall under relevant financial legislation, rules and regulations. It was found that corruption during the PPP process was a key reason for the decline in PPPs (National Treasury 2019). The key reasons for acts of corruption were associated with weaknesses in the feasibility studies, supply chain and procurement, checking, approval of procurement documentation before its acceptance, and scrutiny of bids before a bidder is appointed (National Treasury 2022).

Such reported realities revealed that the excessive acts of corruption in state entities – primarily through collaboration with the private sector and PPPs – resulted in the escalation of costs, often double or three times higher than the original quotations (National Treasury 2022). The potential contribution creates doubt and signifies the urgency to curtail corruption so that electricity, railway services, healthcare facilities, manufacturing, mining, infrastructure construction in communities and port facilities become a reality (Speckman 2018).

According to Bowen, Edwards and Cattell (2012), the construction industry has been at the centre of corrupt practices under the PPP arrangements both nationally and internationally. In South Africa, several developments in the infrastructure sector have revealed extensive corruption at all levels and phases of the PPP cycle (Fombad 2013; Schomaker 2020). Both the primary PPP initiative actors and collaborators were shocked after the existence of “grand infrastructure/construction cartels” became public knowledge nationally. The evidence revealed that the national cartels had operated primarily in the Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal since 1973 (Jardine 2013).

For construction and infrastructure corruption, most sectors, including public health, revealed direct involvement of internationally-based companies such as the Japanese construction company, Hitachi (News24 2015), and collusion between local and transnational companies in infrastructural projects (EWN

2018). The construction of the Medupi power station in Limpopo Province is a prime example of PPP-related mismanagement. Initially, the construction of the Medupi power station was seen as an essential infrastructural project that would benefit all sectors of the economy – including public healthcare. However, the project has since become a prime example of the knock-on effect of PPP-related corruption. A senior provincial politician who was directly involved with the project revealed that, “It was extremely difficult – if not impossible – to mitigate expected corruption risks in such massive tenders because the dialogue between service providers and government was exceedingly difficult for a number of reasons”.

For cost efficiencies, serious problems arose because of the service providers’ capacity, financial considerations, project designs and differences among potential bidders and the state representatives. Interventions by ‘mediators’ and collusion among major construction and infrastructure companies led to notable problems. State authorities had to manage 30 major contractors and over 300 sub-contractors (Personal Interview with Respondent 1, Johannesburg).

Given the democratic government’s commitment to infrastructure development throughout the country, the construction industry became a significant contributor to the economy.

The industry contributed R119 billion, or 3.7% of the country’s GDP in 2013 (Statistics SA 2013). In the second quarter of 2018, the construction industry’s contribution to the GDP increased to R109 million, up from R108 million in the first quarter of 2018 (Trading Economics 2018). The 2017 Quarterly Labour Force Survey reported that, in the last quarter of 2016, the construction industry had spent R420 billion in nominal rand. Statistics South Africa recorded that 1 483 000 people were employed in the construction sector (1 004 000 in the formal and 479 000 in the informal sectors) (Statistics SA 2017a; Statistics SA 2017b). The last figure declined to 1 395 000 as the country faced an economic downturn, which affected the sector negatively and it contracted by 0.8 and 0.5% respectively, by the third quarter of 2017 (Statistics SA 2017a).

Over the years, the PPPs in the infrastructure service delivery have been replete with corruption at all levels of healthcare. “Both in the urban and rural areas, for example, from the building of massive provincial hospitals to rural clinics” (Interviewee 2 Senior Public Servant, Johannesburg). Often members of the existing cartels and provincial or national politicians and/or administrators were involved in irregularities. On occasion, private tenders were conducted, and the results were never made public. In most of these instances, the same company was awarded the tender based on price-fixing agreements with politicians or existing mediators (Interviewee 3 Senior Public Servant; Jardine 2013).

Certain researchers argue that “business collusion that leads to cartels” does not necessarily equate to corruption (Grossman 2004; Dick 2008). However, the

South African infrastructure-based cartel operated for decades and not only in relation to the pre-2010 World Cup corrupt practices, as initially assumed. The cartel in question was also directly involved with “the vast majority of state healthcare infrastructure projects, including hospital buildings and maintenance” (Interviewee 3 Senior Public Servant, Johannesburg).

The comment by Interviewee 3 confirms that collusion is nothing but a “secret, illegal, immoral conspiracy and coordinated cooperation to maximise profits through deceiving, cheating, and stealing from the public, which one of the respondents confessed publicly” (Jardine 2013). He added that, “The cartel members and their co-conspirators were profoundly corrupt and dishonest. They lacked integrity, and directly as well as indirectly involved in fraudulent conduct through bribery, co-optation, or mediation” (Jardine 2013).

Within this context it is debatable whether a “cartel process and output” could be described as “corruptive innovation”, as analysed by Andrew (2008 in Jardine 2013). Andrew (2008 in Jardine 2013) elaborated on the processes of designing and planning based on manipulation, secrecy, price controls, centrally agreed upon and careful implantation, which the author describes as “exact as science”.

In South Africa, the calculated, anti-competitive greed and exceedingly expensive acts of corruption are prevalent in healthcare and other infrastructure, which “cannot be achieved without political acceptance ending in a handshake” (Interviewees 4 and 5, Johannesburg). In line with this, investigative research by the Competition Commission revealed conclusive collusion among the “corrupt construction cartel” which exceeded 300 acts and clear contravention of the Competition Act 89, 1998 (Competition Commission 2011). The Commission only focused on the period before the 2010 World Cup. The Commission implemented Section 49B(1) of the Competition Act 89, 1998, which stipulates collusion and tender bid rigging. The violations of Section 4(1)(b) of the Act were evident from the comparative pricing for all the materials utilised, for example, steel, plastic pipes, concrete, and bricks (Competition Commission 2011). Most of the companies which were involved applied for immunity.

The Commission found that collusion, fixed price agreements, work-sharing, paying of “loser fees for those who were left out voluntarily”, market divisions, profit margins, regional coordination, were discussed and agreed upon at all strategic and operational levels among the cartel members (Mail & Guardian 2013a; Mail & Guardian 2013b). The creation of a monopolistic (or oligopolistic) consortium that dictated prices and infrastructure market conditions and circumstances spread to all levels of healthcare infrastructure delivery. This is evident in both the national and provincial budgets.

The country's Health Department was allocated R21.1 billion for healthcare infrastructure in the 2018 budget. This amount was expected to be spent in designated areas which required infrastructure. It was also expected that budget

allocations focus primarily on provincial health departments, with a targeted R18 billion over the medium term for upgrades, the maintenance and refurbishment of existing healthcare facilities and building new facilities (National Treasury 2018). This process played an instrumental role in creating a consortium which monopolised a niche PPP terrain through corrupt practices. These were undertaken through alliances with politicians, either as mediators or as price fixers. In such cases, the law of supply and demand becomes an empty concept. With PPP, the “P” symbolises the “Public” component, which has been “absorbed into an unholy alliance of the corrupt and the corrupted” (Interviewee 6 Senior Public Servant, Cape Town).

The unanswered questions regarding the violation of key anti-corruption laws during the post-Soccer World Cup period are twofold: First, why did the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) only join the Competition Commission in 2011 to investigate the construction industry following a series of complaints by civil society and citizens about unexplained costs and exorbitant prices of the soccer stadiums? (*Mail & Guardian* 2013b; *Mail & Guardian* 2014). Second, why did the manipulation of tender processes and cover pricing not lead to direct prosecution as outlined in Sections 12 and 13 of the Prevention of Combating of Corrupt Activities Act 12, 2002? (Interviewees 6 and 7; Senior Public Servants, Cape Town).

Section 34 of the Prevention of Combating of Corrupt Activities Act 12, 2002 highlights that, a senior member with authority in a specific company, as identified in the Companies Act 71, 2008, as amended by the Companies Amendment Act of 2011, is obliged to report corrupt or suspected corrupt activities over R100 000 to the South African Police Service. The Act stipulates that, if this is not done, a criminal offence has taken place and can lead to a fine or up to 10 years in prison.

The state’s ‘leniency’ regarding corruption was prevalent in large-scale infrastructure PPP projects such as the Coega harbour project in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth) and the Gautrain Project in Gauteng. “In fact, the only difference between such acts have been apologetic affidavits by the corrupt infrastructure service providers whose leadership provided the details of the processes, joint and separate functions, fake tender bids and ‘loser fees’” (Interviewees 1 and 3).

Questions were raised about the combined R1.5 billion in administrative penalties paid by the corrupt parties (*Mail & Guardian* 2013a), as well as why further legal steps were not taken to expose overcharging in the construction of hospitals (*Mail & Guardian* 2013b; *Mail & Guardian* 2013c; KwaZulu-Natal Health Department 2020; National Department of Health 2021). While the companies admitted guilt, they avoided more stringent penalties because the Competition Commission and the other anti-corruption agencies believed that further investigations would be “extremely expensive and a waste of time” (Interviewees 1 and 4).

Throughout the years, PPPs consisting of cartels, politicians and mediators have by-passed legislation, rules, and state regulations, including the Prevention of Combating of Corrupt Activities Act, 2002. The reality is that corruption is so widespread that if all implicated construction companies were blacklisted, only a handful could complete the massive infrastructure projects (Interviewee 5).

The regions with the most prevalent corruption, especially in healthcare infrastructure, formed part of apartheid's 'homelands' system. After 1994, these provinces faced severe infrastructure challenges relating to healthcare. For example, in the Eastern Cape homelands of Transkei and Ciskei, hospital infrastructural backlogs were immense. The former homelands only had small mission hospitals, which meant that this historical imbalance had to be rectified immediately (New Humanitarian 2015). However, as opposed to infrastructure development, health budgets were utilised for among other things the provision of electricity generators, sewerage, and water purification. Within a few years a "parasitic political elite" in the Health Department stole over R800 million in 18 months (Naidoo 2013). Despite the direct involvement of the Special Investigations Unit, corrupt activities continued. Due to these corrupt acts, the healthcare infrastructure in the province and the entire system collapsed (Bateman 2011, 2012, 2013; Eastern Cape Health Crisis Action Coalition 2013).

There are certain realities related to PPP and infrastructure, including in healthcare. The empirical findings related to good governance and global corruption highlighted several elements prevalent on the African continent, in general, and southern Africa, in particular. Most of the findings are either directly or indirectly related to organisational functions and legal processes as the foundation for good governance and the fight against corruption. Within this context, corruption includes the violation of rules, regulations, and existing legislation by either the state or the private sector service providers. The prevalence of corruption can also be ascribed to bureaucratic hurdles, inefficiencies by state institutions and a lack of institutional capacity within the public service to manage PPP processes. When role-players withhold crucial information, it leads to a lack of confidentiality and procedural weaknesses that were not addressed in the initial feasibility study.

Weaknesses in the cost-to-benefit analysis processes have a negative impact on the subsequent planning, implementation, assessment, and evaluation phases. The lack of a thorough investigation of existing and future risks in the public sector can be linked to fundamental shortcomings in the supply chain process, procurement possibilities, roll-out procedures and existing and future support resources. Yet another foothold for corruption is agreements that fail to specify the allocation of risk between the PPP partners and risk mitigation strategies and measures (Perkins, Fedderke & Luiz 2005; Mitchell 2007; World Bank Online source 2007; Roodt 2008; Reside 2009; World Bank 2009; World Economic Forum 2013; AfDB 2017; RSA Presidential Health Summit Online source 2018).

A widely acknowledged way forward is the National Development Plan's efforts to alleviate poverty and unemployment which promises sustainable development over the next decades (RSA 2013). Jardine (2013) highlights that infrastructure development in the healthcare sector plays a key role in national development. This was associated with an immediate increase of the gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) to 30% over a three-year period for infrastructural development and hospitals. This was supplemented by the 18 Strategic Integrated Projects of the Presidential Infrastructure Coordination Commission. The estimated infrastructural cost reached over R4 trillion (Jardine 2013). Given the complexities of the state capture, it would be difficult to calculate the outcomes of the massive infrastructure budgetary costs and its eventual destination.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the developed and developing world (including the African continent and South Africa), infrastructure PPPs can play a crucial role in service delivery. PPP-related realities and experiences, of which several were highlighted in this article, point to the need to adopt radical new directions and dimensions. Government should focus on streamlining anti-corruption entities and organisations to ensure the investigation and prosecution of corrupt individuals from all sectors. These checks and balances will help convince honest, accountable private sector partners of the state's political will to fight corruption by enhancing all legislative and regulatory processes (including operational functions and processes). To succeed, legislative and regulatory processes should be supported through integrity, accountability, transparency and institutional capacity.

From an empirical perspective, South Africa, Rwanda, Kenya, Angola, and Botswana have examples of best and worst policy planning and implementation practices at all layers of government. To counter poor policy planning and implementation practices, countries require a well-researched, debated and agreed upon infrastructure priority masterplan. This needs to be communicated on time to all stakeholders and role-players, including potential private sector partners. Such an initiative that is supported by social and economic partners would help boost investor confidence. Possibilities of well-built further alliances and partnerships would be strengthened after an agreement on how to best use existing resources, sectoral and country alliances, and direct negotiations with multilaterals funding agencies internationally and/or coordinated through the African Union.

The most important and urgent policy measures relate to planning and implementation phases, especially in the case of South Africa. The first step should be the introduction of an Anti-Corruption Council. The Council's priorities should include consulting with the existing anti-corruption agencies, the country's

Cabinet within the national and provincial spheres, municipalities, private sector representatives and sections of civil society. This consultation should serve as building blocks of the new, permanent entity. One of the most fundamental duties and responsibilities of such an entity would be to scrutinise the real conditions, strengths, and weaknesses of all anti-corruption agencies in the country and future restructuring. The future of Africa and South Africa can only be built on these principled policy foundations to fight corruption.

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Reconfiguring Local Economic Development Strategies

The Case of JB Marks Local Municipality

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ABSTRACT

The national local economic development (LED) strategic framework emerged in the post-1994 era, mandating local, district and metropolitan municipalities to meet socio-economic growth targets. This includes support for small business development, entrepreneurship, job creation and poverty alleviation. For this municipalities have to design comprehensive LED strategies to act as an overarching framework and catalyst for LED initiatives. However, especially local municipalities, such as the JB Marks Local Municipality (JBMLM), struggle to design appropriate strategies to realise LED targets. The purpose of this article is to report on findings of an empirical investigation conducted to probe the effectiveness of the current LED strategy of JBMLM with the purpose of designing a reconfigured LED strategy.

By following a qualitative case study research design, data, method and source triangulation were used to probe the nature, scope, content and effectiveness of the existing LED strategy of JBMLM. Data collection was done through semi-structured interviews with purposively sampled officials and stakeholder groups. The findings of this study revealed that implementing the existing LED strategy is problematic mainly because of poor coordination, misalignment and limited cooperation and involvement of key stakeholders. The proposed model to reconfigure the existing LED strategy is fundamental to effect positive socio-economic changes that will improve the quality of life of local communities.

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment and large-scale poverty are worldwide realities that impact communities, government policy and strategies, and the economy of a country in general (EconomyWatch 2021:1). The global scholarly discourse regarding unemployment and poverty suggests that, compared to developed countries, developing countries such as South Africa are more severely affected by escalating levels of unemployment, chronic poverty and inequality which partly originates from past policies (Vaquez-Barquero 2011:509; World Economic Prospects 2021:9). South Africa experiences rising levels of unemployment, currently estimated at 34% (StatsSA 2022). It is evident that existing government policies and strategies for job creation and economic growth do not yield the desired results (Beukes *et al.* 2016:1; National Treasury 2021:9). In response, LED recently moved to the forefront of the political agenda of the South African government. Since 1994, the government has established a comprehensive statutory and regulatory framework to promote socio-economic development in general and to enhance the design and implementation of LED strategies in local government in particular. The LED strategy is regarded as a targeted development intervention to address challenges related to unemployment, poverty and inequality in local areas by stimulating economic activity. However, the successful design and implementation of such strategies are constrained by multiple factors.

This article reports on findings of an empirical investigation into the nature, scope and effectiveness of the current LED strategy of JBMLM with the purpose of proposing a reconfigured LED strategy. A qualitative case study research design was followed and data collection was done through semi-structured interviews with purposively sampled officials and stakeholder groupings. A model is proposed to reconfigure the existing LED strategy, making it more suitable and appropriate for promoting broad-based socio-economic development.

LED IN PERSPECTIVE

LED has become a popular development intervention, especially in developing countries. Literature generally highlights that LED is regarded as an integrated strategy to address challenges surrounding high levels of unemployment and poverty by promoting economic development in local areas (Cunningham and Meyer-Stamer 2005:4; Maxegwana, Theron and Draai 2015:4; Strydom 2016:73). Additionally, LED is described as a strategic plan with short-, medium- and long-term objectives and actions which define what is to be achieved as far as development is concerned (Van der Waldt 2018:696). LED provides “an agenda to promote and develop a local community’s economic, physical, social

and environmental strengths by addressing both challenges and opportunities” (Nthekelele 2014:153). This agenda is congruent with the constitutional mandate for developmental local government in South Africa as well as various other legislative obligations for local, district and metropolitan municipalities in the country. Section 152 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*, stipulates that developmental local government means that municipalities take up an important role in the economic and social development of a community. Section 153 of the Constitution highlights that municipalities need to promote social and economic development of the community including participating in national and provincial programmes.

The National Development Plan (NDP): Vision 2030 was designed in 2011 as the country’s strategic framework for addressing development goals and growth objectives to achieve a targeted growth trajectory (Go *et al.* 2013:6). The goals specified in the NDP include economic development targets aimed at poverty alleviation, improved living standards and job creation (National Planning Commission 2011:29). The South African government also introduced the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in 2003 as a nationwide programme aimed at infrastructure development, by utilising unemployed workers. Through the EPWP, the unemployed acquire the necessary skills to be absorbed in the labour market (Philips 2004:4). Further initiatives for socio-economic development planning include the Medium-Term Strategic Framework and the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework. Both frameworks serve as overarching strategic agendas aimed at proper expenditure alignment and development coordination between the national, provincial and local spheres of government (Bekink 2006:104; National Treasury 2012:6).

A significant development in South Africa’s developmental policy framework took place when the system of integrated development plans (IDPs) was introduced in 1998 (Van der Walldt 2016:50). IDPs are intended to incorporate local government in the national development framework (Koma 2013:128; Tlokwe Local Municipality 2017:79). The IDP of municipalities aligns local growth, development priorities and realities with the provincial growth and development strategies (Levin 2009:960). Through the IDP, strategies are integrated, coordinated and linked to natural, financial, human and physical resources (Tlokwe Local Municipality 2017:15). For this it is mandatory for municipalities to design spatial development frameworks (SDFs) as a core component of their IDPs. The SDF pinpoints growth areas in municipal areas by identifying strategic portions of land for development and sets parameters for an efficient and effective land use management system (Mashamba 2008:425).

During 2005–2014 South Africa designed various local development strategies, plans and guidelines. LED is regarded as a critical contribution to the success of government enhancing the national economy for the benefit of all

individuals (Trousdale 2005:4). Through the aligning of national spatial development perspectives (NSDP), provincial growth and development strategies (PGDs) and district and metro IDPs, government has adopted an inclusive approach to developing and supporting municipalities. Hofisi (2014:127) and Pretorius and Blaauw (2008:156–157) maintain that this inclusive approach brought about a locally-driven or bottom-up approach for development. This approach is mainly characterised by inclusiveness and active participation from communities and stakeholders in the development process (Tomaney *et al.* 2011:620). This inclusive approach to development, according to Cunningham and Meyer-Stamer (2005:4) and Maxegwana, Theron and Draai (2015:4), is vital in enhancing development, economic growth and job creation in communities.

LED is generally aimed at building the economic capacity of a specific locality to improve its economic future and quality of life for all (Nkwinika and Munzhedzi 2016:76). It can be regarded as a cross-cutting, participatory process involving the private and public sector within a defined local area (Trousdale 2005:29; Van der Waldt 2016:50). An LED strategy is also perceived as a key municipal “driver” to facilitate growth and to promote social and economic development (Scheepers and Monchusi 2002:82). Swinburn and Yatta (2006:5) point to generally accepted global principles of LED, namely that it should:

- use strategic planning;
- have a territorial approach focused on a specific geographical area;
- be locally owned, designed and delivered;
- be partnership-based;
- integrate government actions;
- create an enabling local business environment; and
- integrate interventions across multiple sectors.

These principles highlight that an LED strategy should be guided by set parameters in aiding municipalities to comprehend its context and applications in communities. In addition to these principles, it is evident that various success factors should be in place in municipalities to facilitate the design and implementation of LED strategies. These success factors, according to Lawrence (2009:21) and Rogerson (2013:640), include the following:

- a comprehensive and integrated strategy for LED;
- institutional capacity and skills to design and execute LED strategies;
- access to local knowledge and resources;
- inclusiveness and productive partnerships with various stakeholders; and
- effective and committed leadership.

Patterson (2008:3) emphasises the significance of a comprehensive, holistic, integrated strategy for LED, inclusive of poverty alleviation and job creation

strategies. Existing LED strategies that are not integrative should, be reconfigured. Such a reconfigured LED strategy should accommodate various essential directives and core dimensions as revealed by international experience (Lawrence 2009; Rogerson 2013). LED strategies in essence form part of a “comprehensive” poverty alleviation plan, addressing the socio-economic needs of an area. A comprehensive LED strategy should enhance the economic capacity of an area, promoting the quality of life of people and improving their economic outlook (Wekwete 2014:9).

JB MARKS LOCAL MUNICIPALITY AS CASE STUDY

The JBMLM was established by the amalgamation of Ventersdorp Local Municipality and Tlokwe City Council Local Municipality on 3 August 2016. During the transition period, the municipality was known as “NW405”. It is located in the North-West province within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality, formerly known as the Southern District area. The municipality covers the following areas: Mohadin, Ikageng, Promosa, Potchefstroom Town, Matlwang, Leliepan/Baitshoke, Haaskraal, Turfleij, Vyfhoek, Mooibank, Machavie, Miederpark, Kopjeskraal, Wilgeboom, Lindequesdrift, Rooipoortjie, Venterskroon, Buffelshoek, Vredefort Dome and Ventersdorp. The JBMLM is the largest of three municipalities in the district, making up almost half of the geographical area of the district (NW405 Municipality 2017:46). JBMLM is a Category B municipality, as it shares municipal executive and legislative authority with a Category C (i.e. district) municipality within whose area it falls, according to Section 155(1) of the Constitution, 1996.

