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Challenges and Successes of the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System

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The Role of the Department of Planning, Monitoring
and Evaluation in the Presidency

S S N Masombuka and X C Thani

Erratum

The affiliation for M S de Vries which appears in Volume 31 No 2 needs to be corrected as below:

M S de Vries*
Radboud University Nijmegen
School of Public Management, Governance and Public Policy
University of Johannesburg

Editorial

D Nel-Sanders

Chief Editor

In recent years, the South African public sector has faced challenges in retaining qualified employees, and competition for talent has increased in the post-pandemic world.

In **'Perceptions of Talent Management Among Senior Public Managers in South Africa: Implications for Good Governance'**, D B Jarbandhan states that the success or failure of an organisation is determined by the calibre of its employees. Despite the importance of a talented and well-resourced public sector, "little attention has been paid to public managers' perception of talent in the scholarly discourse on talent management".

Undeniably, the perceptions of public sector managers are important for workforce planning, recruitment, and talent acquisition. As such, the article discusses the perceptions of public sector managers in South Africa towards talent management. An online questionnaire was used to gather data, while thematic analysis was applied to make sense of the data.

The results reveal that many senior managers did not devote enough attention to workforce planning. Key factors contributing to this include that senior managers are not adequately trained or equipped, high turnover and vacancy rates, a politicised public service, ambiguous understanding of talent and uneven application of performance management systems.

According to the author, there is a need for senior managers to change their perception of talent through training and development programmes to promote good governance. Senior public managers must be equipped to understand that talent management is crucial for South Africa to meet its developmental goals and promote good governance.

"A public service staffed by talented officials, who are able to deliver on the South African constitutional mandate will assist the country to aspire to the 'better life for all' that was promised upon South Africa becoming a democracy in 1994," concludes the author.

In **'Challenges in South Africa's Post-School Education and Training System on Local Governance Performance'** by H Khunoethe and P S Reddy the authors highlight that South Africa's comprehensive human resources development policy and legal framework supports the country's goals of economic growth and development. "It takes into account the past as the legacy of apartheid places unique challenges on measures to develop human capacity". The framework also

facilitates the role of human capacity in realising South Africa's vision of socio-economic development and transformation. "Both of these aspects are expressed in the Post-School Education and Training system that is based on the policy and legal framework".

South Africa has struggled with a shortage of critical skills for economic development. To this end, the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) play a vital role in ensuring job-related skills and increasing employability. SETAs provide services to both the government and private sector. According to the authors, "They are intended to provide access to qualifications for individuals who cannot access formal education and improve the quality of the labour pool".

Despite their importance, the achievements of the Post-School Education and Training system have been characterised by implementation-related challenges, especially in the SETA component. The SETA component is the weakest part of the system, but it is also the most important in developing job-related skills, state the authors. "When SETAs fail to deliver, the failure directly impacts the pool of skilled labour available to industry and government; it represents a critical failure of the PSET system".

While local government plays a vital role in implementing transformation and development policies, there are challenges in developing its skills through the local government SETA. According to the authors, skills development has failed to improve the functioning of local government. This article highlights some significant failures of the Local Government SETA in carrying out its mandate and has attributed them to a lack of training management fundamentals in both the SETA and the municipalities.

Parliamentary Budget Offices (PBOs) are independent financial institutions established primarily to provide parliaments with the capacity to perform their legislative and fiscal oversight role by enhancing fiscal scrutiny and decision-making. In '**The Role of the Parliamentary Budget Offices in Supporting Budget Reforms**', M Molepo and M I Jahed state that PBOs have revolutionised the way in which budget processes are conducted. "When implemented correctly, these budget reform initiatives can enhance budget transparency, accountability, fiscal oversight, policy prioritisation and budget allocation public participation in budgetary processes and reduce budget asymmetries".

Although there are several benefits associated with the effective establishment of PBOs, some scholars argue that a few weaknesses still persist. To this end, the article focuses on the role of PBOs in supporting budgetary reform processes within government and highlights the related challenges that are encountered. The methodology entails a desktop analysis approach by way of a literature and documentary review.

According to the research results, the lack of support from all stakeholders, inevitable errors of estimation and projections and failure to motivate sufficient

attention to long-term debt sustainability are among the universal challenges facing many PBOs. To address such challenges, many governments often resort to international lessons of experiences.

The findings suggest that effective implementation and management of PBOs can improve budget processes and effective public finance management. A continuous monitoring and evaluation of the PBO as well as international lessons of experiences and best practices further contribute to the effectiveness of the office.

The credibility of the office can enhance public and government trust in the work it produces for effective fiscal oversight. As such, it is crucial that governments invest in PBOs not only financially, and in human capital and other resources necessary. "Investing in PBOs enables the office to not only produce quality work, but to also give the overall office credibility", state the authors.

In line with global trends, South Africa is transitioning towards smart cities with the use of advanced Information and Communication (ICT) and Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) e-readiness models. M Maphangwa and G van der Waldt, in their article, **'Towards a Smart City Model for Local Government: The Case of South African Metropolitan Municipalities'**, argue that much still needs to be done to ensure that South African cities are on par with investment-competing cities internationally. To this end, the authors state that, there is a dire need for cities to invest heavily in human capital and ICT infrastructure, such as broadband and wireless technology, to bolster connectivity and the application of big data to ensure quality service delivery. "This requires political will and an integrated approach," highlight the authors.

The article reflects on findings of an empirical study conducted to investigate the smart city readiness of three Gauteng-based metropolitan municipalities, namely the City of Johannesburg (CoJ), the City of Ekurhuleni (CoE) and the City of Tshwane (CoT), to determine their smart city maturity levels. The survey was guided by existing international smart city models and lessons learned from smart cities around the globe, with the purpose of designing a suitable smart city model.

On a local level, the research findings suggest that the three metros have a relatively low level (2) of maturity, which underscores the need for a smart city model to guide progress towards higher levels of e-readiness. According to the authors, the model aims to inform and guide municipalities in their efforts to design and implement smart city initiatives. "The successful implementation of the proposed smart city model can guide city councils towards effective e-readiness and 4IR maturity as they try to keep up with the demands of a rapidly changing technological landscape".

The authors believe that by adopting international best practices, engaging stakeholders, ensuring interoperability and complying with national legislation, city councils can create a framework that enables them to leverage technology to improve the quality of life for citizens while driving economic growth.

In **'Housing Delivery at the Masiphumelele Community'**, B P Monqo and C Alers explore housing delivery challenges in the Masiphumelele community, a township in the Western Cape Province. By using the Masiphumelele community as case study, the authors investigate experiences and perspectives of important role-players involved in housing delivery to create "effective strategies for addressing housing needs and improving the living conditions in the community". They also investigate the reasons why informal settlements and the degradation of housing continue to plague the community of Masiphumelele.

The article utilised qualitative research methods involving focus group discussions with heads of households and online individual interviews with Ward Committee members and a Ward Councillor. The research findings revealed several key issues. For example, the lack of affordable housing options remains a pressing concern, as it leads to further overcrowding and sub-standard living conditions. Additionally, the participants stated that overcrowding, flooding, fires, inadequate sanitation, unsafe living conditions and unemployment are key challenges within Masiphumelele.

Based on these findings, the article presents recommendations to the City of Cape Town to improve housing delivery in the Masiphumelele community. These include promoting community-driven initiatives to ensure that residents' voices are heard during decision-making processes. The authors highlight that, "The dates, times and places of municipal workshops and meetings must be announced as widely as possible to improve participation and communication with community members". The research findings underscore the importance of holistic and participatory approaches to addressing housing challenges, with the ultimate aim of improving quality of life and promoting housing development within the Masiphumelele community.

Affordable and high-quality healthcare is essential for the long-term development of any nation. Despite this, the existing literature on the relationship between public financial management reforms and service delivery is limited. In their article, **'Public Financial Management Reforms and Service Delivery in the Northern Cape Department of Health'**, C B Motsitsi and C J Hendriks argue that, despite the implementation of public financial management reforms, there has been a lack of improvement in service delivery. The authors state that, "Extant research indicates that public financial management reforms are implemented not only to improve the management of public finances, but also to enhance the delivery of quality services". However, while previous studies have suggested that these reforms are intended to improve the quality of services provided, the implementation thereof does not always lead to the desired improvement in service delivery.

To shed light on the issue, the authors conducted a case study in the Northern Cape Provincial Department of Health. The research revealed several challenges

that hinder the effectiveness of these reforms in improving service delivery. These challenges include: inadequate leadership, political interference, lack of capacity, absence of consequence management, insufficient budget allocation, and poor internal control. The authors recommend appointing managers who prioritise accountability and effectiveness and promote efficient service delivery.

The study highlights that the behaviour of personnel within the department is the primary factor contributing to the breakdown in the relationship between public financial management reforms and service delivery. To this end, the authors recommend that “the department appoint managers who will establish and pursue a culture of accountability and effectiveness within the department while promoting effective service delivery”.

According to Motsitsi and Hendiks, the study contributes to the field of public administration and management research by providing new research literature supported by empirical evidence on the challenges that hinder public financial management reforms and subsequently lead to inadequate service delivery within the department.

M P Choane, in the article **‘Employing the Ubuntu Approach as a Lens to Enhance Risk Management Skills at a Municipality’**, argues that the approach to risk management skills training in South African cities has hinged on positivist research approaches. However, according to the author, such professional research models tend to restrict employees’ input regarding risk mitigation. “Consequently, despite the existence of rich African philosophical approaches, such as *Ubuntu*, the methods of teaching and learning risk management in municipalities are ineffective,” states the author.

The author argues that the practice of *Ubuntu* in teaching and learning, with specific reference to risk management, supports a culture of group solidarity in the research environment that embraces brotherhood and sisterhood for survival. To this end, the article seeks to investigate how the *Ubuntu* philosophy can be used as a lens to enhance the risk management skills of municipal officials

A single case study was conducted at Xhariep District Municipality in the Free State. Data was collected from municipal officials through participatory action research. Based on the results, the article recommends a culture of integrated teamwork driven by *Ubuntu* principles. The ability to empower one another in teamwork aimed at successful implementation could mitigate risks at the organisation. “Such a culture will contribute to human resource development, which will improve employees’ competency and self-esteem for the provision of better and higher-quality services to the Xhariep communities”.

Performance monitoring and evaluation is one of the key drivers and policy imperatives in South Africa, with an increasing acceptance of the need to improve governance, accountability, and continuous transformation in the public service. In **‘Challenges and Successes of the Government-wide Monitoring**

and Evaluation System (GWMES): The Role of the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in the Presidency', SSN Masombuka and XC Thani state that the GWMES was approved and adopted by the South African government in 2005 to ensure the systematic collection and use of performance information to evaluate government performance through programmes.

The article aims to investigate the extent to which the government monitoring and evaluation system has been institutionalised in the DPME, the milestones, challenges, successes, current practices and sustainability of the system in the DPME in the Presidency. The article focuses on the development trajectory of monitoring and how it has evolved in relation to the reforms that were undertaken in the country in general and the GWMES in particular, which has been adopted, as the overarching coordinating system for monitoring and evaluation across government in South Africa.

Unobtrusive research methods (conceptual and systematic documentary analysis) are used to explore legislation, official documents and reports to conceptualise monitoring and evaluation in South Africa. To reach key findings, the article includes the following thematic areas: the development of performance monitoring in government; contextualising the progress, practice and development of monitoring and evaluation in South Africa; the GWMES and the role of the DPME in the institutionalisation of a monitoring and evaluation system in government; the successes and challenges as they apply to various settings and perspectives within the South African context.

Findings reveal that, "While government performance review reports also suggest progress and milestones in the institutional set-up for the coherence of monitoring and evaluation functions, the focus is still more on monitoring with less emphasis on evaluations". Thus, states the authors, the results are not adequately informing planning and budgeting. Some of the challenges relate to data quality and the coherence of the monitoring and evaluation function.

Chief Editor

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Perceptions of Talent Management Among Senior Public Managers in South Africa

Implications for Good Governance

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decades, the South African public sector has encountered numerous challenges in retaining suitably qualified employees. To add to this challenge, competition for talent has become intense in the post-pandemic world. Moreover, both public and private organisations are burdened with the downturn of financial markets, ongoing conflict across the globe and the “great resignation”. Undeniably, all these aspects have an impact on talent management (TM). The knowledge-based economy within which the public sector functions has made the quest for talent more crucial. It is important to note that the calibre of the employees within an organisation determines its success or failure. Despite the increased scholarly discourse on TM over the last few decades, little attention has been paid to public managers’ perception of talent. To help remedy this knowledge gap, this article will seek to gather data on the perceptions of public sector managers in the South African public sector towards TM. The perceptions of public sector managers towards TM are important, as these managers strategise about workforce planning, recruitment and talent acquisition. The purpose of this article is to investigate the perceptions of public sector managers in the South African public sector towards TM. An online questionnaire was distributed to selected senior managers in the South African public sector to gather rich data on their perceptions on TM. A thematic analysis was

used to identify and make sense of the data. The intended contribution of the article is to build empirical evidence in TM literature to help public managers understand the nuances in TM in an ever-changing public sector environment.

INTRODUCTION

Very often, the concept of talent management (TM) is researched from the perspective of employees. Little to no research is undertaken on the perception of managers – especially public sector managers – on what they perceive TM to encompass. Viewing TM through the lens of managers within the public sector is deemed crucial. Given the post-pandemic environment within which the sector operates, its strategic direction will reside with talented individuals who can provide goods and services to members of the public in an effective and efficient manner. This article examines the perceptions of managers towards managing talent within the South African public sector. From a post-pandemic *polycrisis* perspective, the South African public sector has suffered several blows. One of the key reasons for this state of affairs is because the sector was already constrained by a high vacancy rate in key sectors such as public health and engineering, as well as a lack of middle managerial competence, corruption in the hiring of staff and the added burden of poor competence among some public servants who hold key positions. Moreover, the politicisation of the public sector has resulted in unequal service provision and increased service delivery protests by a disgruntled citizenry.

In line with this, the article aims to investigate the perceptions of senior managers within the public sector towards the management of talent. The author embarked on a methodology that included an empirical component, which sought to solicit the response of 13 senior managers about TM by using an email-based questionnaire. This was supplemented by an in-depth literature review, which included peer-reviewed articles published in journals, government policy documents and reputable evidence-based online sources. It was found that the already-constrained South African public sector was further limited by the uncertain post-pandemic environment, where senior managers had to focus their energy on managing crises, and where talent was managed unevenly due to the complex nature of recruiting, retaining and promoting talent in a very competitive labour market. Finally, this article intends to contribute to the ongoing academic debate on managing talent against the backdrop of a global “war on talent”.

THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE WORD 'TALENT'

The sections below will conceptualise talent and will provide a contextual definition of the term as it relates to the public sector.

The commodity/monetary value position of talent

The concept of talent is difficult to contextualise, because it has been used widely in various contexts. According to Tansley (2011:267), and Meyers, Van Woerkom and Dries (2013:305), the word talent has been in existence for thousands of years. The word originated from the ancient Greek term *tálanon*, which was later translated to *talentum* in Latin. *Tálanon* originally indicated a unit of weight, such as precious metals like gold and silver (Ansar & Baloch 2018:216). As gold and silver were viewed as valuable, the term talent took on a substantial meaning.

The term later evolved and was used to indicate a “sum of money” by Babylonians and Assyrians (Adebola 2017:23; Ansar & Baloch 2018:216). The monetary link to talent can be traced back to ancient times, when the term was used to refer to a coin (Thunissen 2015:8). The scholar further asserts that one talent (a coin) at the time had great value and was possessed by the wealthy. The monetary or economic value and meaning of talent is articulated in English literature through a Biblical parable. In the *Book of Matthew*, Chapter 25, verses 14 to 30 (Gallardo-Gallardo 2013; Dries & González-Cruz 2013:292), a reference is made to a wealthy man who was about to go on a journey and left his three male servants one, two and five bags of talents (referred to as *capital* by modern English versions), respectively, based on his assessment of their capability or in modern terms: talent (Eyo 2019:60). Upon his return, the two servants entrusted with more than one bag had been able to trade the talents (bags of gold) and double the amounts their master had given them. The servant who received a single bag of talents had kept it hidden to ensure its safety. The wealthy man was disappointed by the servant who failed to generate more talents and classified him as lazy. He ordered the servant to give his bag of talent to the one who doubled the five bags to 10 bags (Gallardo-Gallardo; Dries & González-Cruz 2013:292). This parable helps contextualise the historical annotation of the term talent.

The origins of the concept talent demonstrate that the roots of the term are directly linked to weight, money, capital, precious metals, wealth and economic value. Tansley (2011:267) and Gallardo-Gallardo (2013:25) postulate that the ancient interchangeable use of talent and capital might have informed the term ‘human capital’. It might also have elicited human resources (HR) academics and practitioners’ use of talent to refer to the value of an organisation’s workforce. Consequently, talent is value-laden, as it plays a vital role in the development of society.