The former Tlokwe City Council (TCC) appointed PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2011 to assist with planning, preparing and realising the LED. The entire process involved capacity building and empowering municipal staff to ensure stakeholder ownership and commitment in taking the strategy forward. The main goal of the strategy was to guide the municipality in identifying and prioritising strategic projects for investigation and implementation. The intended outcome was to enhance economic opportunities that would create jobs and uplift the livelihoods of the community. The stakeholders involved in the LED strategy included national and provincial government, business, educational institutions, civil society and community-based organisations (Tlokwe City Council LED Strategy 2013:13–21). In relation to the study, there is a need for a more focused policy when dealing with the issue of unemployment, increasing more employment opportunities and development.

According to the Tlokwe Local Municipality (2017:84), the IDP comprises developmental objectives that can be defined as statements of intent. Equally

important, the municipality aims to achieve its objectives in the mid-term through identifying priority issues that contribute towards the realisation of the mission at hand. The municipality's objectives in connection to NDP 2030 objectives are aimed at the elimination of poverty, reduction of inequality, increasing economic growth and developing the environment through promoting job creation (Tlokwe Local Municipality 2015:49). The IDP and LED are policies that aim to bring about economic change in the municipality concerning employment opportunities and socio-economic development.

Despite the main aims of LED, challenges such as unemployment, limited stakeholder involvement and poor business support continue to plague JBMLM. It also appears that the lack of a targeted approach results in failures of LED projects. In addition, Mumba (2016:98–100) highlights the following institutional challenges:

- failure of most projects due to mismanagement and lack of collaboration;
- lack of prioritisation of funds for socio-economic development projects;
- lack of appropriate financial, human and infrastructural resources required for the successful implementation of the LED strategy;
- lack of prioritisation and recognition within the municipality regarding the important part LED plays to achieve its developmental objectives; and
- general absence of political stability due to the frequent changes occurring within political offices.

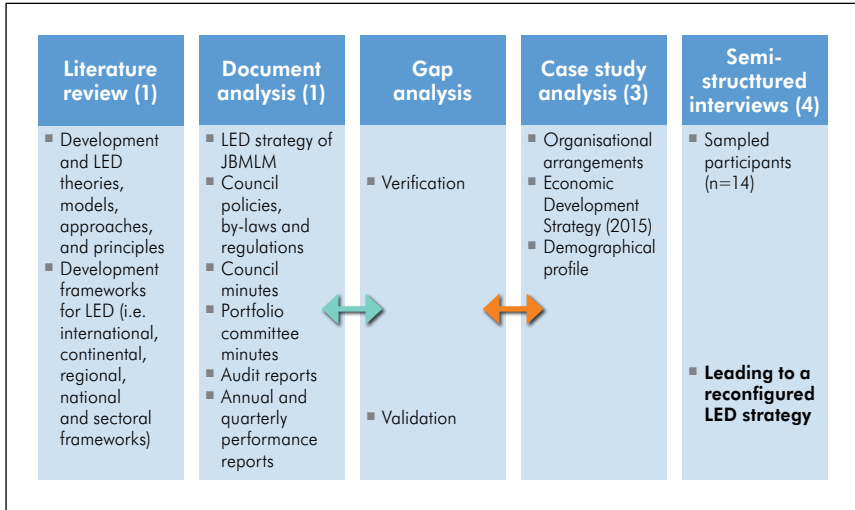
Likewise, Koma (2013:41) is of the opinion that regardless of LED being seen as the key mechanism to address socio-economic development challenges in municipal areas, it is not being adequately implemented due to a range of municipal challenges. The lack of cooperation, coordination and alignment of LED initiatives between adjacent municipalities is a major obstacle to address socio-economic development problems in a region.

An analysis of the existing LED strategy of the JBMLM revealed that a coordinated, longer-term, prioritised approach is generally absent. Furthermore, the existing LED strategy is not based on systematic, scientific, thorough analyses of the community. It is, for example, evident that the existing LED strategy does not adequately make provision for the disparities between rural and urban settlement within the municipal area. Reconfiguring the LED strategy is essential to improve and find a more efficient way to meet the needs of specific communities in the municipal area.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative case study design was followed to probe the nature, scope and content of the existing LED strategy of JBMLM and to pinpoint key challenges associated

Figure 1: Research design: triangulation of data sets



Source: (Researchers' own construction)

with its implementation. The principles of data, method and source triangulation were applied to ensure that thick descriptions and rich data pertaining to the phenomenon under investigation were obtained, verified and validated. A GAP analysis was used to determine discrepancies between the literature review (data set 1), document analysis (data set 2) and current realities (case study, data set 3) and interviews (data set 4). The overall design of the study is depicted in Figure 1.

Data was collected by means of a robust literature review (i.e. LED concepts, theory, approaches, models, development frameworks), document analysis (i.e. official LED strategy of JBMLM, council documents, the IDP, audit reports, portfolio committee minutes, and annual and quarterly performance reports) as well as semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain information pertaining to the design, implementation and challenges of the existing LED strategy of the municipality. Input was obtained regarding participants' perception of the relative successes of the LED in creating job opportunities and addressing poverty in the municipal area. An interview schedule containing both closed and open-ended questions was formulated and piloted with four participants.

Non-probability sampling in the form of purposive sampling was used. Table 1 outlines the target population and sample size.

The research ethics committee (BaSSREC) of the North-West University issued an ethical clearance certificate (Ref. NWU-00295-18-A7) to conduct the research. Permission was also obtained from the main gatekeeper, namely the Office of the Municipal Manager.

Table 1: Target population and sample size

Sampled participants (units of analysis)	Number of participants
Representative of the private sector (senior manager)	1
Representative of small and medium enterprises in the JBMLM area	1
Senior manager: Department of Economic Development	1
Senior official: Department of Community Services	2
Manager and senior official from the Department of Public Safety and Sports, Arts and Culture	2
Project manager of LED-related project task teams	4
Ward councillor (serving on portfolio committees associated with the LED functions)	2
Representative of community-based and non-governmental organisations involved in job creation, poverty alleviation and economic development initiatives	1
Total sample size (n=14)	14

Thematic analysis with the use of Atlas.ti software (Version 9) aided the categorisation of data collected by making use of codes and themes. The coding of input per thematic domain was done to formulate policy and strategic interventions for the reconfiguration of the existing LED strategy.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RESULTS

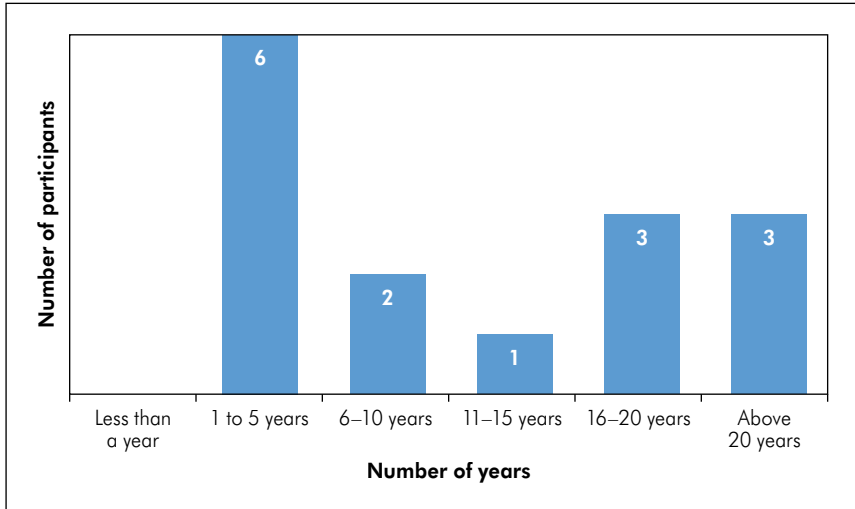
The interview schedule was divided into two sections: Section A on biographical profiles and Section B dealing with LED-related matters. Section B was divided into a number of key cross-cutting themes related to the phenomenon under investigation. Results pertaining to both sections and themes are presented below.

Section A: Biographical profile

Years of experience in current position

Graph 1 illustrates the number of participants and their years of experience in the current job position. This question was important to ascertain whether participants have adequate experience to provide informed input (i.e. rich data) regarding the LED function and strategy.

Graph 1: Participants' experience in LED-related issues



Source: (Researchers' own construction)

It is evident that the majority of participants had adequate experience to contribute meaningfully to the investigation.

Section B: The status of JBMLM's LED strategy: A thematic analysis

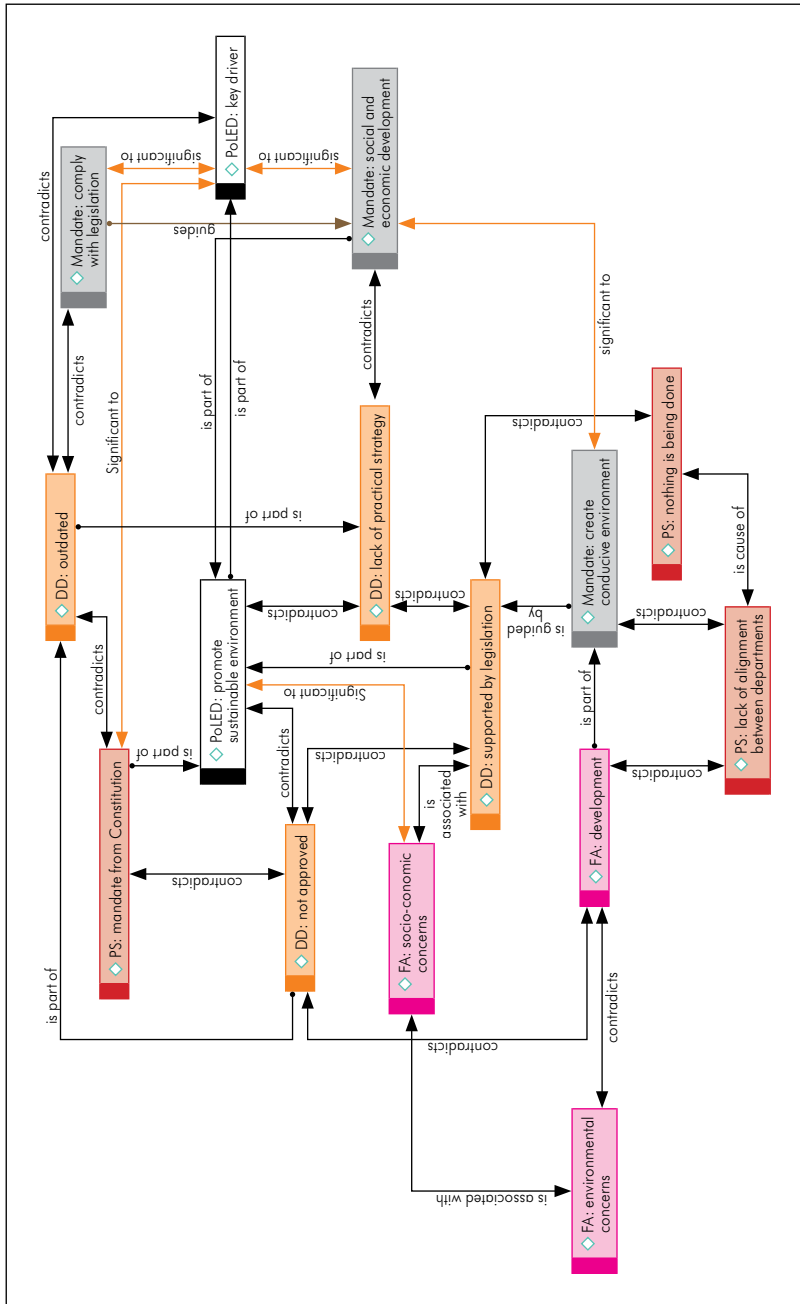
Theme 1: The status of a strategic LED orientation

Theme 1 was aimed at ascertaining the status of a strategic orientation as far as the LED strategy in the municipality is concerned. The theme comprised five questions (B1, B3, B4, B5 and B6). The prefixes within the nodes are the following: B1 mandate, B3 policy structure (referred to as PS), B4 purpose of LED (referred to as PoLED), B5 detailed and documented (referred to as DD) and lastly, B6 focus area (referred to as FA). The first four questions, B1, B3, B4 and B5 address the relevance of the LED strategy at JBMLM, while question B6 is directed towards municipal officials within different departments in assessing their knowledge on the function of the LED strategy. Figure 2 depicts the prefix and nodes, as derived from Atlas.ti coding of responses.

Each node depicted above has a prefix, code and question attached, as follows:

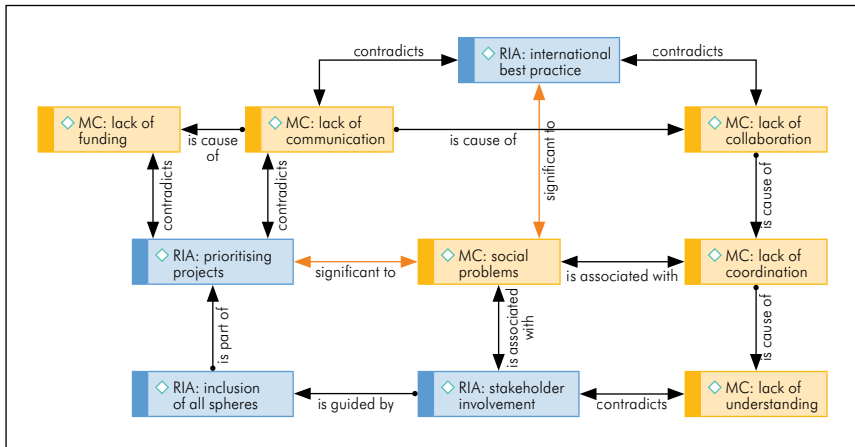
- B1 mandate: comply with legislation, mandate: social and economic development, mandate: create a conducive environment.
- B3 PS: nothing is being done, PS: mandate from constitution, PS: lack of alignment between departments.

Figure 2: The LED strategy at JBMLM



Source: (Researchers' own construction based on Atlas.ti—Version 9)

Figure 3: Responses pertaining to the level of integration of the LED strategy



Source: (Researcher's own construction based on Atlas.ti-Version 9)

- B4 PoLED: promote sustainable environment, PoLED and acts as a vehicle in guiding a municipality.
- B5 DD: not approved, DD: outdated, DD: supported by legislation and DD: lack of a practical strategy.
- B6 FA: socio-economic concerns.

These prefixes and codes were used to assess the LED strategy at JBMLM with specific reference to its level of integration. Figure 4 illustrates opinions regarding the integration of the existing LED strategy at JBMLM.

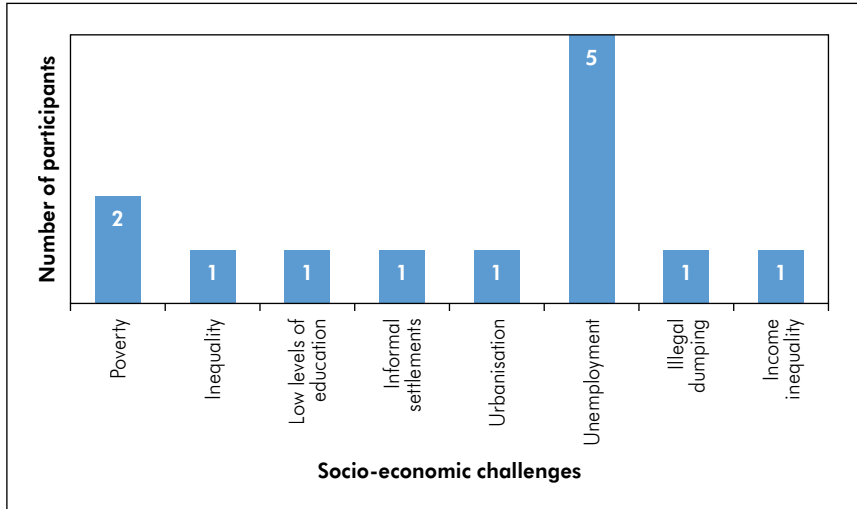
The results revealed that the lack of alignment and coordination between departments was considered to be the most significant stumbling block hampering the successful design and implementation of the LED strategy. Poor alignment and limited coordination generally result in municipal dysfunctionality and fruitless, wasteful expenditure. This matter was confirmed by scholars such as Trousdale (2005:29) and Malefane (2013:234), who reason that LED in a municipality is a cross-cutting function which demands an inclusive, coordinated process involving multiple actors.

Theme 2: Barriers to socio-economic development in the municipality

As shown in Graph 2, a number of key barriers to socio-economic development were highlighted by participants. The most significant barriers are listed below based on the frequency response thereof.

- Unemployment (5)
- High levels of poverty (2)

Graph 2: Main barriers to socio-economic development



Source: (Researchers' own construction)

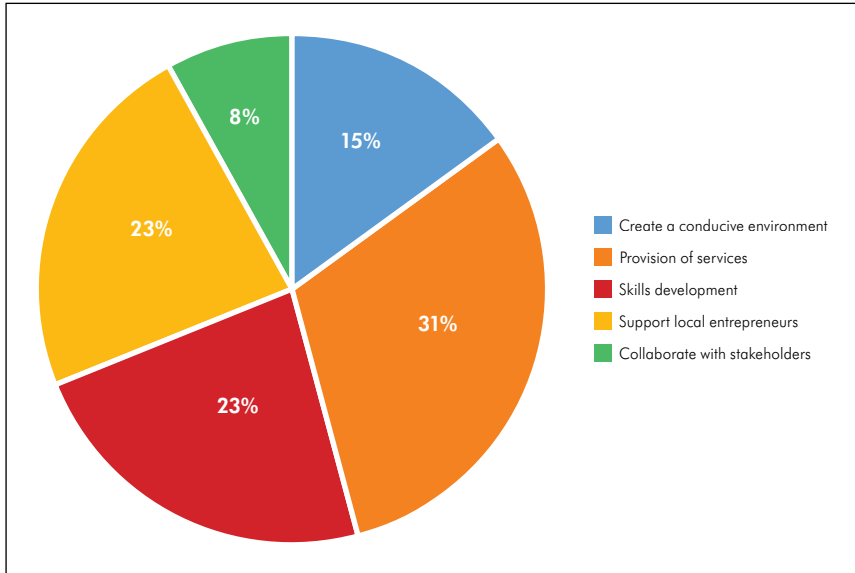
- Social inequality (1) and income inequality (1)
- Low levels of education and skills (1)
- Rapid urbanisation leading to poor spatial planning (1) and unplanned informal settlement (1)
- Illegal dumping hampering the development of areas earmarked for business development (1)

In follow-up questions pertaining to addressing the barriers identified, Participant Three highlighted the need for additional funding to arrange workshops with community members regarding the importance of LED and to obtain their commitment to identify, prioritise and successfully implement LED projects. In addition, Participant Six accentuated the importance of promoting an entrepreneurial climate and culture within the municipality and within community wards.

Theme 3: Responsibility of JBMLM in the LED function

Participants were probed on “what is the responsibility of municipality as far as general local economic development, job creation, poverty alleviation and unemployment are concerned?” From the responses received (Figure 6), four participants (31%) indicated that the responsibility of the municipality is to provide services within communities. Three participants (23%) were of the view that skills development is vital, whereas another three participants (23%) highlighted the need to support local entrepreneurs. Two participants (15%) mentioned the need for creating a

Graph 3: Responsibility of JBMLM in the LED function



Source: (Researchers' own construction)

beneficial environment and one participant (8%) suggested better collaboration with key stakeholders, inclusive of local businesses and community-based organisations.

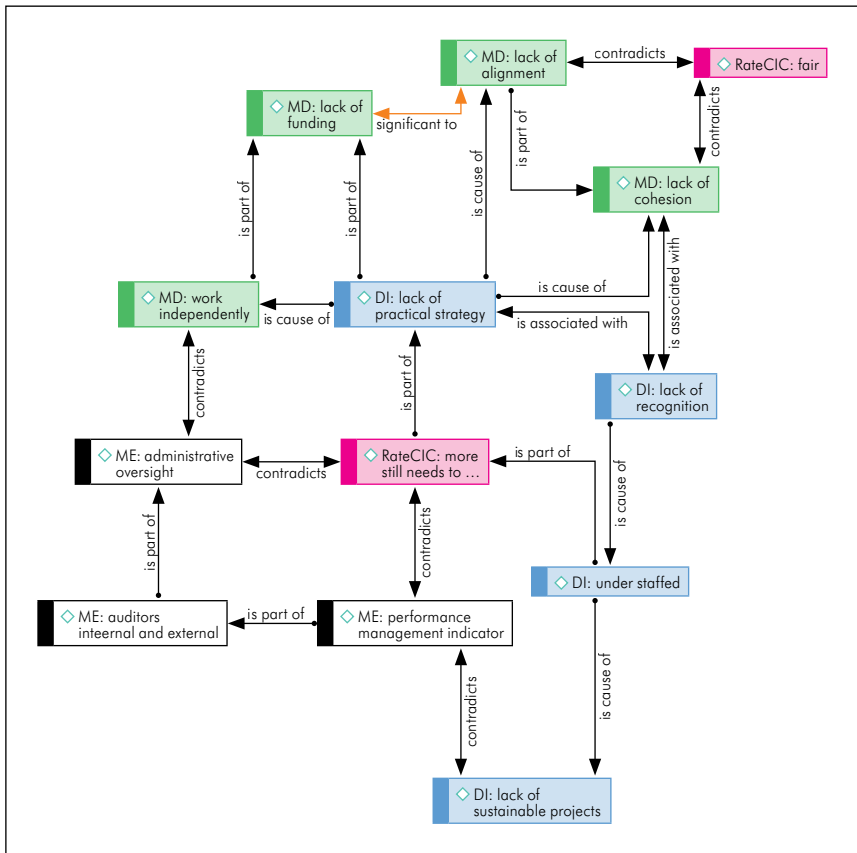
Inasmuch as participants are aware of the responsibility of municipalities, unemployment, poverty and inequality continue to affect JBMLM. In these responses, participants confirmed the need to create a favourable economic environment supported by an integrative LED strategy. They also accentuated the responsibility of the municipality to engage key stakeholders.