The inclination/disposition position of talent

In the 13th century, talent underwent a metamorphosis, as the term was perceived as an ‘inclination’ or ‘disposition’ (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* 2013:293). Simply put, talent was perceived as “a feeling that drives an individual to want to do something” (inclination) or a “natural ability/quality/skill of an individual” (disposition), which contradicts the monetary association punted by the Greeks (Ansar & Baloch 2018:216). This demonstrates that the position of talent transformed from the commodity (unit of measurement) to a feeling (will or desire) (Meyers *et al.* 2013:306). The view stems from the French perception, which has since become obsolete. Even though the definition is deemed outdated, Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2013:292) warn that this behavioural aspect is regaining importance within the current “world of work”.

The reconfiguration from the inclination- and disposition-based approach commenced with the “innate ability” school of thought, which believes that people are born with certain gifts informed by their genetic predisposition (Van Arensbergen, Van der Weijden & Van den Besselaar 2014:2). This school of thought gained particular traction in Europe. By the 14th century, several novel, conflicting interpretations were introduced, as outlined in the next section.

Talent as an innate ability

In the late 13th century, talent was believed to be an innate ability (Van Arensbergen 2014:2). It was believed that a person’s natural characteristics, as opposed to learning and practice, determines excellence in something. A study by Kayamba (2019:17) reveals that, during this time, talent was believed to be hereditary and that it is impossible to learn or acquire. Simply put, talent is an inborn, genetic asset that remains rigid throughout the person’s life. Thus, under this school of thought, TM is unnecessary since it is perceived as fixed throughout a person’s life. However, as time went by, this school of thought was replaced by the notion that talent stems from a mastery of a skill or competence.

Talent as an outcome of human resource management and business strategy

More recent definitions of talent links the concept to human resource management (HRM) or strategic management. As talent is considered the most important part of 21st century organisations (Gaitonde 2020; Al-Dalahmeh 2020), talent’s strategic role in business processes is seen as crucially important. Consequently, theories supporting TM have grown in significance (Meyers & Von Woerkm 2014).

CURRENT CONTEXT OF TALENT MANAGEMENT

The concept of TM has been subject to considerable change within the post-pandemic period. Terms such as the great resignation and the great attrition have added a stronger focus to the strategic thrust of managing talent. The anticipated turnover rate of staff post-pandemic, the global socio-economic crisis, the war in Eastern Europe and the onset of disruptive technologies such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the introduction of Artificial intelligence (AI) have once again placed TM in sharp focus – especially within the public sector. Put succinctly by Damonte, Ledet, Morales and Tobey (2023), the next competitive organisational advantage will be managing talent and taking stock on how to build a sustainable and resilient public service that attracts and retains talent to improve service delivery.

Definition of talent management for the purpose of this article

Kravariti and Johnston (2020) identify four approaches to TM as supported by literature review from a public sector perspective. TM:

- is perceived as systematic procedures of attracting, identifying, developing, deploying, engaging and the retention of people seen as current and future talent;
- is seen as a strategic instrument to deal with leadership and complex service delivery challenges;
- is a plan that ensures public servants have the core values to ensure good governance within the public service (Reilly 2008); and
- is a process to attain an entity-and-person fit to the application of strategic mandates and the public service's overall philosophy; structure and culture (Thunnissen & Buttiens 2017:4,18).

This article defines TM as the systematic application of fundamental processes, procedures and systems in public entities, to ensure that public servants possess and apply the required skills, knowledge, traits and core values needed to deal with problems and to resolve the complex service delivery challenges directly influencing the public sector's strategic goals to ensure the interest of the public and the country at large, at all times.

The current *polycrisis* has made the retention and recruitment of talented individuals in organisations a lineage of strategic importance. It is becoming increasingly challenging to attract and retain talent from a smaller pool of talented individuals, as the demand for highly skilled people does not match the supply side of skills within a post-Covid environment. Both private and public organisations must ensure that the human resource processes of workforce planning, recruitment, retention, on-boarding, training and development, and compensation are strategically positioned to retain or attract the right employees.

In a 2022 survey conducted among 5 000 tech professionals, Ahuja (2022) found that, in a post-Covid world, “many professionals are considering leaving their jobs in search of roles that offer better work-life balance and that are more aligned with their values”. The same study found that 87% of respondents were willing to switch jobs in search of a better work-life balance. The study concluded that, to retain and recruit talented staff, employers would have to focus on significantly improving retention, on-boarding and succession planning.

Besides the post-Covid *polycrisis*, the South African public sector has been dogged by cost-cutting measures, service delivery challenges, an ageing workforce, a lack of professionalism, rampant corruption and a politicised public sector. As this *polycrisis* has exacerbated the challenges within the public sector, the sector must find means to retain and attract talented staff. The South African government has found it prudent to strengthen the capacity and capability to build competent state structures that would deliver on the mandate that was promised at the onset of democracy in 1994 – to “build a better life for all” South Africans.

In addition to the global *polycrisis*, the country must overcome a legacy of internal corruption, which is referred to as “the state capture years”. During these trying times, corruption manifested itself in the levers of the state and, as a result, state-owned enterprises (SOEs) were captured by political and private interest. SOEs, such as Eskom, Transnet and the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa) were subjected to widespread looting of their resources. A commission of enquiry, called the Zondo Commission, was initiated to probe the claims of widespread corruption. After three years of in-depth investigation, the commission completed and delivered its report to the South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa. The President must still make pronouncements based on the report and no arrests have been made to date.

The state capture years have weakened state capacity and SOEs, thus impacting the state’s mandate to provide effective and efficient services, which have hampered effective service delivery to its citizenry. The 2021 State of the Public Service Report summarises the situation as follows: “South Africa is known to have produced good policies, however, the lack of contextual environment upon which these have to be implemented coupled with lack of capacity and capability makes it difficult to deliver on those policies” (Public Service Commission (PSC) 2022: iii). Moreover, the 2021 State of the Public Service Report indicates that vacancy rates remain relatively high among the senior management services (SMS). The vacancy rate on salary levels 13 to 16 of the SMS is the highest, at 14%; and the second-highest vacancy rate is at salary levels 9 to 12, at 9% (South African Government 2023: Online source).

According to a study conducted by the Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority (PSETA) (2017:4–5), the challenges in filling the vacancies include:

- The availability and quality of candidates possessing the competencies required for specific positions.

- The salaries typically paid outside the public service sector for similar positions.
- The recent turnover in similar positions.
- Special or unique competencies that are required for the position.
- The recruitment processes in the public service sector's impact on the time it takes to fill the vacancies.
- The desirability of the duties, work or organisational environment.
- The strict measures the public service follows to fill vacancies and the extended time it takes to fill vacancies.

A major challenge the South African public sector faces is finding talented employees to fill key vacancies, especially in sectors such as engineering and planning skills, artisan and technical skills, information technology (IT) and environmental management (PSC 2007:27). The post-pandemic challenges are exacerbated by large-scale unemployment among the youth, the war in Eastern Europe and increased levels of corruption (PSC 2021).

SCIENTIFIC AND METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

This section aims to contextualise the scientific approach and methodology applied in this article. O'Sullivan, Rassel and Berner (2007 in Ngcobe 2021:22) view research methodology as a process that provides the researcher with the necessary scientific tools to respond to the research problem in a systematic manner. For Kumar (2009:10) research, "as a scientific inquiry, should obtain answers through data collection, analysis and interpretation". Ndenje-Sichalwe and Elia (2020 in Ngcobe 2021:22) state that, "[R]esearch is central in classifying, resolving challenges of society and expanding knowledge for making strategic decisions". Mishra and Alok (2017 in Mandiriza 2021:27) add that, "[S]cientific research methods are about procedures and steps to be followed by the researcher in order to address a research phenomenon". The objective of scientific research is to produce knowledge, examine assumptions and present a theoretical framework to build on existing findings (Ngcobe 2012:22).

For the aim and purpose of this article, the researcher opted for a qualitative research paradigm as the blueprint for the research design. Thus, the article underscores Creswell's (2009:4) notion of "a qualitative design, as a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem".

This article utilised a qualitative research approach and an interpretive inquiry (Shank 2002:5). As qualitative research "is a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning", researchers within this domain study "things in their natural

settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people attach to them” (Shank 2002:5).

Data collection techniques

In terms of the data collection process, primary (empirical) and secondary information sources were gathered.

Primary data was gathered from respondents through a self-designed questionnaire that was emailed to 13 members of the SMS within the South African Public Service. The SMS members in question are involved in managing strategic government resources, including HR talent management, which is a crucial component in the management of strategic HR. Using an emailed questionnaire was deemed advantageous since respondents could provide rich historical data (Cresswell 2014:191). Moreover, the SMS cohort are not readily available due to the nature of their strategic tasks.

In terms of information sources, secondary data was used to compile the literature review. To collect secondary data, the researcher used a desktop analysis. In this regard, the researcher consulted recently published and unpublished local and international journals; academic books; South African legislation; the internet; official and unofficial documents from the University of Johannesburg (UJ); conference articles; and unpublished and published dissertations that were deemed relevant to the article. Thus, the research question was enriched by exploring senior managers’ perceptions of TM.

Empirical research context

According to Bryman (in Auriacombe 2010:51), “Any attempt to comprehend a social reality must be grounded in people’s comprehension and experience of that reality. Thus, an attempt is made to understand things from the subject’s perspective – the person being studied”.

Population and sampling

A population is defined as all elements (individuals, objects and events) that meet the sample criteria. This study population consisted of 13 members of the Public Service’s SMS.

Sampling involves choosing a sub-group of a population and drawing specific conclusions based on that group to represent the entire population (De Carlo 2000 in Blore 2011:131). This article used a purposive sampling strategy, since people with the necessary experience and knowledge were sought out “to provide information that can be studied in-depth, with purpose and within specific

categories, such as age, culture and experience” (Smith *et al.* 2009 in Auriacombe 2013:46).

Respondent profile

Table 1 describes the respondent profile:

Table 1: Respondent profile

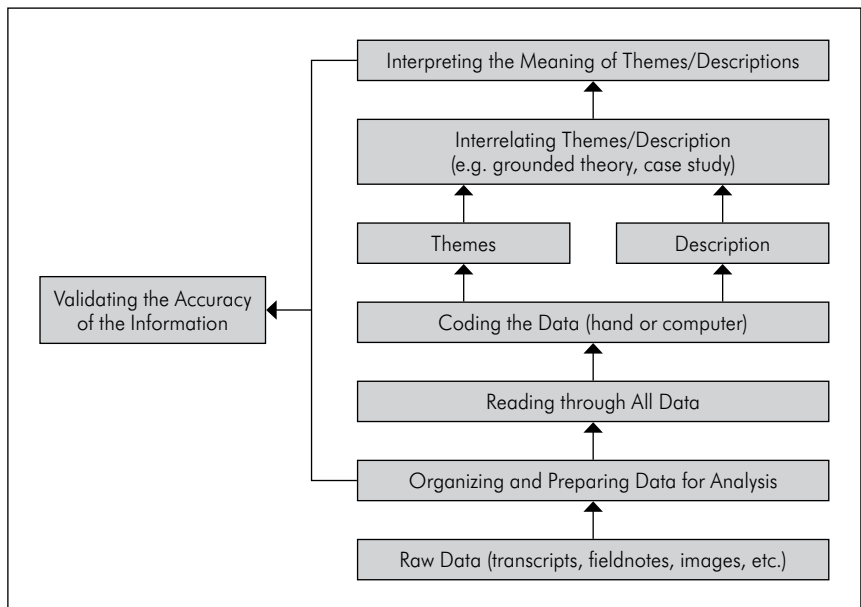
Number of respondents	Male	Female	Racial breakdown	Number of years managerial experience	Level of education
13	8	5	10 black 2 white	Between 12 and 32 years	Post-schooling

Source: (Author’s own construction)

Data analysis protocol

Figure 1 outlines the protocol that was utilised to analyse the data and ensure the reliability and validity thereof (Cresswell 2014:197).

Figure 1: Data analysis protocol



Source: (Cresswell 2014:197)

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The researcher analysed the data that was derived from the questionnaire responses. The findings represent the interviewees' perceptions in relation to the thematic analysis of the emerging variances from the study.

Theme 1: Perceptions of senior managers towards managing talent as a strategic resource

This theme helps reflect the primary research question proposed in the article, namely: 'To seek to gather the perceptions of public sector managers in the South African public sector towards TM'. This theme was sub-divided into the following sub-themes.

Theme 1.1: What do you perceive the term 'talent management' to entail?

The wide variety of responses to this question indicated that the concept of TM meant different things to different respondents. Responses included "attracting the best person for the job"; "developing an employee's career"; "upskilling of staff"; and "recruiting, retaining and developing the right skill in an organisation". Inherent in the diversified responses lies the conundrum that TM is difficult to define, especially within the context of the public sector. Based on their perceived notion of the term, respondents did not view the process as planned, strategic, competency-based or even complex.

Furthermore, senior managers did not view TM within the realm of a post-Covid world of work. Consequently, the strategic value of managing in a *polycrisis* was overlooked. Inherent to this is the problem of managing talent while facing the challenge of limited skills within the public sector to build longevity and resilience (World Economic Forum (WEF) 2023: Online source).

Of greater concern was the fact that 61.53% of senior managers indicated that "no policy exists"; "I have no idea" or "We do have a policy but it's not fully implemented" to the following questions: 1) ***Do you know your unit/ department's TM policy?***; 2) ***Does your unit/department have one [a policy]?***, and 3) ***If so, please elaborate.*** Of the 38.47% of senior managers who responded yes to the second question, the responses were somewhat confusing, for example, "Yes. It does have one. However, it has [a] few shortfalls in terms of alignment to the current trends and practices locally and globally".

This raises questions about the relationship between policies and their interpretation by senior managers who are in charge of rolling-out the government's strategic TM policies. It is crucial that "employers and governments must invest in

creating the environment – the sustainable workplace” to contribute to a “sustainable world of work” (WEF 2023: Online source).

This article focuses on employers’ perceptions of TM, rather than that of employees. However, it is worth noting that, to improve the status quo, “all point(s) to the importance of developing an internal and long-term HR capacity and the importance of aligning HR and business strategies” (Cooke, Saini & Wang 2014:235). Thus, managing talent is important and is an area that the South African public sector needs to focus on.

Following on the above responses, the second theme was based on the mechanisms senior managers use to identify talented staff.

Theme 2: Mechanisms used by senior managers in identifying talented staff

TM focuses on organisational processes and systems for identifying key positions that are strategically important to the South African public sector. Furthermore, it is concerned with filling these positions with the right personnel through well-developed HR systems, processes and policies (Collings & Mellahi 2009 in Cooke *et al.* 2014:226). A total of 56% of respondents indicated that their sole mechanism for identifying talented staff rested with the performance management system (PMS) used within the public sector. Consequently, where employees receive high performance scores, they are deemed “talented”. A further 2% of respondents identified “personal attitudes”, “being a team player” and “willingness to learn” as factors that contribute to talent. The remaining 42% of responses varied from “I am not sure”, “the organisation does not seem to have this” to “meetings”, “performance appraisal”, “project delivery”, “client feedback” and “work produced”. Thus, the respondents were unclear as to how talent should be identified.

Current literature on TM indicates that talent must be identified at an early stage and that it must be viewed as a “burning corporate priority”. Moreover, a TM mindset should form part of an organisation’s strategic mindset, starting from the very top. Organisations should create an attractive “employee value proposition” to manage talent despite the ongoing challenges relating to identifying talented individuals. From an employee perspective, the literature also points to the key role of active listening, constant monitoring, and regular dialogue with employees to determine the challenges they experience “on the ground”. This is especially the case within the post-pandemic environment (Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin & Michaels 1998; Damonte, Ledet, Morales & Tobey 2023). Literature-based evidence indicates that the public sector needs to focus on identifying talent. Importantly, talent recognition and employee retention are key drivers in the South African public sector’s TM framework (Koketso 2011:107).

Theme 3: Staff development to nurture talent

Staff turnover rates within the South African public sector are considered to be high; many posts – especially at an SMS level – remain vacant for lengthy periods of time.

The challenge is that key posts are vacant and staff resign when they find greater opportunities elsewhere. According to Koketso (2011:17), “The public service continues to struggle with retaining effective managers and employees with scarce skills, and these retention problems are perceived to be worsening”. Areas of concern include public health professionals, engineers, computer programmers and middle managers. Only 23% of respondents stated that they actively encouraged staff to enrol for adequate staff development programmes.

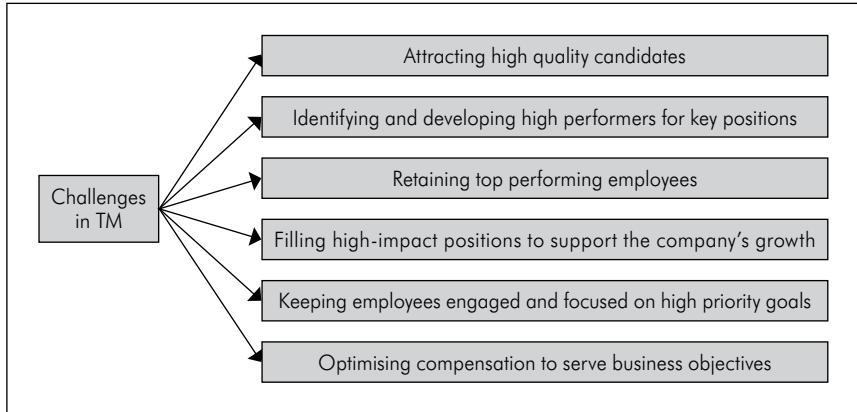
Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin and Michaels (1998) point out that, “To attract and retain the people you need, you must create and perpetually refine an employee value proposition: senior management’s answer to why a smart, energetic, ambitious individual would want to come and work with you rather than with the team next door. That done, you must turn your attention to how you are going to recruit great talent, and finally develop, develop, develop!” There must be a renewed focus on, and motivation to, retain and re-train staff to align with the organisation’s strategic goals within the public service.