In a follow-up question about key stakeholders that should be involved, participants had differing views. The majority of participants acknowledged that the "community" must be involved, but could not indicate who exactly in the community should be engaged. The participants could also not clearly specify in what form and how often these stakeholders should be engaged. It is evident that the reconfigured LED strategy should make provision for stakeholder profiling and analysis, their contact details, their information needs and the mechanisms and frequency of engagements. Participants Five, Nine and Ten confirmed that there is a general lack of knowledge regarding the significance of stakeholder involvement and that it negatively affects the design and implementation of the LED strategy. This finding contradicts the importance of a bottom-up approach regarding LED strategies as confirmed by development literature (Hofisi 2014; Patterson 2008; Rogerson 2013; Wekwete 2014).

Theme 4: Performance of the LED strategy

The LED function at JBMLM is understood within the parameters of the entire constitutional dispensation that emerged in 1994. Consequentially, statutory and regulatory frameworks serve as performance parameters to gauge the extent to which JBMLM adheres to its LED obligations. With this contextual perspective in mind, theme 4 was informed by questions B9, B10 and C3 aimed at ascertaining whether the current LED strategy at JBMLM is effective and efficient for job creation and economic growth. Figure 7 comprises prefixes and codes according to the responses obtained. The meaning of these prefixes are as follows: B9: [MD] refers to municipal departments; [RateCIC] refers to rate coordination, integration and communication; B10 [ME] refers to monitoring and evaluation and, lastly, C3: [DI] refers to design and implementation.

Figure 4: Responses pertaining to LED strategy performance



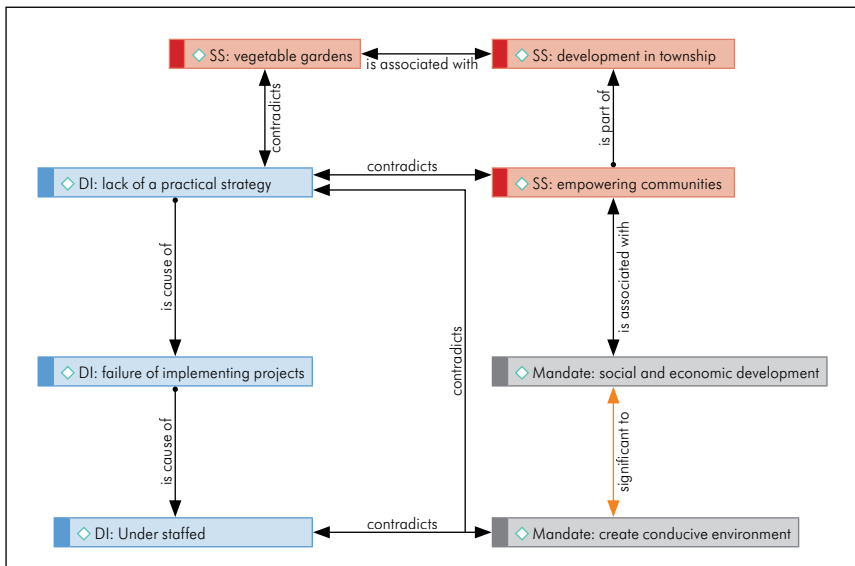
The majority of participants (64.2%) rated the performance of the existing LED strategy as either “Low” or “Poor”. The main reasons cited for the relatively poor performance include the following:

- the lack of communication, cohesion, coordination and alignment between municipal departments, entities and agencies;
- the absence of performance monitoring mechanisms and continuous evaluation of progress made, inclusive of limited political oversight;
- the lack of stakeholder and community involvement in the design of the LED strategy;
- the design of the LED strategy not conforming to best practice, such as a clear development vision supported by strategic objectives and performance targets; and
- no clear implementation guidelines, such as roles and responsibilities, reporting arrangements, resource allocation and funding for LED projects.

Theme 5: Factors critical for the success of LED

The identification of factors critical for the success of LED is essential since the LED strategy serves as a sustainable development instrument aimed at boosting local economies by tackling issues related to poverty, inequality and unemployment.

Figure 5: Critical success factors



Source: (Researchers’ own construction using Atlas.ti)

This theme consisted of questions B4, B12 and C1. Again, this theme has prefixes and codes, depicted in Figure 5. All these prefixes comprise codes based on responses to these questions.

The following critical success factors were highlighted:

- [Mandate]: Clear social and economic development objectives, strategies and programmes
- [Mandate]: The establishment of a conducive environment and climate for local investment, economic prosperity and job creation
- [SS]: The establishment of vegetable gardens for sustainable economic activities (eg. job creation and poverty alleviation through food production)
- [SS]: Targeted development in informal settlements aimed at empowering communities
- [DI]: A practical LED strategy
- [DI]: The successful design and execution of LED projects
- [DI]: Adequately skilled staff to drive the LED function.

Based on the input provided by participants in each theme a gap analysis (see Figure 1) was undertaken to ascertain key areas which require reconfiguration to make it more suitable and effective for unique local economic conditions within the municipality. The gap analysis led to the design of a proposed model to reconfigure the existing LED strategy of JBMLM. Although a case study design was followed, this model holds universal, generic application value for all local municipalities in the country.

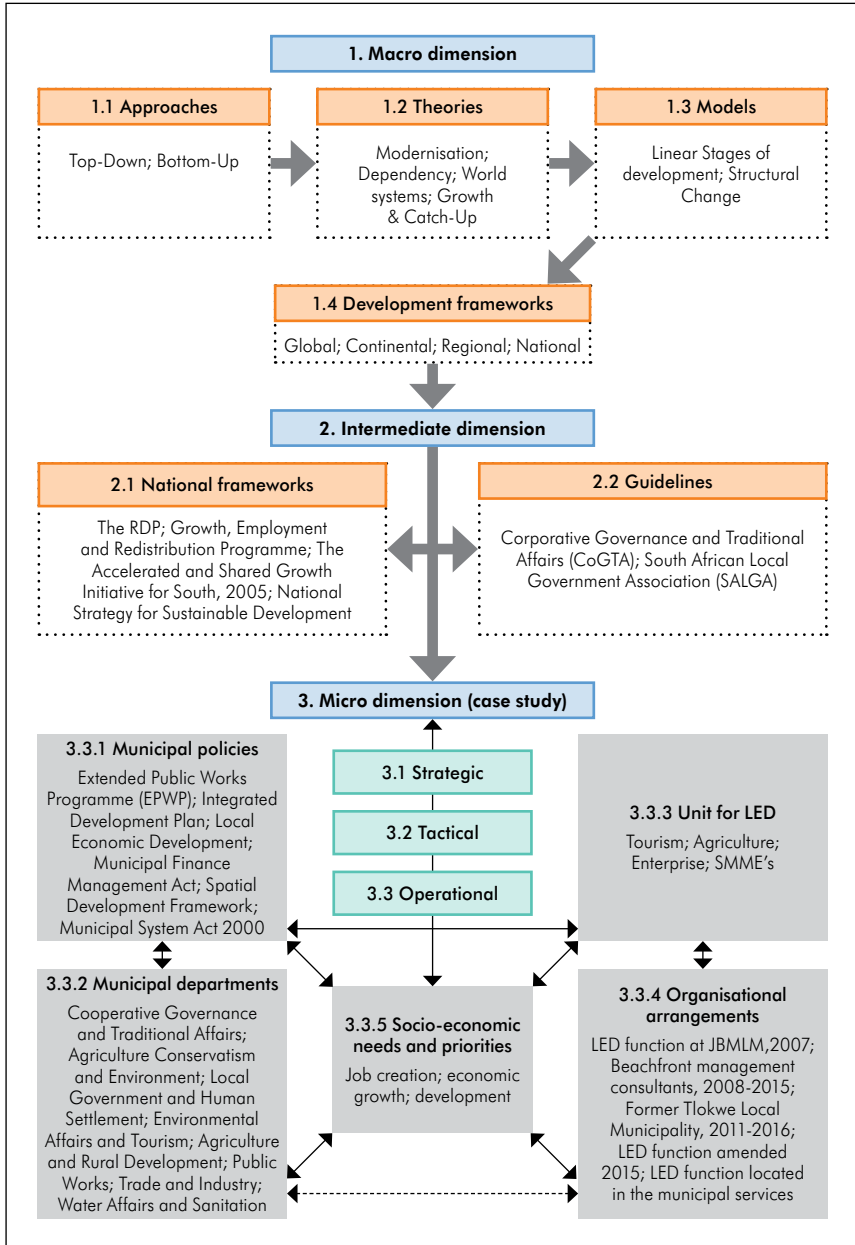
RECOMMENDATIONS: A MODEL TO RECONFIGURE LED STRATEGIES

The proposed model for a reconfigured LED strategy was the outcome of data triangulation of the four data sets (see Figure 1). The reconfiguration model, as reflected in Figure 6, comprises design dimensions and variables, as well as practical steps that serve as strategic adjustment interventions.

Figure 6 illustrates a broad process map of the entire LED reconfiguration process and comprises three dimensions that contain elements uncovered in the literature survey: macro, intermediate and micro. Each dimension has a key component with sub-elements applicable and of significance to the LED process in such a way that it contributes to an adjusted LED strategy.

In the macro dimension (1), there are four elements: LED approaches, theories, models and development frameworks with sub-elements. The second element (1.2) comprises theoretical perspectives. The study utilised the key principles of

Figure 6: The LED reconfiguration model: Key dimensions



Source: (Researchers' own construction)

modernisation, dependency, world systems, growth and catch-up, and globalisation theory to establish criteria for the assessment of LED strategies.

The macro dimension is connected to the intermediate dimension (illustrated by an arrow). The intermediate dimension (2) is sub-divided into two parts, namely national frameworks (2.1) and guidelines (2.2), which emphasise the responsibility of municipalities and the need for harmony and alignment. The interdependent relationship between national frameworks (eg. legislation) and guidelines is in turn aligned with the micro dimension (3) comprising three aspects: the strategic, tactical and operational. The micro dimension is divided into five sub-elements: municipal council policies, municipal departments, units of LED, organisational arrangements, and socio-economic needs and priorities.

The micro dimension (3) focuses on internal, organisational arrangements to establish the LED function. These arrangements should include the allocation of clear responsibilities to the respective levels of management, from senior to junior managers. On a strategic level senior managers should assess the macro and intermediate environments constantly to determine whether any adjustments to the existing LED is required. They are primarily responsible for identifying strategic issues and formulating strategic objectives of the municipality, inclusive of the LED strategy. Directives of senior managers should be delegated to middle managers, who mainly perform a tactical function in the municipality. On this level, broader strategic objectives should be operationalised through the design and execution of municipal programmes and projects. On a junior management level, LED directives should be executed in the day-to-day functions and activities of municipal officials in the respective municipal departments. Coordination between different directorates, units and sections is essential to ensure that certain LED functions are not duplicated.

The reconfiguration of the LED strategy: Action steps

Utilising the model should be supported by implementation guidelines. The following 10 action steps towards LED reconfiguration are proposed. These steps do not necessarily follow a linear process, but are rather iterative in nature.

Step 1: Promote sustainable growth and development through a detailed LED strategy

Finalising the existing LED strategy should be a priority to promote change and to focus attention on strategic issues that are aimed at addressing the realities in the community in a sustainable way. This step should be supported by regular scientific environmental scanning and strategic planning exercises to ensure that the LED strategy remains relevant. This step should also include efforts to promote sustainable business development, allocate resources and funds, and gain political commitment.

Step 2: Determine targeted change through surveys

This step should entail surveys to identify LED focal points, inclusive of the socio-economic and demographical profile of communities. Quarterly meetings with stakeholders should be scheduled to assess progress made and to align priorities and contributions.

Step 3: Delegation of responsibilities

In step 3, the LED strategy should incorporate detailed responsibilities and functions of both internal and external stakeholders. This should be supported by accountability arrangements.

Step 4: Establish task teams for local business support

It is strongly recommended that local municipalities establish project task teams to establish municipal-wide LED support systems. Such task teams should comprise LED project managers, LED officials, officials from support departments and representatives from different sectors to identify and support deserving local businesses.

Step 5: Organisational arrangements to entrench the LED function

In step 5, the municipality should establish a well-resourced, competent and well-functioning LED unit to assess the municipality's socio-economic profile constantly and foster an effective and user-friendly LED strategy. This unit should support the task teams. Frequent changes in the organisational arrangements of the LED office, as currently experienced by JBMLM, negatively affects the successful execution of the LED strategy. Such a unit will foster consistency, continuity and provide the necessary administrative support.

Step 6: Pursue a multipronged and integrated LED approach

It is proposed that LED strategies should promote an integrated and multipronged approach since it is evident that the current LED strategy is significantly hampered by the lack of integration, coordination and alignment. There is a need for cohesion in the pursuit of economic growth and development and to utilise limited resources and funding for LED projects more efficiently. Proper coordination and alignment between municipal departments and sector provincial and national departments and agencies is essential. The multipronged, integrated approach should accommodate diverse priorities for allocating resources and funding (eg. transport, information and communication technology, energy, job creation and business start-up capital). It is also essential to align LED priorities with the priority concerns of the respective municipal departments, agencies and entities, and to ensure that resources are allocated based on agreed business needs.

Step 7: Coordination and alignment of the LED function

Step 7 entails establishing coordination and alignment mechanisms to align initiatives of all stakeholders, inclusive of sector departments on all spheres of government. To foster coordination and alignment of the LED function, it is recommended that the municipality regularly conduct strategic planning sessions with representatives from stakeholders. The LED requires alignment with provincial growth plans and national development priorities, policies, strategies and programmes. This includes alignment with imperatives and guidelines emanating from oversight institutions such as the South African Local Government Association and the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

Step 8: Establish early-warning and information systems

The empirical survey revealed that the existing LED strategy does not perform adequately due to the absence of monitoring or early-warning systems to detect and proactively respond to any emerging socio-economic issues. It is proposed that the municipality develop a dedicated LED information system and database to support LED strategies. This should make provision for evidence-based decisions and to analyse potential risks in both the internal (micro) and external (macro) environments. Open and frequent dialogue with representatives from different sectors, inclusive of the community, is also essential to share information, experience and concerns.

Step 9: Establish and maintain a stakeholder forum

It is suggested that a reconfigured LED strategy makes provision for establishing a stakeholder forum. Such a forum should meet at least on a quarterly basis to strengthen the working relationship and to enhance cooperation. Having a permanent stakeholder structure and organising stakeholder sessions on a quarterly basis is critical to keep abreast of the latest trends and events and to follow-up on resolutions from previous meetings. Records of proceedings may serve as valuable tools to monitor progress and any non-compliance with delegated responsibilities.

Step 10: Ensure the efficient utilisation of LED resources and monitor progress

It is necessary that the LED office appoint dedicated municipal project managers (step 4) to oversee the allocation and utilisation of LED resources and to guide the monitoring process (steps 8 and 9). Such LED project managers should facilitate regular financial audits to verify the utilisation of LED funds and other resources. Project managers in conjunction with senior managers should oversee all LED-related projects by making use of tactical directives and operational guidelines.

They should submit regular status and progress reports to council. Reasons for any deviations to existing LED project plans and the prescribed principles for utilising resources should be provided to the relevant portfolio committee of council. Project managers should also indicate any remedial steps taken to ensure that similar deviations will not occur in future.

CONCLUSION

Development and employment creation are key obligations of local municipalities in promoting economic growth and improving the living standards of communities. The successful implementation of their LED strategies will reduce societal challenges such as unemployment, inequality and poverty that pose severe challenges for developing countries such as South Africa. However, it is evident that the LED strategy of municipalities requires a joint effort from various stakeholders with the aim to promote sustainable local economies and improve the quality of life for all citizens. It also necessitates compliance with statutory and regulatory prescripts and adherence to established international best practice regarding socio-economic development. Non-compliance and non-adherence compel municipalities to adjust their LED strategies.

To reconfigure existing LED strategies of municipalities, such as the JBMLM, various processes, steps and recommendations are proposed. The reconfigured LED strategy should clearly accommodate roles and responsibilities within the three layers of management: strategic, tactical and operational. These three layers should function within the parameters set by the statutory and legislative frameworks governing the LED function in local government. The clarification of the LED process, the steps proposed and the recommendations made should serve as a valuable foundation for other local municipalities with similar issues that hinder development, business support and employment creation. Although the study was based on a single case study, the model for reconfiguration emanating from the findings will benefit all other category B municipalities in South Africa by setting the policy and parameters for more suitable and effective LED strategies.

NOTE

*This article is based on Natasha Mumba's doctoral thesis conducted at North-West University, titled "A Reconfigured Local Economic Development Strategy for Local Government: The Case of JB Marks Local Municipality", under the supervision of Professor Gerrit van der Walddt.

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The Effectiveness of Learner Support in Open Distance Learning at Unisa, KwaZulu-Natal

Critical Considerations

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ABSTRACT

Distance education in South Africa has changed significantly and this affected some of the distance education institutions within the field of higher education, especially the University of South Africa (Unisa). Unisa, the Technikon of Southern Africa, as well as the distance education section of Vista University merged and the new Unisa came into existence in 2005. Unisa has five regional hubs, of which Unisa KwaZulu-Natal, the research setting of focus of this article, is the second largest. As the merger between these institutions developed, Unisa embarked on a character as an open distance learning mega-university and introduced in 2008 an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) policy with the goal to promote open access to higher learning. The focus was tuition to include technology, multimedia interaction and consequently, learner support to underpin ODL.

The article aims to provide an investigation into the learner support initiatives in the Unisa region of KwaZulu-Natal through the use of empirical methodology to obtain the relevant information on the readiness of the students coming into the ODL university system and their experience of the learner support initiatives provided to them in the region.

The research is based on a mixed method approach and utilised conceptual analysis, interviews, observation and a questionnaire distributed to

staff, tutors and students of Unisa KwaZulu-Natal. One of the key questions in this study is to determine whether the new students who enter the ODL system at Unisa KwaZulu-Natal are ready for this new environment. It was found from the data obtained, that students are uncertain, not well prepared for this new environment and that better learner support services are needed to improve on the learning of students and also on the poor throughput rate in the region.

Conceptually and contextually, the article explains the difference between a correspondence versus ODL university, it contextualises ODL for sustainable progress, in terms of learner support, quality assurance and skills development. It also focuses on models in open and distance learning with reference to Unisa's ODL model and the Bates actions model.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

South Africa has a history of distance education that has evolved over time and the African National Congress documented A Policy Framework for Education and Training in 1994 (Mouton 2015). This document outlined a well-designed and quality distance education system based on the values of open learning. Owing to the past imbalances in education in South Africa, distance education based on open learning principles has been welcomed as the solution to the educational backlog that faces South Africa (South Africa Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE) 2000:17). Various policies stipulate the importance of learner support and it is generally accepted that learner support should be provided in distance education. Learner support should aim to eliminate a variety of difficulties and create best practice conditions for learner success.

In the South African White Paper on Education and Training of 1995, the Ministry of Education dedicated itself to distance education. The White Paper envisaged distance education methodologies to be developed and implemented by a large number of institutions and organisations in terms of five areas crucial to provide education for all, as put forward by Nonyongo and Ngengebule (1998:103). The five areas cover the establishment of quality basic education for all children, assistance with Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), a comprehensive Further Education and Training (FET) sector (FET Colleges) to provide a focused education experience to learners, a financial planning system that should capitalise in research and development on different learning objectives through distance education, and a whole new method to the provision and facilitation of learning opportunities.

Inevitably, this would have caused significant change in the South African higher education landscape and environment, and would affect conventional distance education institutions resulting in new distance education advantages (Nonyongo & Ngengebule 1998:104). Butcher (in Mills and Tait 1996: 21) also states that the higher education landscape in South Africa had to change due to a significantly uneven higher education system of the past in South Africa.

An open learning approach was adopted through the White Paper on Education and Training of 1995, which enhances several principles; for example, student centredness, life-long learning, flexibility of learning provision, the elimination of obstacles to access learning, delivery of learner support, structuring of learning programmes in ways to increase the success of learners and the preservation of rigorous quality assurance over the development of learning materials and provision of support systems (Nonyongo & Ngengebule 1998:104).

The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 clearly promotes and supports quality in higher education through the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). It also gives direction that effective and quality learner support should be provided to students who register at Higher Education institutions.

The White Paper for Post School Education and Training of 2013 also focuses on the vision of government for the post-school system education in South Africa. It forms part of the National Development Plan (NDP) of 2030. This document is made up of a diverse range of the educational institutions of South Africa to cater for the millions of adults that will come into the system. These documents focus strongly on the product that will be acceptable for society in South Africa and which is employable.

Although politically and legally, the context of higher education and learning in South Africa has changed, a huge number of South Africans are still deprived and under-prepared in obtaining a proper education. A considerable number of today's higher education under-prepared students are in developing countries, and as South Africa is a developing country with a goal of becoming a developmental state, a high number of students are also exposed to problems of social disorganisation, low productivity, underdevelopment, poverty and diseases, including HIV/AIDS (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) 1994 in Mugabe 2011:1).

In general, the throughput rate in distance education institutions has been very poor, particularly for African learners. Glennie (in Tait & Mills 1996:25) explains the causes for the high failure and attrition rates succinctly as: "A large number of learners following distance education programmes at secondary and tertiary level do so because of very negative experiences of education. Their schools did not perform well; their educators have often been average. The potential learners are likely to lack many vital learning skills, and, in general, are not prepared well".

Notably, it is evident to a certain extent that many learners in South Africa are still experiencing higher education negatively and are lacking essential skills. In a developmental state, skills development is seen as one of the significant issues that should be addressed to reach economic goals and development. It is important that the education system should be in a strong position to address this crucial fragment of development.

In the South African context, a higher percentage of learners will find it difficult to perform well if they are admitted to distance education institutions without sufficient or adequate support. This is the result of the insufficient quality of basic education for a large section of the population, which is well recognised by various authors. An open learning policy without the provision of learner support will be inadequate to address the needs of disadvantaged learners (Paul in SAIDE 2000:17).

Education, training and innovation are crucial to the long-term growth of South Africa. These components are very important to eradicate poverty and lessen inequality and are the fundamentals of an equal society. Removing the barriers to access learning, flexibility of learning provision, student-centredness, supporting students and constructing learning programmes with the anticipation that students can succeed are all important factors to be considered in the context of the National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) of government to improve the quality of public service delivery.

Chapter nine of the NDP of 2030 aims to have a post-school system that provides quality learning opportunities to young people and adults who want to change careers or upgrade skills. It should also contribute towards quality teaching and learning and raise education and training levels to produce highly skilled professionals (NDP 2030). The plan further stipulates that the higher education system should make a serious impact on economic and social progress. As the system develops at a moderate pace, continuous quality enhancement is needed.