In a world characterised by *polycrisis*, it is vital to maximise team engagement, motivation, attendance and retention through assessment, regular feedback, ongoing support and experience-based development initiatives. This theme shows that managers within the South African public sector do not nurture talent through strategic recruitment, retention and training programmes. Of concern is the loss of talented public servants to the private sector which provides opportunities for higher salaries and better working conditions. Moreover, the impact of 4IR, including generative technologies, poses a risk to talented public servants. Building resilience and sustainability within the modern work environment “requires collaboration, understanding and mapping skills, investing in education and upskilling, and ensuring fair pay and decent working conditions. Employers and governments must invest in creating the environment – the sustainable workplace; while workers themselves must actively take advantage of that environment and keep their skills updated, contributing to creating a more sustainable world” (WEF 2023: Online source).

Figure 2 summarises the challenges to TM (Vidyeeswari & Nair in Koketso 2011:62).

Figure 2 clearly demonstrates the challenges relating to TM. Challenges within the post-pandemic environment have added to the complexity, as it has introduced an element of job-related uncertainty, while exacerbating the impact of the global financial crisis, corruption in hiring practices, the South African

Figure 2: Typical challenges to talent management



Source: (Vidyeeswari & Nair in Koketso 2011:62)

government's call to professionalise the public sector, the war in Eastern Europe and the shrinking public sector budget.

CONCLUSIONS

For South Africa to meet its developmental goals, there is a need to develop the aspirations of senior public managers to be able to understand the nuances of TM and its interconnectivity to promote good governance. A public service staffed by talented officials, who are able to deliver on the South African constitutional mandate will assist the country to aspire to the “better life for all” that was promised upon South Africa becoming a democracy in 1994. This article concludes that the perceptions of senior managers within the South African public sector towards the management of talent was varied, with a sizeable percentage of the respondents not devoting enough of their working commitment towards TM. This is attributed to the following key factors:

- Senior public managers are not adequately trained and equipped to identify and retain talented staff.
- The high turnover and vacancy rate within the SMS itself is a key challenge to managing talent. With many vacant posts in the SMS, TM is not viewed as an existential threat to the public sector.
- A highly politicised public service poses a major challenge to the attraction and retention of talent. The appointment of politically-connected officials who are given preferential positions above talented individuals adds to the talent burden.

- The data in this study revealed that the ambiguous understanding of the concept of talent often blurs the management thereof (Theme 1).
- The identification of talent through a PMS is unevenly applied in the South African public sector. Consequently, the talent-performance link becomes blurred (Theme 2).
- It is evident that a talented and well-resourced public sector is crucial to navigating the South African public sector during times of *polycrises*. This was evident during the Covid-19 pandemic, and it will be a requirement to future global shocks and pressures.

Finally, the nexus between TM and good governance cannot be overemphasised, with SMS members having to change their perception of talent through well-orchestrated training and development programmes.

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Challenges in South Africa's Post-School Education and Training System on Local Governance Performance

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ABSTRACT

South Africa has a well-considered, comprehensive and integrated policy and legal framework for enabling human resource development. It takes into account the past as the legacy of apartheid places unique challenges on measures to develop human capacity. The framework also facilitates the role of human capacity in actualising South Africa's vision of socio-economic development and transformation. Both of these aspects are expressed in the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system that is based on the policy and legal framework.

However, the achievements of the PSET system have been limited by challenges that arise at the level of implementation, especially in the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA) component. The SETA component is the weakest part of the system but it is also the most important in developing job-related skills and therefore increasing the employability of the poorest and most educationally disadvantaged South Africans. When SETAs fail to deliver, the failure directly impacts the pool of skilled labour available to industry and government; it represents a critical failure of the PSET system.

Since the 1980s, South Africa has struggled with a shortage of skills critical for economic development. These include leadership and management skills, technical, engineering and artisan skills and financial and information technology skills. In spite of initiatives first, by the apartheid government and then by the democratic government, the situation has remained

stubbornly persistent and South Africa has not managed to develop the skills needed to develop its economy sufficiently to reduce its high rates of poverty and unemployment.

SETAs provide services to government as well as the private sector. Local government plays an especially important role as the implementer of transformation and development policies. It is vital that it is led and managed by skilled practitioners but there are severe challenges in developing their skills through the local government SETA. These challenges are discussed in some detail relating to the findings of a recent doctoral research study.

INTRODUCTION

Economic growth and development require that a country's citizens have the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge to make a constructive contribution to society generally and in particular to private and public sector workplaces. Post-1994, after centuries of colonial and then apartheid policies and laws that either ignored or deliberately weakened the capacity of the black majority to contribute to their own socio-economic development, South Africa has developed an enabling legal system and policy which aims to rebuild the capacity of its human capital.

Reddy (2014:3), views capacity development as the implementation of "*processes that drive progress*". Such processes would flow from basic education through post-school skills development to the workplace and contribute to the development of government institutions and socio-economic development in the country as a whole.

Van Zyl (2018:1), highlights the role of skills development in facilitating the socio-economic development of the country and its potential to assist South Africa to overcome its colonial and apartheid legacy. He cautions, however, that South Africa's approach to skills development must take into account the reality of a labour force with a racially-based disparity in skills, and high levels of poverty and inequality.

Inequality begins in childhood. Although the poor can access free education, the quality of free education is poor, learners do not attain acceptable levels of numeracy and literacy and the drop-out rate is high. Spaul (2015) notes that poor quality education helps maintain a cycle of poverty because the basic education system does not ensure that school leavers have labour market skills, especially mathematical skills, and as a result, the majority of young black South Africans are trapped in poverty just as their parents were.

This article will explore South Africa's PSET system which was designed to drive progress in skills development and overcome the legacy of weakened capacity. Relating to findings from research conducted for a doctoral study (Khunoethe 2021), it will also critically discuss the implementation of the system in developing the skills of local government councillors.

In addition to examining the challenges associated with South Africa's PSET system in the local government sphere, this article also explores the alignment between the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 3 qualification and the actual responsibilities of councillors. This will address concerns about the limited scope of the NQF3 training course in adequately preparing councillors for their roles, especially in areas such as budget review and policy evaluation. It is crucial to consider whether the current educational qualifications alone can sufficiently equip councillors to address the complex demands of local government. As part of our analysis, we investigate alternative assessment methods, such as the principles of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and the development of Personal Development Plans (PDPs), to assess councillors' competencies based on their practical experience and informal learning as adults. By exploring the alignment between the NQF level 3 qualification and the critical responsibilities outlined in the Local Government Back-to-Basics list, we aim to shed light on the relevance of the qualification and propose recommendations to ensure that councillors possess the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively contribute to service delivery and governance in local government.

METHODOLOGY

In this article, the methodology employed is primarily a literature review. We conducted an extensive review of existing academic papers, reports, and relevant documents related to South Africa's PSET system and its implementation in the local government sphere. The review encompassed a comprehensive search and analysis of key literature sources, including scholarly databases, government publications, and reputable research institutes' websites.

The literature review aimed to address the following research questions:

- What are the key features and components of South Africa's PSET system?
- How is the PSET system currently being implemented in the local government sphere?
- What are the main challenges faced in implementing the PSET system in the local government context?
- How do these challenges impact the effectiveness and outcomes of PSET programmes?

- What are the existing best practices, models, and strategies for addressing the challenges associated with implementing the PSET system in the local government sphere?
- What policy recommendations can be made to improve the implementation and effectiveness of councillor education and training programmes?
- How well does the current NQF3 qualification align with the knowledge, skills, and competencies required for effective councillor performance in the local government context?

By synthesising and analysing the findings from these literature sources, the article aims at gaining a comprehensive understanding of the challenges associated with implementing the PSET system in the local government context. The goal of this article is to contribute to the existing knowledge by providing insights and recommendations that can inform policy and practice in councillor education and training, ultimately leading to enhanced governance and service delivery at the local level.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

South Africa has a long and troubled history concerning education and skills development in the indigenous population. During colonial times, black people were seen as a convenient source of cheap labour and successive governments paid little attention to their education. At that time, the economy was based mainly on mining and agriculture which employed large numbers of unskilled and very low-skilled labourers; employers had no need for skilled black workers. (Van Zyl 2018:41–58).

By the beginning of the 20th century, less than 8% of black children were in school and more than half of them dropped out before they had completed primary school.

By the 1940s there was a large and growing population of destitute and unskilled job seekers who had migrated from rural areas and were living in informal settlements near urban centres. The 1951 Report of the Eiselen Commission on Native Education considered this development but recommended that access to education for black pupils continue to be limited to a few years of primary schooling and its recommendations were incorporated in the Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953 (Seroto 1999).

The Bantu Education Act not only entrenched disadvantage for black youth but by obstructing access to secondary education, it also limited the supply of skilled workers available to industry which had by then begun to develop a significant manufacturing sector. As the economy developed and the demand for skilled

workers increased, the country's economic growth potential was hampered by the unavailability of technical skills. By the 1970s South Africa entered a recession and it was becoming clear that apartheid educational policies were counter-productive to the country's economic development. In 1972, restrictions on secondary and technical schools for black learners in urban areas were lifted and in 1976, the Bantu Employees' In-Service Training Act allowed for training centres in urban areas to train black workers in technical skills (Van Zyl 2018:41–58).

In the late 1970s, the findings of two Commissions of Enquiry into Labour Legislation, the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions, led to the Manpower Training Act of 1984. The Manpower Training Act removed restrictions to apprenticeships and other post-school skills development opportunities that were based on race, sex or ethnicity but the government had no credibility with the majority of young black people and there were few applicants for the new training opportunities that the Manpower Training Act made available (Van Zyl 2018:41–58).

By 1994, there were critical shortages of leadership, management, project management, engineering, technician, artisan and financial skills required for industrial, social and economic reconstruction and development and it was essential for the new government to formulate policies and implement measures to facilitate and accelerate the development of these skills; not only for industry but also for government. Local government, especially rural local municipalities, was in dire need of appropriate interventions to develop skills for both administrators and councillors. By 1998, new skills development legislation was available and a new post-school training system, together with new institutions and structures, was being developed.

POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

Developing the capacity of individuals to play an active and effective role in the social and economic development of the country is seen as a critical element in efforts to overcome the legacy of apartheid. This is evidenced in the Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa 2010–2030 (Republic of South Africa 2009), which aligns human resource development (HRD) with South Africa's development agenda. The importance of HRD in economic policies was first identified in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which stated that: *“Improved training and education are fundamental to higher employment, the introduction of more advanced technologies, and reduced inequalities”* (Republic of South Africa 2009:11). This assertion was supported by the Growth Employment and Redistribution Strategy which emphasised the role of HRD in reducing unemployment and poverty and by the Accelerated and Shared Growth

initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) which identified the shortage of technical skills as one of “*six binding constraints to accelerated growth in South Africa*” (Republic of South Africa 2009:11).

South Africa’s HRD policies are articulated in several documents in an increasingly specific way. Starting with the Constitution (*Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996*), which provides a broad value statement in its Preamble: “*We, the people of South Africa, Recognise the injustices of our past ... [and]... adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to—... Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person*”. In Section 29, in the Bill of Rights it also provides that everyone has the right to basic education and to further education.

The National Development Plan (NDP) provides goals for actualising the Bill of Rights by 2030. The vision of the NDP is that, among other things, the country must develop “an inclusive economy, build [individual] capabilities, and enhance the capability of the state and leaders” (Alexander 2017:2). The actualisation of vision 2030 entails overcoming the legacy of apartheid and reversing the challenges of high unemployment, poverty, inequality, poor quality of school education and a lack of state capacity in critical areas.

The Medium-Term Strategic Framework 2014 to 2019 (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation 2014), was the first MTSF after the NDP was adopted in 2012. It identifies 12 strategic outcomes which are also urgent priorities of the NDP. These include: quality basic education that allows all children to fulfil their academic potential; a skilled and capable workforce with higher education and vocational qualifications that contributes to economic growth; a responsive, accountable, effective and efficient developmental local government that delivers high-quality services and reduces poverty and inequality

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2014:7–8) turns vision 2030 into policy and defines the focus of the Department of Higher Education. The policy is based on three fundamental principles: integration, articulation and quality. Implementation of these principles is seen as the means by which PSET can eradicate the legacy of apartheid and assist in building a South Africa in which people have skills for gaining employment and improving their standard of living.

An integrated system is one in which all institutions are parts of a coherent whole. The institutions of PSET include colleges and technical institutions; institutions of higher learning such as universities; the SETAs that support PSET with information and other resources including competence-based qualifications, learnerships and skills programmes; the National Skills Fund and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) that provide financial resources; and quality assurance bodies such as the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Quality Councils for Trades and Occupations (QCTOs) that support high quality PSET.

The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (2014) also recognises the importance of linking education with the skills needed by the various industry sectors and it allocates to SETAs a central role in using learnerships to facilitate partnerships between employers and educational institutions. The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2014:16–17) states that *“the design of training systems, including curricula, requires close cooperation between education and training providers and employers – especially in those programmes providing vocational training”*. Artisan training is given special attention. The White Paper identifies the deterioration of the apprenticeship system since the 1950s as the chief cause of the current shortage of technical skills. It places a high priority on developing an effective artisan training system and sets a target of qualifying 30 000 artisans a year.

An articulated system is one in which all qualifications are part of a modular whole with pathways that allow learners to enter the system at their current level of competence or education and then progress by obtaining qualifications at higher and higher NQF levels with no dead ends, until each learner achieves their goal. Learners, regardless of age, can enter the system if they have completed grade 12, if they did not complete secondary school, if they left school after primary school or if they have never attended school. Articulation ensures that the system allows anyone who wants to, to achieve qualifications up to or above the level of grade 12.

A quality education and training system is one which recognises that education and training must be of high quality and that the right to access alone is not enough. It is access to quality post-school education that has the potential to eradicate poverty and inequality. To ensure quality unit standards and qualifications, SETAs need to gather accurate data from employers on sector skills needs and the skills levels of employees and ensure that their strategies are relevant. However, a quality education and training system is holistic and it goes beyond job-related knowledge and skills by developing citizens who understand their social, cultural and physical environments, are innovative in the way they apply their skills, behave ethically and can function effectively as members of a democracy.

In summary, South Africa’s HRD policy is two-pronged. The first prong is economic development. The consequence of apartheid education and training policies was that South Africa did not have the types and levels of skills required for economic development. A lack of skills not only constrains the growth of a country’s economy, it also has a negative effect on the performance of government and its ability to deliver services and development. Even when other capacities and resources are available to support service delivery, a lack of individual capacity can prevent this potential from being actualised. Economic development is government’s top priority and development of the workforce to ensure that the skills required by the labour market are available, is a key element in its economic

growth and development strategy. South Africa's HRD policies, therefore, link skills development to economic development and the labour market. The second prong recognises education and training as important tools for developing the potential of individual citizens, overcoming the legacy of past discriminatory practices, increasing employment and reducing poverty and inequality. South Africa's HRD acknowledge and promote these outcomes of skills development.

The main policy objectives stated in the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (Department of Higher Education and Training 2014:11) are: *“a post-school system that can assist in building a fair, equitable, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa; a single, coordinated post-school education and training system; expanded access, improved quality and increased diversity of provision; a stronger and more cooperative relationship between education and training institutions and the workplace; a post-school education and training system that is responsive to the needs of individual citizens, employers in both public and private sectors, as well as broader societal and developmental objectives”.*

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Nearly 50 years of apartheid had created an education and training system in which unfair discrimination was so deeply embedded that the Department of Higher Education and Training (2016), decided to discard the system in its entirety and replace it with a system organised around the concept of competence outcomes. The national PSET has four components: higher education offered by public universities and universities of technology and private higher education institutions; Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), offered by public TVET colleges and private colleges; Community Education and Training (CET), offered by public CET colleges and public and private adult learning centres; and SETAs (Department of Higher Education and Training 2016).

There are four pieces of legislation that regulate further and higher education (Department of Higher Education and Training 2020): the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 which regulates higher education and provides for public higher educational institutions, independent assessors and quality assurance in higher education; the Continuing Education and Training Act 16 of 2006 which regulates further education and training and provides for public further education and training colleges and quality assurance in further education and training; the General Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act 58 of 2001 which provides for quality assurance, norms and standards for curriculum and assessment and certification; and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme Act 56 of 1999 which establishes and provides for the administration of the NSFAS in

order to grant loans and bursaries to eligible students at public higher education institutions.

The legal framework for job-related skills development consists of four additional pieces of legislation specifically designed to promote occupational skills development, increase access to work opportunities and reduce unemployment and improve the country's economic growth potential. These are: the National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008; the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998; the Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999 and the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998.