Poor school education is a major challenge and it increases cost in creating graduates. This is seen as the main reason why only a small number of black students graduate from universities. More support must be given to universities to increase graduation rates. Courses should be combined with bridging courses. A further emphasis is placed on research and development to improve the quality of teaching and of higher education and staff capacity and the quality of staff should be addressed to bring about knowledge production and innovation. This will directly impact better student development as well.

Unisa, as an institution operates under the Higher Education Act of South Africa, it is important to locate the policies of the institution for the research. All the policy documents of Unisa clearly indicate and disseminate the concept of ODL as a tool to bridge time, economic, social, education and communication

distance between the student and the institution, and the student and academics. These policies include the Open Distance Learning Policy of 2008, the Institutional Operational Plan, the Learner Support Policy and the 2015 Strategic Plan. One of the strategic objectives of Unisa is to “position Unisa as a leading provider of quality distance education programmes through an academic product range that expands on its comprehensive character” (Unisa Strategic Plan 2015). The Unisa policies focus on the Strategic Plan and its strategic objectives.

Unisa is now considered as Africa’s leading distance learning institution and is seen as a comprehensive, flexible and accessible ODL institution. It is also the only comprehensive ODL higher education institution in South Africa. Unisa established a comprehensive learner support component, the Department of Tutorial Services, Discussion Classes and Work-integrated Learning (TSDL) in 2006. The purpose of this department was to establish and drive learner support initiatives in the different regions.

In July 2011, the Department of Tuition and Facilitation of Learning (DTFL) was formed and it replaced the previous TSDL. Restructuring of management was done to expedite the mandate of the new Vice-Chancellor of Unisa who assumed duty on 1 January 2011. A new portfolio of Academic (Teaching and Learning) was formed, which consists of six colleges and the DTFL (Departmental Operational Plan 2012-2013).

The DTFL consists of all regional offices, the Directorate Curriculum and Learning Development (DCLD), the Directorate of Instructional Support and Services (DISS) and the Directorate Counselling and Career Development (DCCD). The DTFL’s functions are guided by the Unisa 2015 Strategic Plan (revised) and all policies and charters of the University. In the spirit of the mission of the University towards the “African University in the service of humanity”, the DTFL committed itself to provide quality services through the development of strategies, policies, structures and methods that will support the academic progress of students. A further purpose of the department is to provide students with access to quality higher education through effective teaching interventions and the facilitation of learning using advanced technologies. This will include the use of appropriate ODL pedagogies as outlined in the Departmental Operational Plan:2012-2013.

CORRESPONDENCE UNIVERSITY VERSUS OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING UNIVERSITY

In the sources consulted, there are different terms for learning at a distance, distance learning, distance education and correspondence learning. This article focuses on the terms distance education and ODL.

In distance learning or distance education, the emphasis falls on the word 'distance', which means that the learning is taking place at a distance or remotely. This distance between the teacher and the learner normally occurs under the sponsorship of an educational institution, like Unisa in this article. The learning materials, for example, the study guides, prescribed textbooks and tutorial letters, are normally the most pertinent two-way communication media between the teacher and the learner (Talbot 2003:159). According to Talbot (2003:xiii), distance education may have developed during the earlier days of correspondence schools with limited learning providers who catered for students who, for one reason or another, did not want to or did not have the necessary resources to attend 'conventional' face-to-face education or established training facilities.

Unisa has been a distance education institution since 1946. In its original state, Unisa was a correspondence-based university and very limited learner support was available to students. The traditional or normative approach to teaching was that students had to submit a certain number of assignments and had to obtain a specific mark to be submitted to the examination. This was the same with students who studied through the former Technikon South Africa.

Lockwood (1995:108) states that teaching at a distance is more modern, compared to 150 years ago during the improvement of technology linked with the Industrial Revolution, with specific reference to transport and communications. It is characterised by the distance between the teacher and the learner and the learner and the learning group. In other words, the traditional face-to-face education made space for communication via technology. Vigorous advances during the electronic developments in the 1980s have for the first time in history made it possible to teach 'face-to-face' at a distance. A virtual classroom was generated by connecting students and teachers at different venues via cable and satellite. A virtual classroom is an electronic classroom that is equipped with special electronic equipment to make contact possible from a distance.

Baggaley (2008:42) stipulates that historically, contemporary distance education is simply the final result of a comprehensive development process. Whereas the 'premodern' provision of educational approaches of the 11th to 20th centuries highlighted continuous interaction between students and teachers, the latest distance education delivery methodologies have disregarded that significance and have denoted indirect, asynchronous communication methods as the best possibilities available for distance-based teacher-student interaction. According to Moore and Kearsley (in Baggaley 2008:40) since the 1960s, modern distance education has used a sequence of delivery modes with progressively refined practices for teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction. It shifted from the correspondence model of using the telephone and postal services to the modern-day online conferencing methods.

Open learning (OL) has been increasingly used since the 1980s, but it did not attract the interest of researchers until fairly recently. OL explored the support companies had given to their employees during their journey in learning (Lockwood 1995:242). ODL at Unisa has been important since 2008 when the role of learner support became increasingly important for the institution. Learner support is a vital aspect of ODL and in many cases did not receive the attention that was needed to assist students in distance education.

Du Plessis (2011:263) states that OL, together with flexible learning and distance learning seems to be the basis of the concept of ODL. Maxwell (in Du Plessis 2011:263) distinguishes between ODL and DE by saying that: "ODL is a student-centred method to education that eliminates the barriers to access while providing a strong degree of learner structure while distance education is a mode of delivering a course of study in which most of communication between teachers and students occur non-contiguously ... Distance education may or may not be grounded on open-learning ideals".

Maxwell also said that OL indicates that the education perspective provides students with as much choice and control as possible over content and learning methodologies, while distance education refers to a mode of delivery (Du Plessis 2011:263). From various sources accessed, it is clear that ODL aims to provide an 'openness' and learner-centred way of educational approach.

Lentell (2006:113) stresses that there are numerous advantages and possibilities of ODL for sustainable learning and development as important determinants for a developmental state, such as:

- **Flexible:** ODL can create flexible learning by combining traditional methods to learning. For example, study materials should enable teachers to manage large classes and enable them to provide asynchronous communication between learners living far from one another.
- **Adaptable:** In ODL different forms of suitable media and technologies, including radio, teleconferencing, video, audio and computers are tools that can be used to deliver information and communication between groups of learners and learners and their teachers. For example, Unisa is using video conferencing as a tutoring facility, and is currently moving towards a focus on e-tutoring as well.
- **Reach:** Through ODL remote groups who have been left without access to education and training because of their remoteness to locations of study or through universal lack of delivery because of economic or social disadvantage, or political disruption, can be reached. Millions of people have access to higher education where there had been inadequate provision of these facilities, because of the development of open universities. This is especially the case in KwaZulu-Natal. Many of the students are in various rural areas, for example, Mbizana and Nkandla.

- **Quality and scale:** In ODL limited human resources are used efficiently. Tutors, who are not specialists in a specific field of study, can assist with the teaching function. Teachers, as we generally understand, do not necessarily have to have all the knowledge, skills and means associated with teaching before they can support learning. Tutors appointed by Unisa are practically in the professions of the subjects they tutor. In other words, they should have the practical experience and should be able to link the theory in the study material with their practical experience and translate that to their learners. With ODL, the tasks teachers carry out are fragmented into their important parts and given to specialists – knowledge experts, curriculum designers, course writers, media experts, designers, editors, and facilitators of learning. Lecturers in higher education institutions should fulfil this role. Only a few specialists who need study materials are more likely to be scrutinised by subject specialists, their value is more solid than the teaching that takes place in the seclusion of a classroom.

OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE PROGRESS

During the stage of transforming to a developmental state in South Africa, ODL is a significant medium for sustainable development in the information age of advanced learning, which is an interesting focal point for higher education in the current South African context.

ODL is a promising and practical method to address the task of broadening access for the developing world, increasing involvement in higher education, which is part of the public sector. It has progressively been seen as an educational delivery model over the past few years, which is cost-effective and without sacrificing quality. On the African continent where resources are limited and higher education provision is poor, ODL has been accepted as a reasonable, cost-effective means of increasing provision without costly outlay in infrastructure (Pityana 2009:7).

According to Daniels (in Du Plessis 2011:265), for ODL to be sustainable, it has to address the requirements of the present generation without conceding the ability of future generations to meet their needs. In support of this point, Daniels (in Du Plessis 2011:265) identifies the following six factors for success and sustainability for enhanced learning:

- **Clarity of purpose and intention:** The purpose and objective to enter and implement the ODL concept must be stated clearly.
- **Economic structure:** If an ODL institution is economically viable, it depends less on government intervention.
- **Institutional structure:** Institutions needs to be autonomous. In other words, they should be able to govern themselves without being controlled by anyone else.

- **Leadership:** Good and strong leadership is very important during the change as it can revitalise and re-energise the institution.
- **An effective and balanced teaching and learning system:** High quality education should satisfy the aspirations of students in such a way that students feel that they want to come back to the institution for further studies. Students should also feel proud of their institution and recommend it to others.
- **Intellectual excitement:** If students find their studies intellectually or practically exciting, they will enjoy studying at their institutions.

It is apparent that the ODL approach to learning is more acceptable in higher education environments, flexibility of delivery and awareness to social, cultural and economic requirements of learners and broader society. ODL methodology puts the learner and their learning requirements and circumstances at the centre of the ODL practice. This emphasis on the learner is what makes ODL methodology potentially transformative (Lentell 2006:114). The quality of open and distance learning varies like any other form of education. Its quality can be the result of a variety of factors, such as the levels of skills and expertise of staff, available resources, weak or strong leadership, effectiveness of administration structures, and the communication infrastructure in a country (Du Plessis 2011:263).

The policy documents of Unisa clearly state that the ODL notion aims to bridge the time, geographical, economic, social, educational and communication distance between students and institution, students and academics, students and courseware as well as students and peers (Olivier 2012:178). ODL distillates on removing barriers to access learning, flexibility of learning provision, student-centredness, student support and creating learning programmes with the confidence that students can succeed (Olivier 2012:179). Consequently, institutions of higher learning are becoming the 'reservoirs' and 'tools' to assist government in reaching its goals as a developmental state.

Education practitioners and educators in most parts of Africa and worldwide are advocating the use of open and distance education to enable Africa to expand and to improve the quality of education towards development. If we are to realise the millennium goals on quality of education for all, it is extremely important for educators in Africa to change their approaches and strategies beginning at teacher education level. ODL is seen as a significant structure of future education and training. Furthermore, it is important to note that there is a need to also develop flexible learning, academic organisations and delivery structures to satisfy the needs of students (Chisefu 2010:6).

Unisa as an ODL university will play an important role within the new higher education landscape and can provide quality education with the possibility to sustainable development of learning for learners, job seekers and the South

African society as a whole. Unisa is in the advantaged position to also provide effective learning to people in the rural areas of South Africa.

Important aspects to improve the sustainability of ODL are learner support, quality assurance and skills development. These aspects will be dealt with in the following section.

Learner support

The development of learner support in distance education began many years ago. Nonyongo and Ngengebule (1998:xi) explain what this service does. It helps learners to reduce their isolation, it facilitates effective learning, it reduces attrition rates and increases success rates, and in general it improves the quality of distance education. Thorpe (in Lockwood 1995:223) explains that there are various definitions of learner support. It has been described as the components of an open learning system capable of acting to an individual learner. Learner support embraces all the support provided by a distance education or e-learning system which are the same or match the facilities provided by a face-to-face system to enhance students' success in the institution (<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:aznwo7G5i0UJ:learning.ericsson.net/socrates/doc/conf/keegan.doc+&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=za>).

Some of the goals in the Departmental Operational Plan 2012-2013 of Unisa, also mention the provision of effective teaching interventions, a positive student experience and facilitating the learning of students through the use of 'cutting edge' technologies. These are typical elements of learner support in an ODL institution. Lockwood (1995:223) went further and summarised the components of learner support; the elements of the system, the configuration of these elements and the interaction between the elements and the learners. These elements are the interaction between learners and support agents, peer learning facilitators and study groups; feedback to learners on their activities; access to libraries, laboratories and equipment and communication networks.

Quality assurance

Higher education has a very significant part to play in contributing to the reconstruction and development in all spheres of the South African society. Again, through good governance and the implementation of sound policies it is the responsibility of the government to guide this very important sphere in the South African society to help in reaching the goals of a developmental state. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) established by the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, has a mission to contribute to the development of the higher education system in South Africa. The Higher Education Act of 1997 allocates

responsibility for quality assurance in higher education in South Africa to the CHE. This responsibility is fulfilled through its permanent sub-committee, the HEQC. The mandate of the HEQC includes quality promotion, institutional audit and programme accreditation. As part of the task of building an effective national quality assurance system, the HEQC has also included capacity development and training as a vital component of its programme of activities (HEQC 2004 in Mouton 2015).

The CHE through the HEQC will address quality issues within the environment of higher education. This quality assurance system is monitoring and evaluating different matters within higher education. On 27 February 2014, the Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) was launched that focuses on (1) student success in terms of students who graduate with qualities that are personally, professionally and socially valuable, (2) on higher education institutions concurrently, and (3) diverse practises that are used at different points in the project. Outputs also include codes of good practice (http://www.che.ac.za/focus_areas/quality_enhancement_project/overview).

The Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF), was gazetted on 5 October 2007 (Department of Education Government Notice No 928 in Mouton 2015) as a policy in terms of the Higher Education Act and states that some qualifications will be designed to incorporate periods of required work that integrate with classroom study. It further stipulates that where Work-integrated Learning (WiL)/Experiential Learning is a structured fragment of a qualification the volume of learning allocated in WiL should be applicable to the purpose of the qualification and to the cognitive demands of the learning outcome and assessment criteria enclosed in the appropriate level descriptors. It also clearly states that it is the obligation of institutions, which offer programmes requiring WiL credits to place students in WiL programmes (Unisa 2012).

Quality assurance in learner support is of vital importance to ensure that the impact of learner support has the desired effect to assist learners to enhance their learning and in the development of their skills during their studies. Andrea Hope (in Perraton & Lentell 2004:168) is of the opinion that “the structures that protect quality within frontiers do not necessarily work beyond them. Approaches to the maintenance and monitoring of quality that are appropriate for conventional institution and teaching face-to-face will always need some adaptation if they are to be appropriate for a new style of teaching and learning”. The products and services organisations offer are a reflection of the quality they offer (Du Plessis 2011:266).

Skills development

The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 has been implemented to among others:

- Offer an institutional framework to develop and implement national, sector and workplace strategies.
- Develop and improve the skills of the South African workforce. In a developmental state, the development of skills plays an active role in economic development. This also links to sustainable development by among others, building the skills of a country's workforce.
- Incorporate those strategies within the National Qualifications Framework contemplated in the South African Qualifications Authority Act 58 of 1995.
- Provide for learnerships that lead to accredited occupational qualifications.

In addition to this Act, the Skills Development Amendment Act 37 of 2008 has been developed to further strengthen the development of skills for the workforce of South Africa.

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013) clearly stipulates how important it is for close cooperation between education, training providers and employers. Where the curriculum includes practical training, for example, in Agricultural Management, it is important that the student gets linked with the workplace to equip the student with practical experience and valuable skills.

The whole idea to incorporate subjects with a WiL component by institutions is to further strengthen the skills development issue in South Africa with the support from higher education institutions. Skills development for students through WiL is to place them in the real world of work under supervision of a qualified mentor to guide them in acquiring the necessary skills in their field of study.

MODELS IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

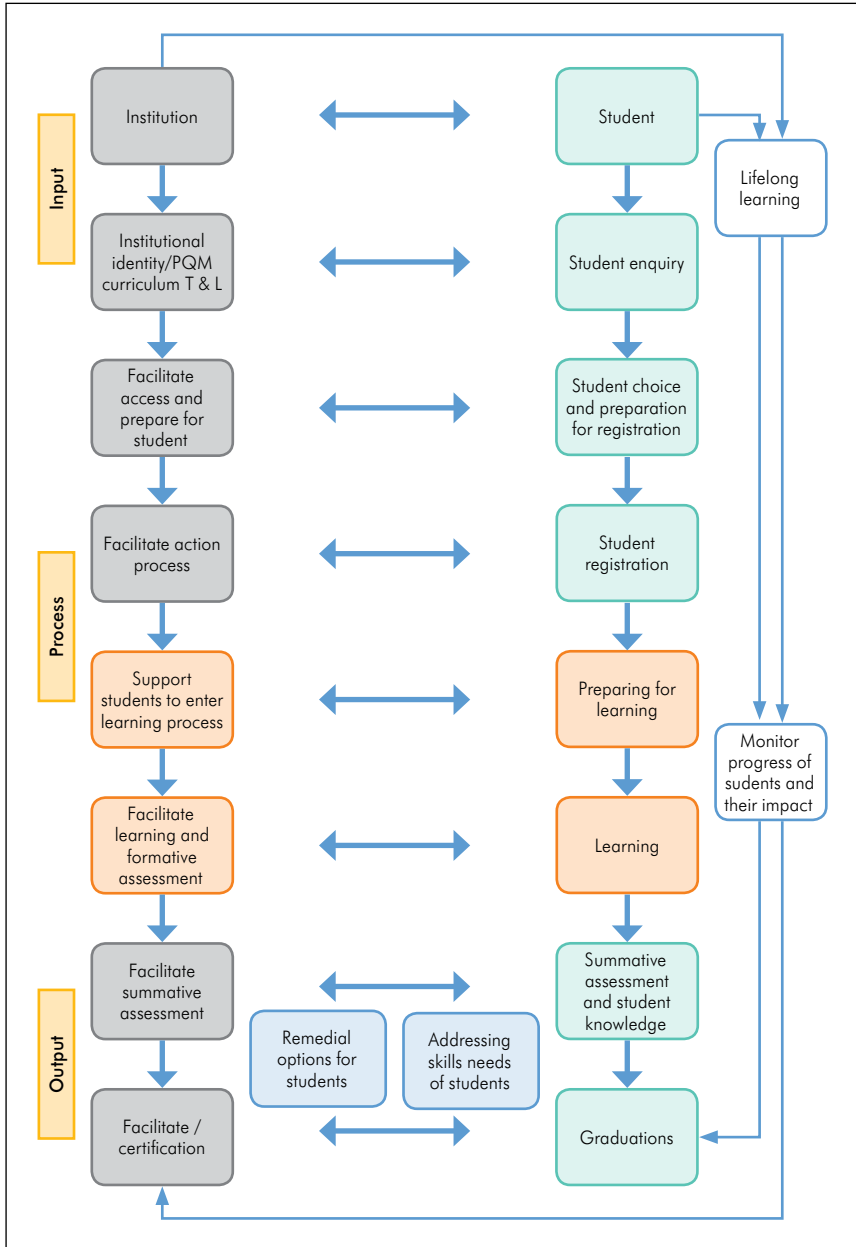
The models in distance learning are discussed with relevance and in context to this article.

Unisa's ODL model

This has been developed in the ODL policy as a guide to demonstrate the implementation of the policy. It gives a clear indication of the relationship between the institution and the student during the student's learning experience while with the institution.

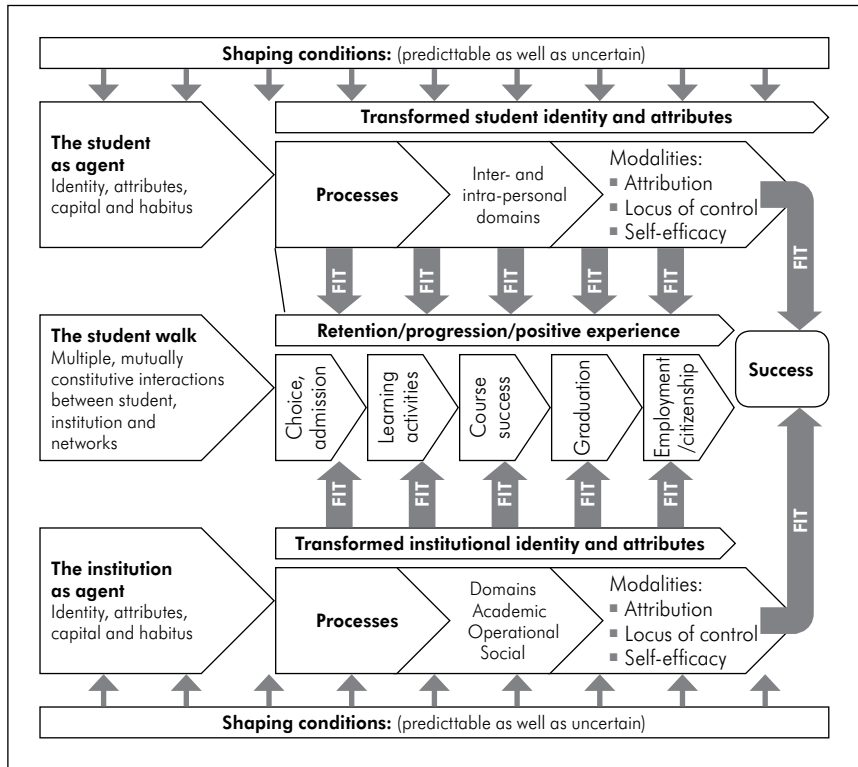
In Figure 1, learner support services include support to students to enter the learning process, preparing for learning, facilitating learning during the formative processes and assisting with learning matters, such as study methods. To monitor the students' impact on their progress is also of vital importance. This can be

Figure 1: Unisa ODL model



Source: (Unisa 2008:11)

Figure 2: Unisa’s socio-critical model for explaining, predicting, and enhancing student success



Source: (Subotzky & Prinsloo 2011:184)

done by monitoring the frequency of students attending tutorial classes in conjunction with assignment results and examination results. This will enable learner support services to identify weak links in the facilitation processes. During all the processes of the Unisa ODL model, the student should be at the centre of development in the facilitation of the learning processes. The needs of the students should be taken into consideration at all times.

The model in Figure 2 illustrates three key concepts as factors which support success in the South African ODL context. These concepts are:

- Student as agent:** In this concept the student is the main role-player. Processes will be affected by inter- and intra-personal domains of the student as well as the modalities such as acknowledgement, locus of control and self-efficacy. This is, in other words, the role the student fulfils towards their success in the learning journey. Learner support services should be acknowledged by students and

their attitudes will determine how successfully they use these services that are provided by the university. The whole idea of an ODL system is also to inspire students to study independently. Subotzky and Prinsloo (2011:184) emphasise that the characteristics and behaviours of students are intensely formed by their historical, environmental, socio-economic, and cultural experiences and circumstances. However, they still enjoy the freedom within these conceptions to advance, grow and transform their qualities in the journey to succeed.

- **The student walk:** At the centre of the model lies the student walk and it is a crucial part of the model. The student walk illustrates the collaboration between the student and the university during the learning journey of the student. It starts with the preregistration activities and continues through every phase of common engagement: application process, registration process, teaching and learning processes, assessments through assignments and examinations, learner support services provided by the university, graduation and finally the ensuing contribution in the community and the labour market.
- **The institution as agent:** The role of the institution/university in these processes is of utmost importance for the success of the student. Academic processes, as well as administrative processes should be student friendly and should contribute to the development of the students and their success. The engagement between the institution and students is enhanced through the provision of financial capital which includes cultural, intellectual, organisational and additional forms of capital. This will ultimately add to success and the habitus of both the institution and students (Subotzky and Prinsloo 2011:184).

The Bates actions model

The Bates Actions Model (1995:1) is based on methodology to assess learning technologies. The author suggests that decision-making in educational institutions should be based on an analysis of questions that each institution needs to ask and grouped in the model as depicted in Table 1.

This model also highlights significant actions when consideration is given to use technology in the ODL system and whether the students are ready for this mode of education. Learner support and service delivery in the environment of Unisa as a public institution should add value to the development and progress of its students as clients. The green highlighted columns in Table 1 depict this statement.

The ODL model and the student walk demonstrate how the student will start the journey in the higher education environment until the final successful stage. The Bates model shows the important role access, cost effectiveness and teaching and learning methods should play during this journey of attainment of knowledge and developing skills for the student.

Table 1: The Bates actions model

Actions						
Access	Cost	Teaching and learning	Interactive and user-friendly	Organisational issues	Novelty	Speed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How accessible is a particular technology for learners. ■ How flexible is it for a particular target group? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What is the cost structure for each technology? ■ What is the unit cost per learner? The resources available should be used cost effective optimized and in a way that students and staff benefit from it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What kinds of learning are needed? ■ What instructional approaches will meet these needs? ■ What are the best teaching technologies for supporting this teaching and learning? 	<p>What kind of interaction does this technology enable? How easy is it to use?</p>	<p>What are the organisational requirements? What are the barriers that should be removed before the technology can be used successfully? What changes in the organisation should be made?</p>	<p>How new is this technology?</p>	<p>How quickly can courses be mounted with this new technology? How quickly can materials be changed and updated?</p>
<p>This also links closely to one of the Batho Pele Principles of "Access to basic services and needs."</p>	<p>This links closely to one of the Batho Pele Principles of "value for money." Student numbers and facilities available will make a significant impact on the use of technologies.</p>	<p>Wide consultation with all role players in this area should take place. Lecturers, support staff and students. It must also be kept in mind that media to be used will be different in their way of presentation.</p>	<p>The access and the interactivity with technology should be used as a developmental tool to provide an effective and easy option for students and staff to use. The interaction between students should also be made possible.</p>	<p>Is the technology synchronous or asynchronous?</p>	<p>Open Education Resources (OERs) can be used effectively here.</p>	<p>The speed of technology should enable swift change when necessary. The stance of government on Information Communication Technology (ICT) involvement should be adhered to. This will be discussed in detail in the study.</p>

Source: (Bates 1995:1-12)

METHODOLOGY

A triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to discover aspects of the study related to learner support in one of the regions of an ODL university. A questionnaire was used as a research instrument and interviews were conducted with permanent staff members and tutors involved in learner support in the region. All the staff and tutors who were interviewed are directly involved in learner support activities, such as tutorial services, student counselling, technology enhanced learning, library and academic literacies. Years of service range between 3-25 years of experience in learner support. Out of a total of 19 interviewees, nine male and 10 female members were interviewed and the number of interviewees is representative of the student cohort in the region.

A focus group interview was also done with the two groups that undertook work-integrated learning in the region. Research themes were linked to both the questionnaire and the interview schedules.

In terms of the questionnaire, the largest number of respondents falls in the age category of 18-25 years. Out of a total of 313 respondents who completed the questionnaire, 150 respondents fall in this age category and 104 of these respondents are female students. Owing to the young age of these respondents 83% of all the respondents are single; 67.1% are unemployed; 42.7% of the students also struggle with accommodation while they study at Unisa. Accommodation is a concerning factor and can have a significant influence on retention of students, as well as the throughput rate. Although Unisa is an ODL institution, students come from the rural areas to the campuses to make use of resources and study spaces that are provided.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The themes and objectives of this study guided the nature of the research that was undertaken. These objectives have been met and through the findings of the empirical study, the key themes that are addressed are as follows:

Role of the relevant policies

The purpose was to determine the role of the ODL policy as well as the Open Distance e-Learning (ODEL) policy as guiding instruments on the implementation of learner support activities effectively at Unisa KwaZulu-Natal. The quantitative data collected through the questionnaires distributed to students who attended face-to-face tutorial classes addressed the knowledge of the students about these policies. Interviews with permanent staff involved in learner support and tutors were undertaken to obtain qualitative data about these policies.

In terms of understanding the role of the relevant policies, it was clear from the respondents to the questionnaire that ODL bridges the time, geographical, economic, social, education and communication gap between student and university. The respondents also agreed that ODL constructs learning programmes for students to succeed.

About distance education, the respondents felt strongly that it is a method of teaching diverse students located at different places. They also agreed that students are physically separated from the University, lecturers and other students. Although respondents understood the term ODeL, the levels of uncertainty among the respondents in this case were larger than with the other policies. This indicates that there is still uncertainty about this policy which needs to be addressed with students.

During the interviews with staff and tutors on their opinion of these policies, it was explicitly stated that the policies are well constructed, but challenges are experienced with the implementation of these policies because of a lack of resources and sufficiently trained staff to implement them. Staff and students need orientation on these policies and online tutoring.

Significant data was derived from these collection methods, and it was clear that the policies are very well constructed. However, with the improvement of resources in the region, implementation of these policies can be improved. These policies fit well into the higher education landscape and the ODL mode of education delivery has now been opened up for other higher education institutions as well, and Unisa has not been the sole provider of ODL education since the White Paper for Post School Education and Training in November 2013.

Readiness of students for the ODL mode of education delivery

It was important to investigate the readiness of Unisa students in this new ODL mode of education delivery, because of the online nature and new technology used. Although the students know what ODL entails, many still struggle to use the online facilities of e-tutoring. This could be caused by the lack of resources and students experiencing difficulty to access these resources. Not all students can afford laptops and the internet. Although there is an improvement in students obtaining laptop computers, there is still a significant number of students who need to use the resources at the campuses of Unisa.

In terms of the readiness and expectations of students in learner support, it was important to obtain data about the readiness of students coming into the ODL environment to study, and also to determine their challenges and expectations. Very positive and negative data was obtained in this section, and it is briefly summarised below.

- Reasons for studying at Unisa. It appears that the cheaper study fees and the fact that respondents can work while they study were the most important

reasons. A number of staff felt that Unisa is a university of last choice owing to limited space in residential universities, and also the matric-scores of some students.

- Expectations when registered at Unisa. More face-to-face tutorial classes and a need for a lecturer at the regional centre were the two most important expectations. The third expectation was to attend classes every day.
- Orientation sessions attended. From the data obtained, the respondents are of the opinion that the orientation sessions are good and informative, but a number of students are unsure and think it is poor. Members of staff raised their concerns that students are invited to both preregistration orientation, as well as post-registration orientation via SMS, but then only a few students turn up for these important sessions.
- Learner support services used. Most of the respondents (80.9%) used the face-to-face tutorial services while 75.2% use the *MyUnisa* (online) services. Although a large percentage use this facility, a small percentage (28.3%) is using e-tutoring (online tutoring). The general feeling among staff is that students are using limited online services because of a lack of computer literacy.
- Challenges (difficulties) experienced while studying at Unisa. Much support is needed from tutorial services and lecturers. Students struggle to get hold of lecturers and expressed their disappointment at not receiving assistance immediately when needed. Students do not have a clear understanding of the university in their first year with no assistance and find it challenging to study alone. Those who formed part of a study group found it very helpful.

Owing to the language barrier difficulties students find some words in the study material difficult to understand and feel that there is an overload of work. Students further expressed their concern about the unhelpfulness of faculty members and that assignments and study material reached them after the examinations, consequently they find it difficult to prepare for examinations.

During the interviews with staff and tutors about the readiness of the students to come into an ODL university, the majority were of the opinion that the students are not ready, and this is mainly due to a lack of access to resources and the challenges experienced by students with the new technology that is compulsory for use in online learning.

Quality of the learner support initiatives to enhance learning of students

The research intended to investigate the quality of the learner support activities in the region and also determine if it is effective enough to enhance learning

of students. Most of the needed learner support activities and initiatives are in place, but there is much room for improvement in many of these areas. Lack of resources requiring attention and staff also needing to be trained are some of the major issues that derived from the collation of the data. Students, especially the first-year students, need more intensive orientation in the learner support services available, which is an important aspect for due consideration by Unisa.

Quality of support for students in experiential learning/ WiL and required skills development when they are exposed to the relevant work environment

Experiential learning/WiL also falls under the ensign of learner support. Students who registered for degrees with practical modules as part of the curriculum of a specific diploma or degree need to do practical training in one or more of the modules for the qualification. It is the responsibility of the University to assist these students with placement in the relevant work environments to enable them to gain the necessary practical experience required. The researcher aimed to determine whether the region does provide quality learner support for these students to get their practical training. Students struggle to get placement and there is little or no assistance from lecturers with whom this responsibility lies at the moment. The region only has an administrative support responsibility, but much is needed to be done to support students in finding relevant placements, although it comes with enormous difficulties and challenges.

Contribution of learner support initiatives to the throughput rate of students

The final objective was to determine if the learner support activities contribute to the throughput rate of students. Many factors can have an influence on the throughput rate. The face-to-face tutorials do definitely contribute to the throughput rate, but it should be considered that the students have a language barrier especially where the language or instruction is different to their mother tongue which can influence their throughput rates.

In terms of the quality of learner support initiatives and the enhancement of learning it was found that although students are committed to their studies, some experienced challenges with the learner support activities. There were also some very positive responses on learner support activities in the region. This is summarised below.

- Feedback from lecturers in assignments. Satisfactory responses have been received here, but students did voice some concerns on the handwriting of

lecturers and that in some assignments the feedback is not sufficient to guide them on where they did go wrong in the assignment.

- Experience of general communication on general administrative queries. A general concern by respondents was that the university does not respond to queries in time and that staff needs more training. Some staff mentioned that the region has a huge backlog in resources. Some units are understaffed and staff also needs training.
- Experience of face-to-face tutorial classes at Unisa. A high level of satisfaction of face-to-face tutorial classes is experienced (89.5%) and shows that there is a high demand for this type of learner support. The respondents expressed a need for more tutorial classes as they found these beneficial. Some tutors raised a concern that the tutorial support is very poorly organised and administered.
- Experience of e-tutoring (online tutoring) at Unisa. Respondents' experiences indicate that this type of learner support activity is not as good as it should be. A low percentage (45.55%) use this facility, while 44.5% do not use it and 39% of the respondents did not know about e-tutoring. This can be influenced by the lack of ownership of computers and also because a large number of students are not computer literate yet. The respondents also felt that more information should be given about this facility. Staff is also of the opinion that a strong marketing drive should be done to get students involved in the learner support activities available.
- Experience of respondents on resources and staff services in the library. Students in general feel that the resources in the library are sufficient, but according to staff most of the material in the library is outdated. The online information of the University is excellent and students need to be trained to access the online information.
- Experience of student counselling services rendered by staff at Unisa. Not a very high percentage (59.1%) of the students are satisfied with the counselling services in the region and 52.1% did not make use of these services. Respondents also voiced their concern that counsellors are not very well trained. Staff on the other hand is of the opinion that the counselling department is doing its best to deliver a good service to students, but that the department is totally understaffed.
- Experience of the Academic Literacy services from staff. This service has two components, namely, the reading and writing section and the quantitative literacy component. This is a very important learner support activity as a large number of Unisa students experience challenges with language as well as with statistics, accounting and mathematics. Of the students 45.9% did not know about these services available to them. Staff is also concerned about the lack of these services that are not institutionalised as yet.

- Experience of the computer laboratories at Unisa KwaZulu-Natal. A general opinion of students and staff is that this facility is not sufficient and that a large number of students are also not computer literate. Staff spends a lot of time in assisting students on how to use a computer. This unit is also understaffed for the large number of students who need assistance.
- Experience of the feedback on assignments and the examination in feedback tutorial letters. In general, the students were satisfied with the feedback on assignments and examination guidelines in follow-up tutorial letters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the research, it can be concluded that positive and negative outcomes are apparent in the learner support services in the region. Recommendations are based on the data obtained from the students (questionnaire) and staff and tutors who were interviewed (interview schedules). The following recommendations are made:

Role and implementation of policies

The ODL and ODeL policies of Unisa have a crucial role to play in the successful implementation of a robust and workable ODL system. These policies should be discussed in each department of the learner support and facilitation sections of the region to create a strong awareness and buy-in to these policies among staff and students. The factors where the region has the infrastructure in place to improve a specific service to its full capacity should be highlighted and improved. Members of staff need training with the implementation of these policies. The current infrastructure should be analysed and shortcomings should be addressed as a matter of urgency. Wide consultation and communication should take place and changes should be gradually phased in and not just dumped on staff. This creates uncertainty and a very low morale among staff. All levels of the management of the region should play a prominent and vibrant role in these processes.

In a study done by Möwes (2005:i) on student support services in ODL at the university of Namibia, the author found that the policies of an institution and the role of management are critical in the setting up of an effective support system to enable the distance learning. In this study it was clear during the interviews with staff members that they are uncertain about how to implement the institutional policies. Staff was of the opinion that the policies look ideal on paper, but the university lacks the drive to ensure that the new policies are implemented effectively.

Orientation and readiness of students coming into the open distance learning university environment

Orientation of students

Orientation sessions should be implemented over a period and should be repeated throughout the preregistration and post-registration periods. During the preregistration and application period, the staff from student administration and funding should be involved in orientation with students where applications were successful and students should be made aware of the learner support functions and activities that are available to them.

Orientation should be done by staff involved in learner support activities. Möwes (2005:i) emphasised that adult students indeed need valuable student support services specifically in services about how to start their studies. He suggested that effective orientation sessions are needed to communicate the available services to students, for example, face-to-face tutorials at regional offices and the purpose of these sessions.

Face-to face tutorial sessions

This should be offered for first registration students and they should not be forced to immediately make use of online tutoring. This should be gradually phased in during the first year of registration and tutors should be trained to be vibrantly involved in this form of preparation for students during face-to-face tutorial classes. More hours should be made available to expose students to the new online environment when they start their second year of studies.

These sessions should not only be offered for high-risk modules, but also where there is a demand for students who registered for specific modules where they need face-to-face tutorials. In other words, the student as the client should decide where they need support. Students should be made familiar with technology and computers during their first year of study. It should also be noted that the current profile of the registered students at the university still highly demands more face-to-face classes. Tutors and academics should work closely together as this impacts the students directly.

For tutor appointments it is recommended that the contractual processes be decentralised to the regions, in the same way the tutor claiming process has been decentralised. Tutors should still be approved by the lecturers. To obtain a contract for tutors sometimes takes up to three months, and the semester is often lost. The activation of tutors is also a prolonged process, and it is recommended that tutors be activated electronically via e-mail. This makes the administration process for the tutorial staff involved in tutorial classes very stressful, and ultimately impacts teaching and learning practices.

E-tutoring

This type of tutoring should go hand in hand with limited face-to-face tutoring where there is a demand for face-to-face tutoring.

Students can be introduced to this by writing a small test before they can register for e-tutoring to make sure that they will be able to learn with e-tutoring. Students should be strongly motivated to share on the e-tutoring sites and make sure that learning takes place through relevant and constructive guidance from the e-tutor. This mode of tutoring should be strongly marketed with students to create awareness and to prepare them for online tutoring. The University should further investigate prospective ways to assist students with laptops and/or tablets.

E-tutors should also be trained to mark the assignments of the students allocated to them and should be managed in the same way as the teaching assistants in the signature modules. This will create self-confidence of the students to engage with their online tutor as well as with other students. The success of e-tutoring depends on the participation of the students, and without this participation, it will fail dismally. The online system should also be updated to accommodate the high volume of students and tutors who will work online.

Academic literacies and quantitative literacies

Street (in Goodfellow 2011:131), claims that literacy education has traditionally been concerned with developing skills in reading and writing that empower participating in society, either in young children or in unschooled adults for whom it is connected with job prospects, societal mobility and personal success. During interviews with staff it was expressed that students experience a serious language barrier and academic literacies are concerned to assist students with writing their assignments and presentation of portfolios. Students also indicated that they are not familiar with this service provided by the university. Students come across many difficulties when they enter into higher education and one of the difficulties encompasses writing and academic discourse. Students from some linguistic groups may experience challenges to a greater degree than other students (Lea & Street 2010:370).

This is currently the most needed support by students and it has been disappointingly neglected over the last two years. Challenges with the contracts of staff have been experienced and staff again started late in 2014.

This unit is not institutionalised, and it is recommended that it be done urgently. More staff should be employed in this unit in all the offices of the region to effectively support students. Some students have a huge language barrier and some also struggle with numeracy subjects like accounting, statistics and mathematics.

Library services

Currently, a library only exists in the Durban office. A library should also be developed in the Pietermaritzburg office and mobile libraries should be developed

for the rural areas. In the library outdated books should be replaced. More vibrant training sessions for students in their first year should take place and the necessary tools should be provided to allow them to get used to ordering books online and to research for information electronically. Unisa's database is very well equipped and students should be made aware of this. If assistance is given to students to conduct research in the formative years of their registration and degree, it will eventually prepare them and create a strong foundation for postgraduate studies.

Computer laboratories

Students in the region desperately need to gain access to computers and the number of computers available at the campuses is not sufficient.

Simpson (1999:89) stresses that when computers are used for students' support then the issues of access, quality and effectiveness are vitally important. The author also mentioned that most of the availability of computers in libraries and computer laboratories are time-limited and this can be unsatisfactory for students who need more time to take full advantage of the computers available.

A further global trend is that access to the internet should be cost-effective and students should be able to afford it. In South Africa, internet access is very expensive and students struggle with access. Makhanya (2014:2) emphasises that there is a "serious deficit in terms of access to the internet in South Africa".

This does not necessarily mean that more computers should be installed, but the university should seriously consider assisting students to obtain laptops and tablets and include the provision in their study fees in their first year.

Student counselling

Counselling services in any higher education institution are very important for new students coming into the system. Students are sometimes unsure about which career they should follow and this service is of utmost importance to assist students to make a career choice and to register for the correct qualification. This will also assist students to progress more accurately and smoothly through the registration processes. Counselling should also assist with advice where students experience personal problems like death in the family, etc.

It is recommended that more permanent staff be employed to create a stronger support unit for students and to uphold the standards of counselling to students at all levels of their learning journey. Counsellors should also be appointed in all offices of the region.

Resources and staffing matters

As the second largest region after Gauteng, the Unisa KwaZulu-Natal region is faced with a serious space issue to accommodate staff and students. A serious shortage of resources exist and this is not managed effectively by the regional management.

The morale of the staff is very low because of a lack in managerial guidance and support. The current restructuring process is actually making the situation worse, because members of staff are concerned about their future. Regional staff should be more involved in decision-making processes that directly involve their day-to-day operations. The regional staff has an important role to play in the development of Unisa students and can be seen as the ‘face’ of the institution.

SUMMARY

In an ODL university, learner support is compulsory and of vital importance, and the role of regions cannot be over-emphasised. Although ODL is seen as a cost-effective mode of education delivery, the initial cost to implement it is very high. It is also very important that the profile of the calibre of student dictates the way ODL is implemented. From the research done, it is evident that members of staff in the region are doing their best with the resources available to them. There are, however, challenges and gaps and this needs to be addressed urgently. The whole learner support drive should also be based on the “*Batho Pele Principle – People First*”. This then implies that students are important stakeholders in the service delivery plan and should come first in the principles of learner-centredness and customer focus.

NOTE

- * This article is partly based on a doctoral thesis of Dr J Mouton that was completed at the University of KwaZulu-Natal under the supervision of Prof Mogie Subban in 2015, titled: *Learner support in Open Distance Learning at Unisa, KwaZulu-Natal: A Developmental State perspective*.

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A Conceptual Model to Underpin Ethical Governance in Local Government

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ABSTRACT

Currently, the public sector in South Africa is plagued by reports of unethical behaviour and maladministration despite various pieces of legislation, a solid policy framework and several institutions that aim to regulate ethical behaviour and the elimination of corruption. Unethical behaviour manifests itself in a variety of ways, from turning a blind eye to accepting bribes. This ethical decline within the public sector is also evident in the annual Auditor-General (AG) reports conducted at various municipalities in South Africa and reports by anti-corruption agencies such as the South African Police Services, the Special Investigation Unit, Corruption Watch and the Public Protector on unethical conduct by public officials and political office bearers. This increase in unethical behaviour within the public sector needs to be addressed before a state of anarchy and collapse prevails. The methodology entails a qualitative paradigm by way of interviews and a desktop analysis in terms of unobtrusive research methods. Within this context, the study aims to develop a conceptual model to serve as a measuring instrument to promote ethical governance in local government and to provide recommendations to improve ethical governance in local government.

BACKGROUND, RATIONALE AND INTRODUCTION

People who hold political office and those in the public sector are expected to be responsible for their acts and/or inactions. There are those who argue that public officials in South Africa have more challenges because of the diverse population in the country, which includes individuals with different standards, beliefs, and cultures. As a result, ethics is a matter of personal preference. "What is acceptable in one civilization at one time may not be tolerated by other societies at another time", says Chapman (1998:56).

Van der Westhuizen (2001) identifies three aspects that relate specifically to ethics, namely "a call to action by public officials, sound reasoning and encouraging public servants to ask for guidance to determine the correct course of action". This implies that ethics goes beyond the law of the land and is therefore "based on, among others, societal norms" (Van der Westhuizen 2001).