Within a year of the first post-apartheid government taking office, the South African Qualifications Authority Act 58 of 1995 was promulgated. It established the SAQA and mandated it to develop and implement an NQF. In 2008, the South African Qualifications Authority Act was repealed and replaced by the National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008. The National Qualifications Framework Act builds on more than 10 years of SAQA's achievements and experience. It provides for a more nuanced NQF; for the capacity building responsibilities of the Departments of Education and Labour; and it establishes Quality Councils.

The National Qualifications Framework Act provides for an NQF that is based on learning outcomes and it establishes RPL to redress past unfair discrimination in education and training. RPL provides a method for assessing learning that has taken place outside of formal learning institutions. It discourages the use of written examinations and encourages other assessment methods such as compiling a portfolio of evidence or conducting a practical exercise that allows learners to demonstrate their competence.

The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 provides for a comprehensive institutional framework for capacity building. The institutional framework is comprised of a National Skills Authority and SETAs; Quality Councils for Trades and Occupations; Productivity South Africa, a national employment service and the National Skills Fund which operates in compliance with the Public Finance Management Act. The Skills Development Act also provides for strategies that develop and improve the skills of the South African workforce and lead to recognised occupational qualifications, including learnerships, skills programmes and artisan development.

The Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999 provides for the financing of skills development through a levy-grant scheme and the National Skills Fund. The use of monies in the National Skills Fund and the levies collected by SETA are regulated by the Regulations to the Skills Development Act (Department of Labour 2021).

The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 has two key objectives. First, to ensure that the Bill of Rights is implemented in private and public sector workplaces to promote equality and democracy, eliminate unfair discrimination and achieve a

workforce representative of the demographic diversity in South Africa. Second, the Employment Equity Act provides for affirmative measures, including skills development in terms of the Skills Development Act, to overcome the legacy of disadvantage and disparities in the workplace.

These four Acts offer an integrated and coordinated legal framework for job-related skills development and they establish various institutions and structures to enable implementation of the purposes of these Acts. Such institutions and structures include: educational institutions, training providers, SAQA, the NQF, SETAs and the levy-grant system.

STRATEGIES FOR HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Finally, a series of national plans and strategies have been formulated to set goals for and support the implementation of the capacity building policies and legislation and the PSET system. Such plans and strategies include: the National Skills Development Programme 2030 (NSDP) the HRD Strategy; the ASGISA; the New Growth Path (NGP) and the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA).

The NSDP 2030 (Department of Higher Education and Training 2019), provides for a set of principles that include contributing to South Africa's socio-economic development objectives; understanding an employer's demand for skills and ensuring that the supply of qualifications and the provision of training are aligned to the demand and are adequately funded. The NSDP has eight outcomes including: identifying skills in high demand and increasing the supply; aligning skills development with the needs of the workplace; improving the workforce's skills levels; increasing the number of public colleges; and making occupationally directed programmes more accessible.

The HRD Strategy 2010–2030 (Republic of South Africa 2009) is a strategy for increasing the human resources available to accelerate economic growth. It identifies indicators and targets for reducing poverty, unemployment and inequality and achieving RDP. It places the responsibility for achieving these goals and targets on government departments and other stakeholders, including training providers, employers and employees who play a role in HRD.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PSET SYSTEM

The PSET is a comprehensive and well-considered system but it has not reduced unemployment, poverty or inequality. The structural nature of the racial inequality that has kept historically disadvantaged black South Africans low-skilled and unemployed must be addressed before the PSET can be successful (Groener 2014).

Groener (2014) analyses the role of the SETAs in skills development and identifies five structural and educational barriers to skills development: first, that while entry level literacy, numeracy and other requirements are stated, they are not strictly enforced and learners enter skills development programmes without the basic requirements for success; second, the content of the skills development programmes may not correspond with learners' prior knowledge and programme facilitators seldom assist learners to reconcile this mismatch; third, there is a lack of support to assist learners in completing a programme; fourth, learnership stipends may be insufficient to cover the needs of poor learners and enable them to remain on the programme; and fifth, the numbers of learners who are recruited for skills development programmes are too low to have an impact.

SETAs are a vital component of the PSET system because they facilitate access to occupational qualifications for learners who have not achieved their potential in the formal education system. However, in reality there are several challenges. SETAs are seen to have a weak skill needs identification and planning system; to fail to produce competence outcomes; to have poor research capacity, poor data management, a lack of skills development expertise and weak leadership and governance. Furthermore, SETAs have lost credibility with private sector employers, many of whom have opted out of the PSET systems in favour of unregulated short courses that do not produce competence outcomes (Department of Higher Education and Training 2016).

In 2013, the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) published a review of PSET which identified SETAs as the weak link in the system. The review noted governance and financial management failures and a general ineffectiveness in addressing sectoral workplace skills needs (Kraak, A., Lewison, R., Pillay, P., Chidi, M., Bhagwan, N. and Makgolane, M. 2013). The HRDC review found that, in spite of high levels of investment from skills levies, SETAs have had little impact on skills development in their sectors; they do not accurately identify training needs or develop relevant qualifications and they do not plan effectively for future skills needs, such as the impacts of changes in technology. There has been success in placing large numbers of learners on learnerships but most of the qualified learners have been unable to find employment and the SETA system has not been able to reduce unemployment.

According to the HRDC review (Kraak *et al.* 2013), the problem starts with a poor schooling system, continues with a weak vocational education and training system from which low numbers of skilled people emerge and results in a "mismatch between the skills of those qualifying and the skills needs of employers" (Kraak *et al.* 2013). The most serious criticism by employers is that people who emerge with qualifications from the basic education or post-school systems are not employable because they lack both fundamental competencies and qualifications required by the workplace. The SETA system was designed to deliver both

but from the perspective of employers, it is delivering only qualifications and not competence.

Finally, the HRDC review identifies that in the public service, the skills development framework is further weakened by confusion around the responsibilities of the Department of Higher Education and Training and its National Skills Development Strategy, the SETA's Sector Skills Plan, the Department of Public Service and Administration's HRD plan and individual departments that have their own HRD plans. This criticism also applies to local government where there is a lack of alignment between the Local Government SETA's Sector Skills Plan, the Workplace Skills Plans of individual municipalities and the skills development plans developed by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs' capacity building units for addressing skills development needs in municipalities. Moreover, there is a lack of alignment between municipalities' Workplace Skills Plans and their Integrated Development Plans. These overlapping and uncoordinated responsibilities create a perception that the skills system in the public sector is complicated and ineffective in building the types and levels of skills needed by councillors and administrators to meet service delivery and development goals.

Furthermore, a report by the National Skills Authority (NSA 2019) found that despite efforts to improve the impact of SETAs, there are still significant gaps in skills development, with many learners who have completed training programmes struggling to find employment. The report emphasises the need for enhanced co-ordination and strategic planning to align the skills development efforts of SETAs with the evolving needs of industries. Their findings echo the observations made in the HRDC review, highlighting the confusion and lack of alignment between different departments' skills development plans and strategies. This lack of co-ordination continues to hinder the effectiveness of skills development initiatives for councillors and administrators in meeting service delivery and development goals. Government has recognised and attempted to address this goal confusion and lack of coordination. The Department of Monitoring and Evaluating in the Presidency (2012) identified a need for clearly defined roles and responsibilities among the various departments and for mechanisms to improve coordination and alignment of capacity building initiatives, including initiatives to evaluate capacity building in order to ensure greater impact; develop the skills base for critical skills needed by local government; promote sound oversight practices by municipal councils; strengthen the institutional capacity of municipalities and strengthen governance and financial management in municipalities. This initiative is known as the "Outcome 9 Agreement" and it requires provincial departments to strengthen the provision and coordination of capacity building support to municipalities.

The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (Department of Higher Education and Training 2014), recognises the challenges in SETAs and it proposes that they are refocused towards their core functions which are to

interact with employers and identify and address the skills needs of employers. The NSDP 2030 (Department of Higher Education and Training 2019), picks up on the challenges and aims to improve skills development by SETAs in terms of Section 9 of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 by ensuring that SETAs have the capability to supply the necessary skills for economic growth, job creation and social development.

It is important to note that PSET cannot be viewed in isolation (Van Zyl 2018:1–2). A poor quality of education and a high drop-out rate in the basic education system may discourage learners and deter them from accessing skills development opportunities offered by the PSET system. Van Zyl warns that *“Skills development efforts cannot flourish where a culture of self-improvement and ambition, pride and confidence in own abilities and human dignity, has been diminished and deteriorated through poverty, a lack of quality education and limited training and work opportunities”*.

ASSESSING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PSET SYSTEM IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Implementation of the capacity building framework in local government confirms the challenges and issues regarding SETAs and indicates that the cause could be a lack of the fundamental processes used in good management of training. Research conducted by H. Khunoethe (Khunoethe 2021) among municipal councillors from a sample of eight poorly performing rural local municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal shows that councillors have generally low levels of education; some had no formal schooling and most had not completed grade 12. Consequently, job-related skills development for councillors relies on the SETA component of the PSET system but training outcomes are hampered by challenges in the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA). The challenges include: poor quality data about the sector and a lack of updating of qualifications leading to a lack of relevance, poor quality of accredited training providers, and low credibility of SETA qualifications.