There could be instances where the interpretation of a legal prescript might influence whether a certain action is considered to be ethical (Van der Westhuizen 2001). Although research by Van Pleet and Peterson (in Van der Westhuizen 2001) states that an activity can be regarded as ethical and unlawful, it is not clear if that is, in fact, so. Laws, ordinances, and regulations are commonly used in South Africa to control all forms of behaviour and achieve specific aims. As long as the prevailing societal values and norms fail to embrace such an approach, it will fail. According to the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996 (hereafter referred to as the Constitution, 1996), "public administration should be regulated by democratic principles and ideals", as outlined in Chapter 10:

- "A high standard of professional ethics must be maintained.
- The best use of resources must be promoted.
- Public administration must be development-orientated, and attention must be paid to people's needs.
- Services must be provided fairly, impartially, equitably and without bias.
- Public administration must be accountable and transparent.
- The potential of people must be developed through efficient management.
- Public administration must be broadly representative of the population, taking into account ability, capacity and the need to redress imbalances".

Thornhill, Van Dijk and Ile (2014:393) argue that, "Public administration is undertaken to seek the general good in the sense of evaluating and passing judgement on actions or inactions in terms of right or wrong, good or bad, proper or improper". This implies that, to understand and "comprehend ethical and unethical behaviour, one needs to *inter alia* understand what ethics and values entail" (Holtzhausen 2010:262).

Based on the aforementioned, “it is important that each public official within the public sector takes cognisance of the fact of openness, transparency, fairness and impartiality” when interacting with the public and when making ethical decisions relating to their employment duties. More importantly, these principles should serve as the foundation of public officials’ decision-making processes (Louw (2012:88-101). If they are not adhered to, this may be considered as unethical behaviour. According to Brytting, Minogue and Morino (2011) ethical values are core to any organisation and senior managers are responsible for setting and establishing organisational values.

Unethical behaviour of public officials seems to be the main topic of discussion in the public sector and is surrounded by considerable controversy and cogitation (Uys 2014:108). At its simplest, state institutions such as the Public Protector in South Africa and the AG of the country have identified serious unethical conduct and exposed corruption and financial mismanagement in the public sector. In addition, “governments, organisations, and the general public are concerned about unethical behaviour, especially in developing nations, because of the impact it has on service delivery” (Uys 2014:108). Ineffective service delivery and, in certain cases, a lack of sound governance appear to be the root causes of unethical behaviour. These incidents point to a public sector beset by ethical infractions.

Uys (2014:109) argues that, “while public sector institutions have management practices in place, they do not seem to function well”. Globally there is serious concern that the importance of promoting ethics and being ethical in one’s working environment is receiving less attention. Garofalo (2004:12), claims that “we are raising an entire generation of people without their own built-in sense of ethics”. Thus, the view of global ethics is that shared values (global consciousness), such as liberty and diversity, exist universally and that ethics is a practical necessity to promote ethical governance within the public sector.

According to Rosenthal (2012:9), “the idea is not to legislate by laws, policies and rules, but to inspire and give insight on innovative strategies that will promote ethical behaviour among public officials”. This implies that a dialogical approach among and within different countries needs to maintain a delicate balance between doing what is right and ethical, while enhancing an integrated global system by learning, adapting and evolving when dealing with unethical behaviour.

It is important to tackle unethical and unlawful behaviour and foster ethics and transparency. Citizens across South Africa are concerned about the integrity of the government and “have the right to demand that public officials adhere to the highest ethical standards” (Auriacombe 2009:87). Auriacombe (2009:87), states that “public administration is governed by democratic standards of good governance, which have a direct influence on the performance of public sector operations and the adoption of measures to encourage ethical behaviour”.

Notably, “to govern a country, a legitimate government is required in terms of the Constitution and other legal prescripts” (Auriacombe 2009:88). This implies that ethical governance should commence with a governing party that upholds the Constitution and leads by example. According to research performed by Mello *et al.* (2020:4), “a number of principles are necessary for ethical governance, namely the existence of the rule of law in practice, public and administrative accountability and transparency”. Devenish (1998) argues that “the doctrine of the rule of law was popularised by Dicey in 1885”. According to Cloete and Thornhill (2012), “This doctrine involved three key principles, namely, legality (guarantees all citizens rights and freedoms), equality (emphasises and right of citizens before the law) and the rights of citizens to be protected by independent courts of law”.

Having legislation and policies in place does not automatically translate to good ethical behaviour among employees. If managers and employees do not take responsibility for their actions, it will lead to a further rise in unethical conduct among public officials. Professional ethics is a major concern in South Africa. This is particularly the case within the public sector, where unethical behaviour of public officials has resulted in billions of rands disappearing from government departments. While the government aims to prevent unethical behaviour in the public sector through several laws, regulations and policy instruments, it has rendered limited results. This is clearly reflected in the formation of the Commission of Inquiry into State Capture headed by Deputy Chief Justice, Judge Raymond Zondo.

Ethical governance is hindered “by several forms of political corruption in local government” (Vyas-Doorgapersad and Ababio 2010:411). “Decentralised municipal governments may be more vulnerable to corruption because of the closeness and frequency of encounters between officials and private citizens” (Vyas-Doorgapersad and Ababio 2010:414). “Bribery, extortion, embezzlement, and graft are all examples of public money corruption” (Vyas-Doorgapersad and Ababio 2010:411). “Nepotism and patronage systems” are also elements of political corruption (Vyas-Doorgapersad and Ababio 2010:411).

The Anti-intimidation and Ethical Practises Foundation (AEPF) (AEPF 2018 in Mello *et al.* 2020:67) conducted a study “to establish the perceptions of professionals regarding ethics in South African society, their organisations as well as their professional institutions”. A total of 1 890 professionals, including those in the public sector, were involved in the study. The AEPF’s “findings pointed a need for more support for professionals in the public sector due to more serious challenges of reporting behaviour relating to unethical conduct” (AEPF 2018 in Mello *et al.* 2020:67). “Of all the professionals who participated in the survey, 56% disagreed that public sector leadership was ethical...only 9% agreed that public sector leadership was ethical” (AEPF 2018 in Mello *et al.* 2020:67). It is also important to note that “only 418 of the 1 890 participants worked in the public sector” (AEPF 2018 in

Mello *et al.* 2020:67). According to the Public Service Commission (2017 in Mello *et al.* 2020:67), “1 150 disciplinary proceedings of financial misconduct were reported in the 2016/2017 financial year”. A breakdown of “the 1 150 reported cases provides a clearer picture of the nature of financial misconduct within the public sector” (Public Service Commission 2017 in Mello *et al.* 2020:67).

Ethical governance underpins basic values and principles governing public administration, public service delivery and promoting good governance for managing ethics to promote ethical conduct in the public sector. The context of politics and administration differs vastly in scope. This scope can be categorised in macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of public administration. To perform these administrative functions requires ethical political office bearers and administrators. These administrators are appointed on different managerial levels in public institutions.

Mantzaris and Pillay (2014) emphasise the necessity to replace philosophical and theoretical discussions with concrete realities that are linked to supporting concepts related to the improvement of ethical governance. Ethical behaviour is integral to good governance. Therefore, it is important that public officials improve performance in public service delivery that is contingent on ethical behaviour. To govern a country, a legitimate government is required in terms of the Constitution and other legal and policy prescripts. Ethical governance should start with a governing party that upholds the Constitution and leads by example. A number of aspects, principles and practices are necessary to promote ethical governance. The Zondo Commission on State Capture has called for a renewed focus on good governance, cooperative governance and corporate governance. Without these vital elements, leadership can develop into dictatorship and fiefdoms that are rife with fraud and corruption. An organisation can be considered a legitimate and responsible user of society’s resources only if it has ethical and effective leadership and makes excellent judgements that society sees as a legitimate and responsible use of its resources.

The task ahead for municipalities is not only to adhere to the codes of conduct or ethics and other relevant legislation, but also to ensure public officials are committed to delivering efficient and effective services using innovative strategies to promote ethical/good governance within local government. The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1995, emphasised “the need for a code of conduct in South Africa as a vital aspect to improve high standards of ethical governance and professionalism within the public sector”. A code of conduct is an internal document that focuses on ensuring that officials are clearly committed to organisation and law. This thorough and prescriptive document contains elements such as occupational health, conflict of interests, gifts and perks. This demand is further repeated in the White Paper of 1997, highlighting the importance of the two concepts (ethics and a code of conduct) in public administration. According to research by Louw (2012:88-101), “it is of fundamental importance that public officials act justly and fairly to everyone, not only paying lip service to transparency and openness”.

The ethical and moral conduct of public officials is a visible manifestation of public sector ethics, as are democratic principles (Mello, Phago, Makamu, Dorasamy, Holtzhausen, Mothusi, Mpabanga and Tonchi 2020:106). Lawton, Raynor and Lasthuizen (2013) argue that “individuals who work in the public sector are bound by, subscribe to and are motivated by what is referred to as public service ethos” (sometimes referred to as public service motivation). Honesty and integrity, as well as a set of protocols that includes merit-based selection of applicants are hallmarks of this approach.

The assumption is that, should a code be thorough, there will be more consultation and stronger commitment from public authorities. The goal of the code of conduct is to encourage moral behaviour among public employees and address concerns pertaining to accountability, corruption and maladministration. Although a code of conduct may be questioned, a code with recommendations is important (Uys 2014:118). Public sector functionaries should focus on transparency and openness to address issues such as accountability, corruption and maladministration (Vyas-Doorgapersad and Ababio 2006:385). However, despite municipalities having such a code of conduct, outcomes of ethical/good governance in practice are contestable.

Mello *et al.* (2020:104), Lawton, Raynor and Lasthuizen (2013:56), Sindane and Uys (2014:396), Garofalo (2004:102), Van der Westhuizen (2001:69) and Lloyd and Kidder (1997:145-148), all claim that, “We are raising an entire generation of people without their own built-in sense of ethics”. The view of global ethics is that shared values (global consciousness), such as liberty and diversity, exist universally and that ethics is necessary to promote ethical governance within the public sector.

The magnitude of combating unethical, unlawful, and corrupt practices, as well as fostering accountability and ethics, cannot be overstated. Citizens throughout South Africa are worried about the government’s integrity and have a right to expect public officials to act ethically. Therefore, the public administration acts within democratic prescriptions for good governance, which influence the way public sector operations are carried out and on the adoption of measures that encourage ethical behaviour. Uys (2014:109) argues that, while public institutions within the public sector have management practices in place, they do not seem to function well. There is concern that the importance of promoting ethics and being ethical in one’s working environment is receiving less attention.

CONCEPTUALISING ETHICS, MORALS AND VALUES

Chapman (1998:56) defines public sector ethics as the application of moral principles to official tasks. Mbatha (2005) says that, “Ethics can be seen as a system

of moral principles that is based on values relating to human conduct". According to research conducted by Holtzhausen (2010:262), "ethics constitutes the basic principles of undertaking the right action, based on written and unwritten rules of behaviour". According to the author, "ethics is concerned with the evaluation and application of what is good or correct through attitudes and beliefs that provide direction to behaviour" (Holtzhausen 2010:262). Hence, ethics "determines the wrongs and rights of the voluntary actions of human beings" (Holtzhausen 2010:263).

Kenneth Kernaghan, an internationally acclaimed expert in the field of ethics in public administration, writes about the concept of ethics: "In addition to separating right from wrong and good from evil, ethics is concerned with a person's commitment to act in accordance with their beliefs...To understand ethics, we must first understand values, which are long-term beliefs that impact our decisions about what to do and how to do it" (Kernaghan 1996:16). The word ethics is frequently used in conjunction with the word morality. Often, these two words are used interchangeably, as if they have the same meaning and are the same concept.

Wiredu (in Molefe 2017:470-482) asserts that morality has intrinsic universal obligations when dealing with issues of ethics. Morality is seen as being independent of the mind and culture. Morality thus is universal when dealing with ethics. Wiredu (in Molefe 2017:470-482) further defines ethics as moral truths that are essential for human survival. Hinde (2002 in Disoloane 2012) explains that "the term 'morality' concerns the distinction between good and evil, and 'morals' are usually taken to refer to rules about good and evil, and 'moral' are usually taken to refer to rules about what people ought to do and what they ought not to do". Hinde (2002 in Disoloane 2012) argues that "when we talk about 'moral' values or behaviours, we usually mean values that we see as 'good', or as how someone 'ought' to behave". The concepts "right" and "wrong" or "ought" and "ought not to", clearly form the core of any discussion about ethics or morality.

It can be argued that "ethics is a system of moral principles which affect how individuals or institutions make decisions and lead institutions" (Van der Westhuizen 2001). Mafunisa (2001:335) defines ethics as a "branch of philosophy dealing with values relating to human conduct, with respect to the rightness and wrongness of certain actions and to the motives and ends of such actions".

Hilliard and Ferreira (2001 in Mello *et al.* 2020:108) define values as, "the general standards by which people live, and their views about what is desirable". "Ethical standards and profound emotional commitment to particular cognitive conceptions of the value of objects" that are generally associated with human action are referred to as values (Hilliard and Ferreira 2001 in Mello *et al.* 2020:108).

Mello *et al.* (2020:73), Bauman (2013:414-426) and Vosselman and Van de Meer-Kooistra (2009:276-283) contend that public sector ethics is the execution

of ethical principles when performing responsibilities. Such ethical principles include recognising the rights of all stakeholders, compliance with legislative and statutory frameworks underpinning public service delivery and ensuring the well-being of citizens. However, in practice, these ethical principles can be compromised when self-interest takes precedence over public gain or when organisational requirements dictate rejecting or refusing ethical principles. One must not only find ways to improve ethical behaviour to ensure good/ethical governance, but also identify any possible causes of, and remedies for, unethical behaviour.

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AS MEASURING INSTRUMENT TO PROMOTE ETHICAL GOVERNANCE

A conceptual framework refers to “the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and constructs that inform research” (Auriacombe and Schurink 2012:78). It represents the “complex reality and the findings of a study in a simplified form that can be used to develop a theory by explaining the relationship between variables” (Auriacombe and Schurink 2012:78). “In its most simplistic connotation”, according to the authors, “a conceptual framework can be regarded as a mental image, or a description, used to help understand the phenomena under study” (Auriacombe and Schurink 2012:78). In this research, the conceptual framework consisted of “selected concepts and phenomena identified during the contextual and conceptual analysis of terms related to governance and the relationships between them” (Auriacombe and Schurink 2012:78), as well as additional findings extrapolated from the empirical study.

“Conceptual frameworks are built on ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions, and each concept within a conceptual framework plays an ontological and epistemological role” (Guba & Lincoln in Auriacombe 2012:129). The guidelines presented by Creswell (2007) and Nuopponen (2010), namely to help capture, analyse, and interpret the findings within the contextual and conceptual framework in a systematic way are followed. According to Nuopponen (2010), these guidelines include to:

- “Identify key concepts;
- Utilise key concepts to search the data;
- Develop, plan, and outline a structure for the literature review;
- Skim the literature;
- Summarise the main arguments as they relate to ethical governance and corruption;
- Structure the literature review thematically;
- Review and critique the literature; and

- Identify and define concepts and phenomena needed to understand ethical governance”.

The conceptual framework of the study, was developed according to the following criteria:

- “The assessment and refinement of the goals of the study;
- The development of realistic and relevant research questions and research objectives;
- Substantiating arguments;
- Identifying primary concepts;
- Clarifying the theoretical framework and reasoning used;
- Analysing concepts;
- Justifying decisions and guiding information gathering and analysis;
- Clarifying the relationships between concepts;
- Comparing the characteristics of related concepts; and
- Refining concepts for the development of a framework for effective citizen participation in third-world countries” (Nuopponen 2010).

The specific process followed to develop a model for ethical governance in municipalities is identified as follows (cf. http://ncra.ucd.ie/papers/sample_chapter8.pdf):

- **Phase One:** Determining the **locus** (South African context in general and local government in particular) and the **focus** (philosophical and disciplinary, eg. P(p) ublic A(a)dmistration in general and local government in particular; conceptual foundations; and theoretical foundations) of the study (ethical governance).
- **Phase Two:** The concepts influencing the context of ethical governance are analysed and the relationships between the concepts and constructs investigated.
- **Phase Three:** The theories that form the foundation of ethical governance are identified and the characteristics/assumptions of good ethical governance, as described in theory, are acknowledged.
- **Phase Four:** The statutory, regulatory and policy framework that has an influence on ethical governance in municipalities is identified.
- **Phase Five:** The institutional and functional framework (organisational structures, institutions, office bearers and other stakeholders) that has an influence on activities related to ethical governance, and responsibility for addressing ethical governance in a municipality is identified.
- **Phase Six:** The manifestations of corruption and approaches and strategies to promote ethical governance are identified.
- **Phase Seven:** The creation of the conceptual, contextual and analytical framework to promote and measure ethical governance in local government.

Table 1 presents the final conceptual framework for phase seven of this study.

Figure 1: Phases to develop ethical governance model for municipalities

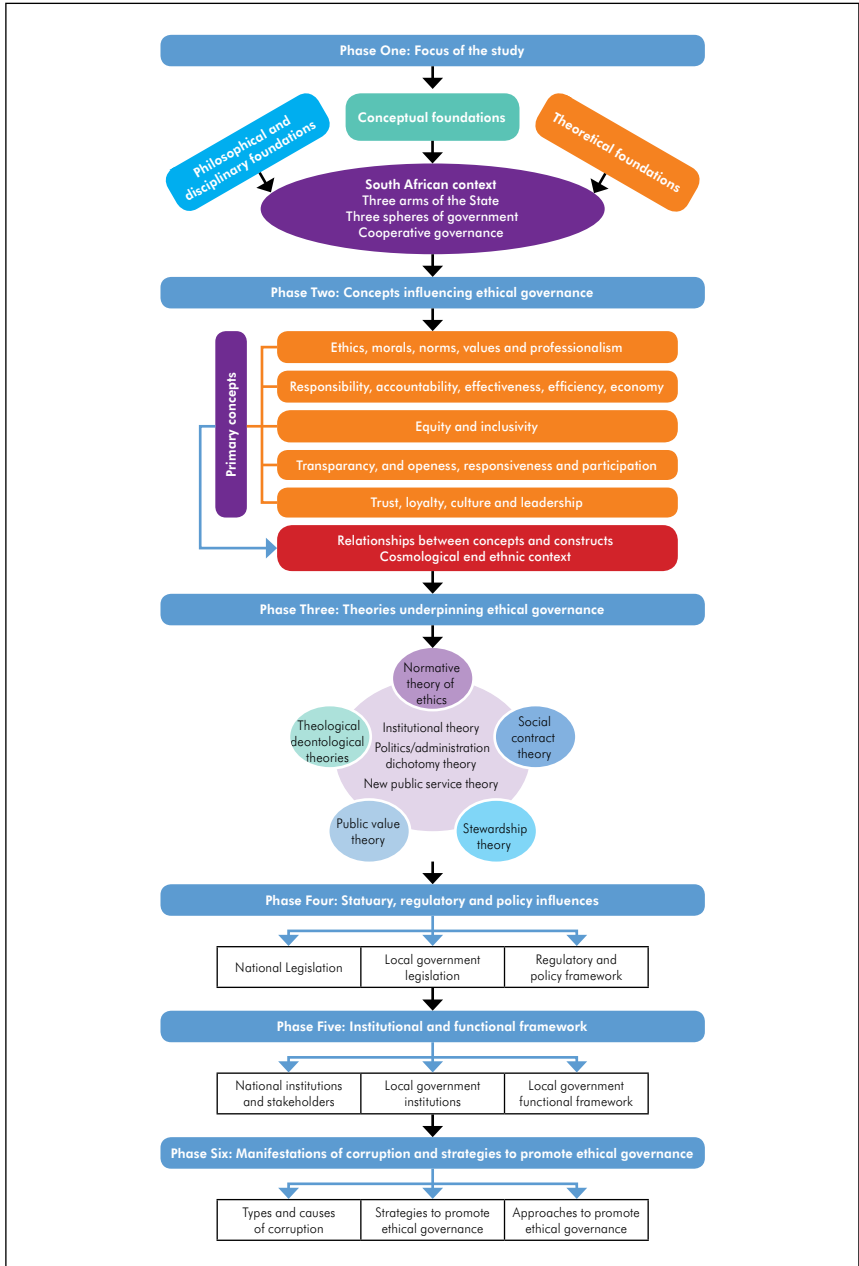


Table 1: Conceptual, contextual and analytical framework to promote ethical governance

Primary concepts, theories and principles	Beliefs, assumptions, expectations and principles	Statutory, regulatory, policy and institutional frameworks
<p>CONCEPTS</p> <p>Ethics <i>Clarity of public sector ethical standards</i> <i>Availability of ethical guidance</i></p> <p>Morals <i>Ethics and morality.</i> <i>Personal morals and codes of conduct.</i> <i>Promotion of moral principles.</i></p> <p>Norms, Values, Respect for human rights, Professionalism <i>Ethics and professionalism.</i> <i>Standards of professionalism.</i> <i>Demonstration of professionalism.</i></p> <p>Responsibility, Accountability <i>Adequate accountability mechanisms</i> <i>Accountability and integrity systems</i> <i>Economic accountability</i></p> <p>Culture</p> <p>Loyalty</p> <p>Trust</p> <p>Effectiveness <i>Effective coordination</i></p> <p>Efficiency</p> <p>Economy <i>Principles of economy</i></p> <p>Equity and inclusivity <i>Promotion of equality</i></p> <p>Transparency and openness <i>Knowledge of rights and obligations when exposing wrongdoing</i></p> <p>Responsiveness</p> <p>Participation</p> <p>Leadership <i>People-centred strategies</i> <i>Adequate leadership skills and attitudes</i> <i>Effective leaders</i> <i>Political commitment reinforcing the ethical conduct of officials and councillors</i> <i>Promotion and demonstration of ethical conduct of managers</i></p>	<p>Philosophical foundations</p> <p>Cosmological context</p> <p>Ethnic context</p> <p>Botho/Ubuntu context</p> <p>African social structure and ethics</p> <p>African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration</p> <p>Ethics and religion</p> <p>Policy considerations for ethical governance <i>Distributive policies</i> <i>Redistributive policies</i> <i>Competitive regulatory policies</i> <i>Protective regulatory policies</i> <i>Self-regulatory policies</i> <i>Substantive policies</i> <i>Procedural policies</i> <i>Material policies</i> <i>Symbolic policies</i> <i>Policies on collective goods</i> <i>Policies on private goods</i></p>	<p>NATIONAL LEGISLATION</p> <p>Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 <i>Bill of Rights</i> <i>Principles of public administration</i></p> <p>Public Service Act 103 of 1994 <i>Governance of misbehaviour</i></p> <p>Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 <i>Public sector conditions and management of human resources</i> <i>Promoting ethical conduct</i> <i>Disciplinary procedures</i> <i>Disciplinary code</i></p> <p>Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 <i>Prevention of racketeering</i> <i>Prevention of organised crime</i></p> <p>Executive Members' Ethics Act 82 of 1998 <i>Code of ethics</i> <i>Operate in good faith</i></p> <p>Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999 <i>Governing financial behaviour of officials</i> <i>Financial misconduct</i> <i>Disciplinary proceedings</i></p> <p>Protected Disclosures Act 26 of 2000 <i>Reporting system of illegal and irregular conduct</i> <i>Whistle-blower protection</i></p> <p>Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 <i>Right to information held by the State</i></p> <p>Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000 <i>Right to administrative action</i> <i>Procedural fairness</i></p> <p>Prevention and Combatting of Corrupt Activities Act 12 of 2004 <i>Prosecution of cases of corruption</i> <i>Identification of criminal offences and corruption</i> <i>Private interests in contracts</i> <i>Investigating offenses</i></p> <p>Public Audit Act 25 of 2004 <i>Regulating AG officials and practices</i></p> <p>Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 <i>Right to personal privacy</i></p> <p>LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION</p> <p>Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 <i>Appointing information officers</i> <i>Ward participatory system</i> <i>Code of conduct</i></p> <p>Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 <i>Establishment of appropriate mechanisms, procedures and processes</i> <i>Code of conduct</i></p> <p>Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 <i>Enforcing treasury rules and standards</i> <i>Liability for financial misconduct</i> <i>Financial reporting</i> <i>Supply chain management</i> <i>Financial management and auditing</i> <i>Institute disciplinary proceedings for financial misconduct</i> <i>Internal and external control systems</i> <i>Effective expenditure control system</i> <i>Management of accounting and information systems</i></p>

Types and causes of corruption	Legal, strategic and functional considerations
<p>Types of unethical behaviour <i>Bribery</i> <i>Leaking confidential information</i> <i>Favouritism in employment practices</i> <i>Sexual harassment and sextortion</i> <i>Theft</i> <i>Falsification of documents or misrepresentation</i> <i>Using political influence and peddling lies</i> <i>Sabotage</i> <i>Misuse of movable and fixed property</i> <i>Control of valuable resources</i> <i>Election fraud and kleptocracy</i> <i>Victimisation</i> <i>Excessive administrative secrecy</i></p> <p>Causes of corruption <i>Weak internal control systems</i> <i>Poor financial management</i> <i>Weak auditing mechanism</i> <i>Weak ethical leadership</i> <i>Absence of leadership development for managers</i> <i>Political 'godfatherism'</i> <i>Failure to address the causes of ethical problems</i> <i>Obscured transparency, openness and fairness in managing public resources</i> <i>Lack of accountability</i> <i>Undermining public control through PPP procurement</i> <i>Weak ethical organisational culture</i> <i>Non-existence of an ethics framework</i> <i>Ineffective ethical management</i> <i>Low salaries in the public sector</i> <i>Weak statutory framework</i> <i>In-group egocentrism</i> <i>Inadequacy of the systemic approach to address ethical problems</i> <i>Lack of training and capacity building to promote ethics</i> <i>Limited or no use of social media communication platforms</i> <i>Political interference in investigations</i> <i>Enforcement agencies' limited capacity</i></p>	<p>Relationship between ethics and the law <i>Role-player interactions</i> <i>Universal juridical inter-order</i> <i>Legal behaviour</i> <i>Interpreting laws</i> <i>Outlining ethical standards in the legal framework</i></p> <p>Customary/common law Customary courts <i>Uncodified laws and customs</i></p> <p>Rules and regulations Legal compliance Respecting the rule of law Approaches to promote ethical management and governance <i>A compliance approach</i> <i>An integrity-based approach</i> <i>A rule-based approach</i> <i>Institutional mechanism-based approach</i></p> <p>Strategies to promote ethical management and governance <i>Appropriate procedures and sanctions to deal with misconduct</i> <i>Disclosure of wrongdoing mechanisms</i> <i>Clear guidelines for interaction between public and private sectors</i> <i>Developing an effective ethics management system</i> <i>Developing clear management policies, procedures and practices promoting ethical conduct</i> <i>Clear ethical standards</i> <i>The reflection of ethical standards in the legal framework</i> <i>Reporting channels to report wrongdoing</i> <i>Political commitment to reinforce the ethical conduct of public officials</i> <i>The decision-making process should be transparent and open to scrutiny</i> <i>Senior managers should demonstrate and promote ethical behaviour</i> <i>Management policies, procedures and practices should promote ethical behaviour</i> <i>Service conditions and HRM should promote ethical conduct</i></p>

Primary concepts, theories and principles	Beliefs, assumptions, expectations and principles	Statutory, regulatory, policy and institutional frameworks
<p>DISCIPLINE CONSTRUCTS AND VARIABLES</p> <p>Administration <i>Administrative justice</i> <i>Procedural fairness and equity</i> <i>Competence of administrator</i></p> <p>Public administration <i>Batho Pele principles</i> <i>Public service ethos</i> <i>Social welfare</i> <i>Quality of services</i></p> <p>Public management <i>Effective delegation procedures</i> <i>Controlling sound organisational processes</i></p> <p>Governance <i>Expansion of public involvement</i> <i>Government/society interactions</i> <i>Societal decision-making</i></p> <p>Good governance principles</p> <p>NPM <i>Non-interference of private sector</i> <i>Increased service orientation</i> <i>Improved capacity</i> <i>Effective private practices</i></p> <p>Corporate governance <i>Appropriate tendering practices</i> <i>Economic accountability</i> <i>Internal and external auditing</i> <i>Principles of King Codes</i></p> <p>Democratic governance <i>Credibility</i> <i>Stability</i></p>		<p>REGULATORY FRAMEWORK</p> <p>National: Public Service Regulations, 2016 <i>Financial transparency</i> <i>Anti-corruption measures</i> <i>Ethical management</i></p> <p>Local government: White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997 <i>A selfless public official</i> <i>Serving the public</i> <i>Optimise access to services</i> <i>Batho Pele principles</i></p> <p>White Paper on Local Government, 1998 <i>Building democratic principles</i> <i>Citizen engagement</i> <i>Building local democracy</i></p> <p>POLICY FRAMEWORK</p> <p>National: Public Service Code of Conduct <i>Umbrella code of conduct</i></p> <p>Local government: Code of conduct for councillors <i>Disclosure and declaration of interests</i> <i>Personal gain</i> <i>Unauthorised disclosure of information</i> <i>Intervention and administration</i> <i>Breaches of the code</i> <i>General conduct</i> <i>Commitment to serving the public's interest</i></p> <p>Code of Conduct for Municipal Staff Members <i>Personal gain</i> <i>Disclosure and declaration of benefits</i> <i>Unauthorised disclosure of information</i> <i>Undue influence</i> <i>Rewards, gifts and favours</i> <i>Breaches of the code</i></p>
<p>THE THREE ARMS OF STATE Separation of state functions</p> <p>Legislature</p> <p>Executive</p> <p>Judiciary</p> <p>National government</p> <p>Provincial government</p> <p>Local government</p> <p>Cooperative governance <i>Interdependency of policy implementation</i></p> <p>Government legitimacy <i>Acceptability of political leaders</i> <i>General well-being and prosperity of citizens</i> <i>Legitimate official actions</i> <i>Separation of state functions</i></p> <p>THEORIES UNDERPINNING ETHICS AND ETHICAL GOVERNANCE WITHIN PUBLIC SECTOR SERVICE DELIVERY Normative theory of ethics</p>		<p>National Institutional Framework</p> <p>Public Service Commission (PSC) <i>Standards of professionalism</i></p> <p>Public Protector <i>Corrective measures</i></p> <p>Auditor-General (AG) <i>Investigate financial transactions</i> <i>Investigate unauthorised expenditure</i></p> <p>South African Revenue Service <i>Fraud and corruption hotline</i></p> <p>South African Police Service <i>Anti-corruption strategy</i></p> <p>National Prosecuting Authority <i>Institute criminal proceedings</i></p> <p>Special Investigating Unit <i>Investigate mal-administration and negligent loss of money</i></p> <p>National Intelligence Agency (NIA) <i>Domestic and counter-intelligence and security</i></p> <p>National Treasury <i>Control, oversight and monitoring</i> <i>Recognised general practises</i> <i>Uniform expenditure classific</i></p>

Types and causes of corruption	Legal, strategic and functional considerations

Primary concepts, theories and principles	Beliefs, assumptions, expectations and principles	Statutory, regulatory, policy and institutional frameworks
<p>Teleological and deontological theories</p> <p>Social contract theory Public interest General safety and security of country</p> <p>Public value theory Value to public goods and service delivery Citizens as primary beneficiaries</p> <p>Institutional theory Acceptability of public institutions</p> <p>Politics-administration dichotomy theory Political interference</p> <p>Stewardship theory Effective resource supervision Community interest</p> <p>New public service theory Responsive public institutions Value citizenship</p>		<p><i>ations</i> <i>Norms and standards</i></p> <p>Commissions of Inquiry <i>Investigate maladministration and corruption</i></p> <p>LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS</p> <p>Council <i>Provide adequate control measures</i></p> <p>Office of the executive mayor <i>Regular performance reports</i></p> <p>Municipal council committees and other committees executive committees <i>Reporting mechanism</i></p> <p>Section 80 and Section 79 committees <i>Appeals committee</i> <i>Disciplinary committee</i> <i>Rules committee</i> <i>Oversight committee</i> <i>Audit committee</i> <i>Ward committees</i></p> <p>Office of the Speaker <i>Notices of proper consultation</i></p> <p>Municipal Manager <i>Foster economical, effective, efficient and accountable administrations</i> <i>Discipline maintenance</i></p> <p>Control and oversight committees <i>Detective controls</i> <i>Preventative control measures</i> <i>Corrective internal controls</i></p> <p>Municipal Public Accounts Committee <i>Recommendations in cases of suspicions or allegations of corrupt actions</i></p> <p>Audit and risk committee <i>Governed by a Charter</i> <i>Ensure compliance with legal frameworks</i></p> <p>Provincial Standing Committee on Public Accounts <i>Oversight over provincial and municipal finances</i></p> <p>Chief financial officer <i>Oversee financial and supply chain-related functions</i> <i>Strategic ethical governance</i></p> <p>Non-financial managers <i>Managing and coordination of financial administrations</i></p> <p>Internal audit staff and auditors <i>Independent and objective</i></p> <p>Party whips and chief-whip <i>Ensuring councilor discipline</i></p> <p>Heads of department and other senior managers <i>Skills and expertise</i> <i>Monitor departmental performance</i> <i>Performance appraisals</i> <i>HR practices</i></p> <p>Individual politicians <i>Guided by and Oath of Office</i></p> <p>Public officials <i>Trustees to protect public resources</i> <i>Consensus orientation</i></p>

Types and causes of corruption	Legal, strategic and functional considerations

Primary concepts, theories and principles	Beliefs, assumptions, expectations and principles	Statutory, regulatory, policy and institutional frameworks
		<p>Communities and individual members of the public Instill desirable values in communities Lodging complaints</p> <p>Religious communities Foundational basis of ethical actions</p> <p>Business community Support government's lack of capacity NGOs (Apolitical and non-profit)</p>

FINDINGS

In the study's findings, several conclusions are reached:

- Ethics is widely recognised as a critical component of public administration and its study on a global scale. Ethics is the topic of countless arguments and reflections by public officials and academics in the field of Public Administration. It is challenging to attempt to define ethics. However, one can safely describe ethics in the context of public administration as the result of interactions between diverse role-players within the arena of public administration. In the public sector, codes of conduct are used to instruct and guide public officials' morals and judgement. They should ideally be written, enforced behavioural norms that do not undermine but rather teach, assist, and direct public officials' competence, morality, and ethical judgement in carrying out their tasks. Codes of conduct must include a basic penal implication for non-compliance. Otherwise, they risk misuse and brazen disrespect.
- If fully understood by everyone, culture can play a significant role in performance and productivity. Culture can be used as a strategy, mechanism or guide for ethical governance by promoting proper communication and validating the actions of public officials and councilors. This does not, however, permit public officials and councillors to engage in immoral behaviour and then exploit the problem of culture to justify their actions.
- The mental stimuli of culture may be viewed as the driving force behind the capacity to retain what has been taught, whether good, bad or indifferent. This ultimately leads to one's judgement and evaluation of immoral behaviour. Individuals should constantly relearn negative mental stimuli that cloud their judgement and instead focus on good cultural stimuli that promote ethical governance. If corruption is ingrained in the culture of a municipality, it must be unlearned.
- Ubuntu is a concept that has become a way of life and a philosophy among African communities in South Africa. The modern structure of African families has changed from people living in extended families to a smaller nuclear family which is surrounded by "strangers". The biggest contributing factors, namely

Types and causes of corruption	Legal, strategic and functional considerations

urbanisation and lifestyle changes, have resulted in families moving away from ethical guidelines which include trust, selflessness, interdependence and sharing. As a result, African families have now become more inward looking, with a strong focus on survival to economic realities and poverty. Leadership and training will be required to introduce the principles of Ubuntu in the public sector. With this approach, Western norms and standards will not erode the values and norms of Ubuntu.

- All decision-making processes within the municipality must be transparent and open to scrutiny.
- Municipalities must establish clear norms for collaboration between the public and commercial sectors. The Anti-Corruption Co-ordinating Committee (see Table 1) brings together sectors such as civil society and business to combat corruption and immoral behaviour.
- Management policies, methods, and practices should support ethical behaviour. Managers can contribute significantly to promoting high ethical standards of behaviour by serving as role-models and offering consistent leadership in their professional interactions with political leaders, other public authorities, and people. A supportive atmosphere that provides suitable rewards for ethical behaviour might help instil ethical behaviour in everyday practice.
- Service conditions and human resource management should foster ethical behaviour within a municipality. Consistently applying fundamental concepts, such as merit in the recruiting and promotion process, contributes to operationalising integrity in the public sector. Ethical behaviour should be rewarded through an ethics-focused performance management system.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE ETHICAL GOVERNANCE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Good ethical governance in municipalities is crucial in the effective functioning of local government and ultimately the promotion of the general well-being and

communities' living standards. Ethical governance involves "the coordination of processes, practices and rules by which an institution is directed and controlled" (cf. Aytekin, Miles & Esen in Majam 2021:178). The following recommendations are proposed to address the main ethical governance challenges in local government. The recommendations focus on the best options available to implement changes to solve these problems with corrective actions. These recommendations can positively influence the way local government undertakes its statutory mandates on ethical governance.

- There must be strong and effective leadership, direction and control from both political office bearers and officials based on the foundations provided in the conceptual model (see Table 1) when implementing the principles of good ethical governance.
- A collaborative and harmonious relationship must be found between the political officebearers, administrative officials and the community. This relationship must be proactive, positive and dynamic, with a shared vision of the service delivery aims, strategies and values of the municipality. Lack of trust and understanding among these role-players will affect the effective implementation of good ethical governance. Strong ethical leadership and a keen sense of professionalism will provide a positive and productive working environment. This will encourage municipal employees to carry out their functions ethically and to the best of their ability.
- There is a need for knowledgeable, skilled, qualified and effective ethical governance structures and office bearers in municipalities (see Table 1). This is required to ensure that legislation is implemented successfully, which will foster successful ethical governance. The effective functioning of political structures and office bearers is their ability to provide critical oversight and guidance in ethics management. The municipal council and the mayor must ensure that municipalities function in a financially and ethically sustainable way. This can be done through monitoring, evaluating, checking, providing guidance and offering advice and support.
- Administrative structures and office bearers require expertise, knowledge and skills and preferably an appropriate tertiary qualification to be successful in their roles and responsibilities. They also need to display a strong commitment to ethics and professionalism. The municipal manager and the Chief Financial Officer are the people who influence the outcomes of actions and decisions (Majam 2021:108). A disciplined adherence to a code of conduct, knowledge of ethical values of the municipality, and a commitment to professionalism will ultimately ensure good ethical governance in municipalities.
- Municipal managers should act as stewards, and, prioritise government performance and community satisfaction above their own needs. Effective and

economical use of resources is imperative. Municipal managers must have the knowledge, skills, competencies, expertise, operational- and technical know-how, and the ability to influence and motivate employees to achieve objectives, be productive, work ethically and with integrity. The foundation on which this is built lies in stewardship theory which focuses on the idea that municipal managers prioritise their communities and not their own personal interests. This theory also advocates for the effective and economical use of resources by municipal council and specifically municipal managers within the municipality to improve its performance. Municipal managers must be “empowered to carry out their roles and responsibilities, such as protecting and maximising organisational performance and community wealth; controlling assets and financial resources; and solving economic and social problems with honesty and integrity by forming key relationships that will benefit communities” (Majam 2021:50). They must also use their knowledge, skills and expertise to better implement decisions that will positively impact their communities.

- Monitoring and evaluation of ethical and unethical behaviour must be incorporated in regular performance appraisals of officials. The focus should not only be on managing financial and material resources but also on human capital. Proper enforcement and strict monitoring must adhere to the code of conduct for councillors and officials.
- There must be ethics education and training sessions to promote adherence to and understanding of the codes of conduct. The municipality’s operational budget must include funding for these sessions.
- Local government officials and councillors must demonstrate professionalism when dealing with challenges concerning ethics and morality. There must be a continued defining and re-defining of what constitutes ethical behaviour, public interest and public value in decision-making.
- A proper ethics compliance programme must be established.
- An ethics officer and an ethics office must be instituted to ensure ethical governance and to provide advice on ethical matters requiring priority.
- Ethics-focused concepts (see Table 1) and violations should be incorporated in the performance management system to ensure discipline and punishment. Performance contracts of senior management must emphasise commitment to ethical conduct and disclosing unethical conduct. Their performance should not only be measured against meeting service delivery targets, as most issues relating to ethical conduct are overlooked within the municipality.
- Observed violations should be better managed in terms of reporting mechanisms.
- A disciplinary office and disciplinary code must be established to resolve punishment or further action in an appropriate time span.

- Improved channels of communication for dealing with ethical matters should be ensured, for example, in terms of knowledge of the relevant codes of conduct.
- Codes of conduct should form part of the induction process of new staff.
- An ethics officer must address functional areas, such as tendering and bidding that tend to attract unethical conduct within the municipality, periodically.
- The conceptual framework, as outlined in Table 1, must be used as a guideline to monitor and implement a policy governing ethics-related matters.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

It became evident that ensuring ethical conduct in the public sector extends beyond enforcing administrative procedures and policies. The public's demand for a more transparent and accountable public sector requires not only reforms but also transformation initiatives to ensure that the public sector is resistant to unethical behaviour.

Government needs to follow a multi-pronged approach that embraces all pillars of ethical conduct to ensure that ethics is driven not only from an external perspective. Containing unethical behaviour requires an integrated approach that determines the causes of unethical behaviour and develops responses that can prevent the recurrence of such conduct. The list of manifestations of unethical behaviour and corruption provided in this article may not be exhaustive, but it serves to inform current and would-be politicians and public officials about the pitfalls to be considered in their conduct.

It is imperative to mention the external role-players that affect the functioning of these political and administrative-ethical governance structures and office bearers, such as the AG and the National Treasury (Majam 2021:110). These external role-players have always been seen as independent, unbiased, objective and impartial control measures in achieving sound financial welfare within the municipality.

The role of the AG cannot be underestimated. "The 'Report on Local Government Audit Outcomes' provided by the AG on a yearly basis, monitors the financial position and performance of municipalities" (*cf.* Majam 2021:113). This report provides a clear indication of municipalities' financial progress in submitting appropriate and correct annual financial statements. For support and advice, the National Treasury plays a pivotal role. A positive, harmonious relationship must be encouraged with municipalities and open channels of communication must be maintained.

In general, there are ever-increasing challenges related to unethical behaviour and practices in local government in South Africa. This situation can be attributed *inter alia* to a lack of proper procedures, a lack of institutional objectives, complicated ethical governance processes, a lack of enforcing the local government codes of conduct and no proper implementation strategy to ensure ethical governance.

NOTE

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Managing the Features and Dynamics of a Rural Non-Farm Economy in a Globalising Africa

Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

It is a fact that the international commodity crisis of the 1980s inspired the emergence of neoliberal ideologies predicated on market liberalisation and globalisation. This major global event and the policies associated with it have had a tremendous impact on the peasant agrarian political economy in many underdeveloped and developing nations, particularly those in Africa. The information available from recent data and evidence from available studies are beginning to challenge the traditional perception of these nations as being typically agrarian, where subsistence agriculture represents the dominant mode of economic activity, particularly in the rural areas. There is a dynamic upsurge of economic activities that are rural but not based on farms. The objective of this article is to appraise these economic activities, evaluate their contemporary features, and assess their development dynamics in a globalising Africa.

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

In discussions on development theory, the importance of the agricultural sector is a predominant feature of nations in their early stages of development. These nations are linked to the agrarian mode of production and livelihood, which is characterised by small, family, or household farms located in cohesive rural communities. This mode of economic production was introduced to the African

continent by European settlers who later also introduced colonial administration in the colonised territories (Ezeanyika 2017). The evolution and subsequent development of peasant socio-economic patterns was strongly encouraged by the colonial administration in the 19th century. The intention was to facilitate the production and export of essential commodities to metropolitan nations (Bryceson 2002; Ezeanyika 2017). Even several decades after their attainment of “nominal political independence”, African nations have remained dependent on the structural features of these peasant agrarian economies of the colonial era (Ezeanyika 2016).

Immediately after the Second World War, the various colonial administrations on the African continent formulated development policies set to expand and modernise peasant agrarian production to turn it into an engine of industrialisation (Adi 2007). The emergence of neoliberal ideologies followed the commodity crisis of the 1980s predicated on market liberalisation. These events and policies greatly influenced and changed the peasant agrarian economy in many underdeveloped nations. Recent data and evidence are challenging the traditional perception of these nations as typically agrarian, where subsistence agriculture represents the dominant mode of economic activity, particularly in rural areas (Helleiner 1986; Maizels 1992). In the past decade, there has been an upsurge of economic activities that are not based on agriculture. They are gaining ground in various rural regions of many underdeveloped and developing nations; not only in Africa, but also in Asia and Latin America (Ellis 2000; Ellis & Seeley 2005).

Consequently, one could therefore liken the 1980s in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) to a period of remarkable transformation. According to scholars such as Bryceson (1999a; 2000a), rural communities in Africa were actively involved in rural non-farm (RNF) activities. Research conducted early in the 21st century highlighted the growing importance of the non-farm sector as a source of income to rural communities. Emphasis placed on livelihood diversification increased and expanded income and livelihood strategies. These processes were captured in the works of Bahigwa, Mdoe and Ellis (2005) and Assan and Kumar (2009).

Diversification is a process of allocating capital to multiple income sources to reduce exposure to risk or volatility. When linked with the concept of livelihoods, it becomes “the processes by which rural families construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities in their struggle for survival and in order to improve their standard of living” (Ellis 1998).

Non-farm activities, as defined by Ellis (2000), comprise all activities that generate income for the household outside of agriculture (i.e. gathering) and fishing (Lanjouw 2001; 2006). Within SSA, this phenomenon has been referred to as “de-agrarianisation”, which implies a radical shift out of, and away from, agriculture (Bryceson 2000b; AnderssonDjurfeldt 2013). De-agrarianisation in SSA was strongly influenced by the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and market

liberalisation policies that were fashionable in the 1980s; radically transforming rural livelihoods (Adi 2007).

THE PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

It is not only dramatic policy changes in most SSA nations and within the global system that have affected rural households' livelihoods. They also seem to have been affected by recent socio-economic changes engineered by the multidimensional ramifications of globalisation (Ezeanyika 2018). For instance, the rural labour force has been rapidly growing at a rate higher than what agriculture can absorb. This situation seems to have been created by the increasing scarcity of arable land necessary for agricultural expansion. It seems to have been aggravated by growing technology diffusion and adoption in agriculture, which pushes manual labour out of agriculture as new technologies reduce agricultural labour needs. This situation is compounded by rapidly declining agricultural productivity and crop failure, which are caused by unanticipated climatic factors (Chepkoech, Mutuku, & Nwaniki 2014). There are many reasons for diversification. They include, first, "push factors", which mainly involve a decrease in risks, fragmentation, crises, etc. (Haggblade, Hazell, & Reardon 2006), and, second, a set of motives involving "pull factors", which include the integration of crop and livestock, specialisation guided by comparative advantage, improved technologies, etc. (Barrett, Reardon, & Webb 2001).

These micro-level determinants of diversification can be aggregated. If diversification is viewed from the push factor angle, it has a lower chance of bearing the risks faced by poorly developed financial systems. From the pull factor angle, local engines of growth, such as commercial agriculture and/or proximity to a city, provide opportunities for income diversification in production and expenditure-linked activities (Barrett 2007; Loison 2016; Makita 2016).

Diversification is conceived as an *ex ante* income-smoothing strategy, rather than an *ex post* consumption-smoothing strategy. It can also be perceived as a risk-mitigation strategy for households under the threat of imperfection in the markets for land, credits, labour, and insurance. Diversification of rural households is an innovative response by households to the dynamic interaction of massive population growth, increasing resource constraints, and growing market development and access (Boserup 1965; Biswanger & Ruttan 1987; De Brauw, Mueller & Lee 2014).

In other words, rural households' diversification of their sources of livelihood is the mitigation of risk factors resulting from insecure sources of livelihood caused by poorly developed markets (Odoh & Nwibo 2017; Anang 2017; Abdissa 2017). In this article, the major assumption is that the decision of a household to diversify

into non-farm activities related to its livelihood or otherwise, is as a result of certain factors, including household endowments of physical assets such as land and equipment; non-physical assets such as skills or capabilities enhanced by education and vocational training; household demographics such as age, size, and the number of economically active household members; and locally available (and accessible) environmental or natural resources such as the quality or fertility of land that would likely determine agricultural productivity. This position is supported in the literature (Bryceson 1999a, 1999b; 2004; Maddox 2005). Given the quality of land, and the high or low returns of farming and access, or lack thereof, to developed markets and infrastructure such as roads and electricity, households must decide which portfolios of activities to hold in order to take advantage of the incentives or to mitigate the perceived constraints. The major challenge of this article is to understand and explain how differences in endowments, such as those listed above, influence rural households' decisions to diversify.

The dynamic expansion of the RNF sector has the potential to create a viable development alternative for African nations in their efforts to solve the challenges of absolute and disproportionate poverty and unemployment. Issues concerning livelihood diversification have become focal in policy debates and initiatives concerning the welfare and development of rural households (Bryceson & Jamal 1997; Reardon 1997; Little *et al.* 2001; Rigg 2006; Bezu & Barrett 2012; Bezu, Barrett & Holden 2012).

HOUSEHOLDS' LIVELIHOOD: MAJOR CHALLENGES AND APPROACH

A common characteristic of most economies, particularly those in underdeveloped and some developing nations is the coexistence of a modern and a traditional sector, commonly referred to as the dual economy. For several decades, the dual economy model has provided the basic framework for the analysis of underdeveloped economies. This model postulates the sectoral division of the economy into rural and urban, agriculture and industry, and informal and formal (Vollrath 2009a; 2009b). According to this model, in the rural economy, activities are classified into agricultural and non-agricultural. Within this context, Bryceson (1999b) postulates that non-agricultural activities can be defined as any work that does not directly involve crops or animal husbandry.

The concept of specialisation plays a central role to the understanding of the dual economy theory. The arguments on its functions are dynamic: some scholars posit that, as distinct from diversification, its application in underdeveloped and developing economies has a positive impact on efficiency and productivity (Lewis 1954; Ruttan 1968; Singer 1996; Vollrath 2009a; 2009b). Within the framework

of this thinking, the concept of diversification was perceived as a transitory stage that would gradually pass as the economy develops (Saith 1992). However, this line of reasoning has failed as diversification has become a permanent feature in many underdeveloped economies (Collier 1988; Preston 1989). This emerging reality has prompted researchers and policy analysts concerned with household livelihood diversities to focus their attention on the livelihoods approach when conducting general research on rural development.

The growing concern about challenges associated with livelihoods among peasant societies and rural people has been expressed by scholars from different social and behavioural science disciplines, including anthropology, demography, economics, political science, psychology, public health, public policy, and others (Jacobs & Makaudze 2012). Recently, this interest has been fuelled by the remarkable transformation occurring in many rural communities of underdeveloped nations in response to fast-changing socio-economic realities. The most noticeable features of this transformation include migration, “de-agrarianisation” and “de-peasantisation”, multiple job holdings and occupational adjustments, and reorientation of rural livelihood patterns (Bryceson 2002; AnderssonDjurfeldt 2015). Remarkably, some aspects of the livelihoods approach bear some relevance to social systems practised in industrialised nations, particularly as they concern holding multiple jobs. Recent studies have paid attention to multiple job holdings among households in developed nations such as Greece, Canada, and the United States of America (Weersink, Nicholson & Weerhewa 1998; Damianos & Skuras 1996) and among households in urban centres in underdeveloped and developing nations (De Bruijn, Van Dijk, & Foeken 2002). This is in contrast to the views of Slatter (2001), who argues that the concept of livelihood is exclusively reserved to the poor.

The livelihoods approach

Concerted research efforts on the challenges of livelihoods have led to the evolution of the *livelihoods approach*. The livelihoods approach is construed as an important actor-orientated perspective in development studies (De Haan 2012). It is a multidisciplinary tool for the systematic study of both human and material development. It is also useful for acquiring an in-depth understanding of labour patterns, social interaction, and processes of change and adaptation in the socio-economic and political arenas. Over the last three decades, the livelihoods approach has evolved into a new theory of development under the *sustainable livelihoods* framework. It has also become a major attraction among government policymakers, development agencies, donor organisations, and, particularly, non-governmental organisations (Chambers & Conway 1992). Its methodology includes various participatory processes such as Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), Rapid Household Appraisal (RHA), and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). It

also places strong emphasis on the principle of reciprocity-based organisation and solidarity, such as the devolution of decision-making power to the nearest or smallest sphere of influence and the institutionalisation thereof (Ezeanyika 2016).

Despite the above argument, it is important to mention that the multiplicity of views in the livelihoods theory infers that insights are generally fragmented on the notion of livelihoods. Summarising from these varying interpretations, livelihoods could be considered as a “complex interaction of sources and processes that guarantee the survival of individuals and groups that share some common physical environment, worldview, and other socio-biological identities. These sources and processes could be economic, social, political, psychological, geographical and historical” (Adi 2007). It could be argued that livelihood is more than income (Lipton 2005). Income could be in cash from profits of sales of homemade products, rental wages, and remittances, or income in kind, which is consumption of products from one’s own farm or household products.

A view from a different angle on livelihood includes income, social institutions, class and gender relations, social and kinship networks, public infrastructure, political process, property rights regimes, and all other items that mediate people’s access to, and use of, resources, as defined in the broadest sense (Berry 1989; Hart 1995).

It is pertinent to note that most studies concerned with the assessment of livelihood emphasise income diversification. According to Adi (2007), one reason that supports this tendency could be the ease of quantifying income as a measure of livelihood differences across individuals. Other important aspects such as reciprocity – base solidarity network, human capital such as skills possessed by individuals, institutional frameworks such as property rights, etc. – are more complex and subject to empirical investigation. Migration is usually treated as a different field of study, although connected to livelihood changes (Brock & Coulibaly 1999). There is growing consensus that livelihood diversification occurs in marginalised nations and in the underdeveloped nations of SSA. There is, however, a paucity of evidence on the direction of change in many of the factors involved in the diversification of livelihood. For instance, according to Bryceson (2002), income diversification grew in recent years, but the picture is not clear on whether reciprocity-based solidarity is growing. Following the argument presented by Bryceson (2002), the reciprocity-based solidarity network or “the moral economy of gift-giving” in Africa is under attack. One cannot also categorically state that human capital is increasing diversity when compared to a decade or two ago; considering the multifarious impacts of the debt crisis and the SAPs.

The central focus of diversification studies is the household. It is often the primary unit of empirical investigation. It is seen as housing members of a household who reside in the same location, sharing the same meals, and making joint or coordinated decisions centred on resource allocation (Meillassoux 1981).

Most researchers treat a household as a single entity and focus on a household head as representative of the household. According to Ellis (1998), the shortcomings of this unitary concept of the household emanates from the fact that, contrary to economic assumptions, not all household decision-making processes are made freely. In addition, social and familial factors have a great influence, not only on what people do but also their ability to change what they do. To account for the above, this study, like many others, takes into consideration factors such as nationality or tribe, property rights, and social institutions.

The concept of livelihood discussed in most studies is dynamic. This suggests that since livelihood is dynamic, it is subject to change over time. It could be referred to as vulnerable, robust, or subject to adaptation and collapse. A vulnerable household is one that is exposed to high risk and is likely to suffer shocks, stress, and unsustainability. This is the common situation in SSA, including those regions that are prone to drought (the Sahel nations), high weather variability (Central African region), floods (Mozambique and Malawi), armed conflicts (parts of East, Central, and southern Africa), religious and communal conflicts (North central and Niger Delta region of Nigeria), cyclones (Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa), and other natural and manmade disasters. A *vulnerable livelihood* is susceptible to collapse, particularly when livelihood strategies appear to depend excessively on the natural resource base. This is mostly the case for many underdeveloped nations. Vulnerability is also influenced by a high level of sensitivity to transmutations in the ecosystem. A *robust livelihood* system is characterised by a high level of resilience and a low level of sensitivity. Davies (1996) observed that household systems in the Sahel region are vulnerable to changes in resources according to climate. They are, however, resilient due to the people's ability to adapt to a changing environment. The adaptability of a household is manifested when the livelihood system responds either positively or negatively to continuous stimuli of pressures from different sources such as economic policies or environmental constraints (Davies & Hossain 1997). *Livelihood adaptation* is positive when it is a strategy adopted by free choice, reversible, and capable of enhancing welfare. It is construed to be negative when it is induced by force, and when its ability of coping with adverse conditions becomes difficult or impossible for affected households (Haggblade *et al.* 2006).

Income diversification is the holding of a portfolio of activities comprising different categories of income sources. Agriculture generally represents the primary focus. Activities are classified *within* the confines of agriculture or *outside* of it. This classification is obviously based on and greatly influenced by the view that the economic system in the majority of underdeveloped nations is based on and dependent on agriculture. This view strongly sustains and supports Rostow's evolutionary theory of economic growth. This position is better highlighted when

examining the traditional *societies* still at the agrarian stage of economic development (Rostow 1960; Wilber 1973).

Even though the argument presented by Reardon (1997) and Ellis (1998) that these distinctions refer to various labour markets with different features of reasonability, sustainability, entry barriers, location, and potential income growth is correct, it could be very misleading if it is not considered within a specific context of a particular area. For example, in rural areas that are still predominantly peasant and where livelihoods are significantly reliant on a natural resource base (such as agriculture or fishing and hunting), it is logical to differentiate activities on the basis of seasonality. However, for many other rural areas that are not strictly peasant, which could be referred to as “semi-peasant” communities (Adi 2007), classifying their activity differentiation by season may not be appropriate. Differentiation based on the level of skill involved would be more suitable. This proposition questions the standing classification of some activities as “unskilled”. As a matter of verifiable observation, no activity could be completely lacking in some form of skill. Such jobs lacking in formal training are referred to as “low-skilled”.

In the majority of African nations, farming in rural areas is predominantly low-skilled. Its actualisation requires a minimal level of technology. It is traditional, labour intensive, and uses crude labour power. Wage labour in farms is classified as a mere farming activity. It is usually labour intensive and employs the lowest group of low-skilled workers. They constitute a group of people without formal education and any form of vocational training who are mainly employed as manual labour.

Non-farm activities such as petty trading and commerce do not always require much training. This, perhaps, explains the proliferation of petty trading in most rural areas that is often not profitable. Commerce on a profitable scale seems to be a high-risk opportunity that requires a considerable investment in terms of training and capital. Training in commerce or business in Africa is usually acquired through undergoing an apprenticeship. An excellent example is the recently recognised practice of the Igbo apprenticeship system, used over centuries by the Igbos of south-eastern Nigeria, which is known and referred to as “stakeholder capitalism”, which means that “businesses must elevate the interests of communities, workers, consumers and the environment alongside those of shareholders” (Ekekwe 2021).

Formal education is usually not a prerequisite and its absence in the apprentice is not a hindrance. Generally, family ties facilitate the matching of the trainer (patron) and the apprentice (trainee) (World Bank 2008). After undergoing an agreed period of apprenticeship, the apprentice is “settled” and “discharged”. They are given cash or a quantity of trading goods, or both, as a take-off grant for commerce or business. In time, after establishing the business and stabilising the earnings, they will become a trainer (patron) with apprentices to assist them (Chukwuezi 1999; 2001). Activities where formal education and vocational

training are prerequisites usually require the highest level of skills, and they also generally provide higher income returns.

Income sources are generally categorised as farm, off-farm, and non-farm income (Smith 1992). Farm income comprises livestock and crops (Barrett *et al.* 2000). Off-farm income entails wage or in-kind payment for labour on others' farms. Non-farm income is different from the aforementioned two because its source is usually non-agricultural. It has many components, but the most prominent categories are non-farm wage employment, non-farm self-employment, property income (such as rent), and remittances (both local and international). For some scholars, agricultural wage labour earned from working on others' farms is categorised as farm or agricultural activity (Barrett *et al.* 2001; Challa 2019). They treat trading or commerce as a separate category.

Income diversification in SSA consists of both farm and non-farm activities (Knudsen 2007); however, the non-farm aspect is more prominent. Despite the persistent image of Africa as a continent of "subsistence farmers", non-farm activity diversification has been on the rise, and accounts for as much as 50% of average household income and seems to be growing in importance (Meagher 2001). More recent studies place the estimate between 60% and 80% (Odoh *et al.* 2019; Igwe 2020).

EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS: A NEW CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of livelihoods approaches has evolved over time in Africa despite claims that the continent consists mostly of subsistence farmers. Since the 1990s, livelihoods approaches have assumed significant importance because of their multifarious ramifications on rural development. These dynamic approaches basically postulate that livelihoods and well-being must be understood in relation to the range of assets and entitlements that people can draw on to manage their lives. A burgeoning amount of literature has recently emerged that emphasises the concept of diversification within livelihoods approaches (Chambers & Conway 1992; Davies 1993).

Livelihoods approaches avoid presuming that the economy is a compartmentalised sphere. It emphasises the broad range of assets that affect the well-being and viability of people's livelihoods. These assets comprise the resources, skills, and entitlements that people can draw on to mitigate adversities and cope with change. Livelihoods approaches also take into account the impact of policies and institutional frameworks on livelihood opportunities (Maddox 2005).

Livelihoods approaches can inform educational policy, but they also emphasise the importance of education and learning for the sustenance of rural livelihoods.

This process could be carried out either in a formal or non-formal agricultural educational structure or through informal learning opportunities. Livelihoods approaches also highlight the transformative potential of education as a central component in human development, in assisting people to manage their resources, access and interact with institutions, and cope with vulnerability (Sen 2003). Ellis and Seeley (2005), building their position on Sen's work on livelihoods approaches, argue that: "livelihood approaches as they emerged in the late 1990s were built on two main, intersecting platforms; one was the immensely insightful work that had been conducted on food security, vulnerability and famines over the preceding two decades, while the other was of the participatory ethnic in micro level rural development intervention, occurring with enthusiasm through the 1990s".

Livelihoods approaches aim to build on people's assets, strengths, and capabilities, rather than focusing on what people do not have. It follows that the livelihoods framework views the asset base of rural people or households as fundamental to the comprehensive understanding of the mitigation factors available to them. One of the basic tenets of the livelihoods framework is that poverty alleviation policy should be targeted at raising the asset base of rural people or enabling existing assets that are idle or underemployed to be used productively. The approach positively considers what is doable rather than focusing on what is not feasible (Ellis & Seeley 2005).

Articulated concisely, the livelihoods framework seeks "to identify what the poor (rural people or households) have rather than what they do not have" and "to strengthen people's inventive solutions, rather than substitute for, block or undermine them" (Ellis & Seeley 2005). Education (formal, vocational, and informal) must be targeted at the overall improvement of the living standard of rural people. People-centred and people-orientated households' livelihood diversification strategies must consider a wide variety of livelihoods, aspirations, and the diversity of cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and environmental contexts (Avila & Gasperini 2005).

Education, construed from a holistic framework, is not intended merely to "train" people. It also creates a sustainable environment for income accumulation and the opportunity for self-improvement (Robinson 2003). Documentation available on households' livelihoods is significant. It also broadens our knowledge on the processes of change, such as economic diversification, the importance of non-farm income and resources in rural livelihoods, and the significance of migration between rural and urban areas (Bryceson 1996; Ellis & Freeman 2004).

TRANSFORMATION OF RURAL LABOUR MARKETS

The rural labour markets have witnessed tremendous transformation. This development has been spurred by changing national and international economic

conditions. Within the framework of globalisation, the degree of vulnerability of agriculture – and of rural labour markets – to international economic change is considerable (Ezeanyika & Oruebor 2016). Macroeconomic developments affect rural households by influencing the prices of agricultural commodities and affect employment opportunities available in the non-farm sector. Generally, there is a higher availability of non-farm employment and pluriactivity among rural households and a corresponding higher dependence on non-farm income.

Although the rise in RNF employment seems to be a global trend, the nature and activities involved are different from nation to nation – depending on the level of development. In SSA nations where rural poverty is widespread, RNF activities are closely linked to agriculture and poorly related to the urban economy. Depending on the peculiarities of particular regions, there is the likelihood, in very poor communities, to derive the bulk of their RNF income from migration to cities or abroad.

Assets and activities diversification

The ultimate reason and economic logic that guides household livelihood strategies is anchored on the assumption that a household's decision to engage in some activities is subject to incentives, as well as social and psychological factors (Adi 2007). Economic factors such as resources, assets, skills, and incomes are fundamental decision-making parameters as they influence the choice of a set of activities. Important factors in determining which activities households engage in include existing social class, available opportunities, family networks, ethnic groups, institutional and political frameworks that govern access to available opportunities, and individual households' perception of risk (Chimhowu & Woodhouse 2006). However, some studies on household diversification strategies give more prominence to the former group of factors than to the latter. In practical terms, it is difficult to separate the two sets of factors. For instance, social class and caste may enable some households to gain access to resources that they did not possess initially. The possession of assets could enable some households to attain a status that they did not have initially. It is more important to assess all factors in order to adequately capture household diversification strategies.

The outline above represents *the asset dependency theory* that is recognised by many economists (Takasaki, Barham & Coomes 2000). There is also documented evidence that households in peasant and semi-peasant communities experience asset dependency in their choice of activities. The evolution of such assets over time displays signs of initial *endowment dependency*, and that human capital accumulation is *lifecycle dependent* (Takasaki *et al.* 2000). These findings have profound implications for the perpetuation of historical poverty, inequality, and livelihood sustainability; not only in the rural communities of Latin America but in SSA as well.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The conventional wisdom that rural economies are agricultural has lost currency. Farm households, particularly those in African nations, earn a large share of their income from the non-farm sector. Decisions that lead to the creation of non-farm enterprises and their management are made in pluriactivity rural households. Non-farm enterprises contribute to structuring labour and capital allocations across activities and outcomes. Consequently, a comprehensive and systematic understanding of rural entrepreneurship dynamics is necessary.

There is an apparent fragmentation of opinions on the reasons why households diversify their activities. This is so because the determinants of diversification are heterogeneous and depend on the character of the particular household and community. The motivation of rural households to diversify and the opportunities available differ significantly across regions. This suggests an important distinction between (a) diversification targeted at managing risk, or escaping from agriculture in stagnation or in secular decline, driven by push factors; and (b) diversification targeted at accumulation purposes, driven by pull factors. Stated differently, diversification is driven by constraints and incentives, also referred to as push and pull factors. In reality, however, it is in fact quite difficult to isolate different determinants of diversification. Several factors interact to shape household diversification strategies. It is more realistic and practical to contextualise the analysis of diversification strategies to each unique community. The logic here is that the more disaggregated the analysis, the better the insight it offers. The decision by a household to supply labour to the RNF sector can be conceptualised as concise application of the class of behavioural models of factor supply in general, and labour in particular.

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