After local government elections, at the start of each term of office, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) enrolls new councillors on a Learning Programme derived from the LGSETA's NQF3 qualification, the National Certificate in Local Government Councillor Practices, to train them in the roles and responsibilities of councillors. However, this qualification fails to address vital functions of municipal councillors which is oversight of the management of financial and other resources, oversight of the performance of the municipality and appointment of a competent Municipal Manager.

Further, the level of the qualification at NQF 3 is aligned with councillor's low levels of formal education and not with the role and level of the position. Municipal councillors have a leadership role and they conduct oversight over the administration but leadership and oversight are high-level competencies. It is possible that if the councillors were assessed according to the principles of RPL or by developing PDPs, that many would be found to have higher levels of skills and knowledge, relevant to their role, than their educational qualifications would suggest. Perhaps they should be defined more by their informal learning as adults and less by the formal schooling they achieved as children.

When the Local Government Back-to-Basics (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs 2015) list of councillors' responsibilities is compared with the unit standards of the NQF 3 qualification, significant mismatches are found: the National Certificate in Local Government Councillor Practices does not address the critical responsibilities councillors have for service delivery, resources management and governance, development planning and infrastructure management or socio-economic development. These issues call into question the relevance of the qualification but in 2018, when the NQF3 qualification was reviewed, the LGSETA did not address them and the qualification was re-registered without change.

Two factors that are fundamental to training decision-making are absent in the determination of the content of the qualification. These are: the lack of a job description for councillors and a lack of knowledge of the training gaps of individuals in accordance with the skills requirements of the job description. Regarding a job description, there is a lack of agreement about the key roles and responsibilities of councillors. The LGSETA qualification prioritises public participation and communication skills; whereas the Auditor General highlights the need to improve financial oversight and governance; communities and businesses call for better delivery of basic services and for job creation and COGTA uses the five pillars of the Back-to-Basics approach to assess the performance of municipalities. It is clear that a councillor's job description that meets the needs of all stakeholders is required before the skills needed by councillors can be determined.

To identify gaps and the skills development needs of individual councillors, the national department of COGTA has developed a web-based tool known as GAPSKILL. It was intended to collect data on the extent to which municipal officials and councillors have the competencies, qualifications and work experience required by their positions but it is not yet aligned to the skills and experience required by specific positions, nor does it collect data on or assess job competence.

According to Greyling, (no date), the GAPSKILL tool was developed in 2006 for the purpose of measuring individual capacity. Individual capacity was defined as the combination of qualifications, experience and competence that was required for a position. The fact that, 16 years after it was initiated, it still does not

measure individual capacity, considerably weakens the value of the tool; it does not assist the user in determining the appropriateness of the type and level of skills possessed by councillors and officials or in identifying their skills development needs. The tool is therefore incomplete and, in its current form, not useful for the purpose of skills development. Greyling points out that the intended outcome of the skills audit was a PDP for every municipal employee in every job category and level and that the PDPs would inform the Workplace Skills Plans (WSPs) thus ensuring well-planned training interventions and building a culture of learning within municipalities. With no data on either individual competencies or job requirements, training interventions cannot be targeted to bridge individual skills gaps. The failure of GAPSKILL to fulfil its intended function has reduced the capacity of both local government and provincial government to address skills development in municipalities.

The concept paper describing the Local Government Back to Basics Approach (COGTA 2014), points out that while there has been progress in delivering water, electricity, sanitation and refuse removal at a local level, at delivery rates that are unprecedented world-wide to more citizens than ever before, many challenges remain in achieving the service delivery and development ideals of local government. Such challenges include institutional and financial incapacity that undermines the viability of some municipalities; a lack of appropriately skilled personnel; inadequate public participation resulting in low levels of trust by communities and corruption and a breakdown in constitutional values among public representatives. The National Certificate in Local Government Councillor Practices contains no financial unit standards nor any unit standards that specifically address the critical challenges of service delivery, infrastructure management or socio-economic development and how to ensure and build the capacity of senior managers.

Another challenge identified by Khunoethe's research (Khunoethe 2021) relates to the interaction between the LGSETA and municipalities as employers. A SETA's primary source of information about the skills needs in its sector comes from the WSPs of individual employers but in all of the municipalities sampled in Khunoethe's study (Khunoethe 2021), the Skills Development Facilitators (SDFs), who compile the WSPs, were interns, most of whom had no background in Human Resources Management and who had no access to information about training needs, if indeed such information exists. They had been given the task of completing the form in order to obtain the grant but the information on the form did not reflect actual training plans. This results in a lack of information that is critical for decision-making by the SETA and it indicates a need for greater coordination and collaboration between the LGSETA and municipalities.

Until good data is collected by the SETAs it will not be possible for it to assess the relevance of the National Certificate in Local Government Councillor Practices or other LGSETA qualifications.

Finally, a review of skills development challenges must consider not only the content of training interventions but also theories and models of how the content should be delivered. According to the KwaZulu-Natal COGTA's Skills Audit Report (2016), municipal councillors are all adults, about one third are women; very few are young, most are 50 years old or older; many did not complete high school and a few have no schooling at all; many speak, read and write only Zulu; some have experience as community activists; all have experience of political organisations, processes and structures but most have no work experience and no experience of PSET.

Given their average age it is likely that they experienced and dropped out of the apartheid Bantu education system and that they might feel uncomfortable, even anxious, in a classroom-type training situation. The average age of councillors also suggests that they have gained knowledge and skills during the course of their lives through informal learning and that this must be respected and recognised.

In order to determine the training methods that will best deliver the intended training outcomes, these characteristics of the learners need to be understood within the framework of theories of adult education. Andragogy, as defined by the University of South Africa's tutorial letter entitled "Principles and theories of adult education", is a theory of adult learning that emphasises the value of learning as a process and identifies principles that differentiate processes for teaching adults from the processes used in teaching children (UNISA 2015). Andragogy promotes an approach to learning that is problem-based and collaborative and it encourages respect for what the learner already knows rather than an assumption that the teacher has all the knowledge and the learner has none.

In the pursuit of finding effective solutions to these challenges, the book "Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice" by Merriam and Bierema (2014) emerges as a valuable resource that serves to connect theory and practice in the field of adult education. Although the book was not specifically written for the South African context, its insights and principles are highly applicable to the unique needs and challenges faced by adult learners in South Africa. The authors delve into theories and models of adult learning that emphasise learner-centred approaches, experiential learning, and the importance of context in shaping learning experiences. These themes align closely with the educational landscape in South Africa, where adult learners often come from diverse backgrounds and have varying educational experiences. By drawing on the theoretical foundations and practical strategies presented in the book, educators and practitioners in South Africa can adapt and contextualise the principles to meet the specific needs of adult learners in their local communities. 'Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice' serves as a valuable reference for South African educators, providing a solid theoretical grounding and practical guidance for designing and delivering effective adult learning programmes.

There are five key principles of adult learning: adults learn best when they understand *why* something is important to know or do; adults learn best when they have the freedom to learn in their own way; when learning is experiential; when they feel the time is right and they need this new skill or information and when the learning environment is positive and encouraging. Adult learners are practical about learning so they are motivated when they perceive that a new skill or new knowledge will help them carry out tasks they confront in their life or work situations. Pedagogy, the art and science of educating children is a teacher-focused approach to education where teachers assume responsibility for making decisions about what will be learned, how it will be learned, and when it will be learned. Andragogy recognises that adults learn differently from children, it places the individual at the heart of the learning transaction and encourages self-direction. This requires the educator to be a facilitator of learning rather than a teacher.

Malcolm Knowles' work (UNISA 2015) reoriented thinking about adult educators from the notion of teaching people to the notion of helping them learn. He identified five ways that adult learners are different from child learners.

- Self-concept. An adult is a self-directed learner while a child depends on teachers for direction.
- Experience. An adult has accumulated life experience that they can use as a resource for learning.
- Readiness to learn. An adult is less ready to learn for the sake of learning and prefers to link learning to needs that arise from their work and social roles
- Orientation to learning. An adult learner has a greater need to perceive the relevance of new skills or knowledge for their current situation and this shifts their learning orientation from subject-centredness to problem-centredness.
- Motivation to learn. An adult's motivation to learn is internal and linked to their perceived need for new skills and knowledge.

In a learner-centred system, instead of sitting in a classroom and being led by a teacher, learners have opportunities to practise and refine their new skills and they should be engaged in informal learning activities where they share knowledge with their peers and learn by doing.

Another theorist who has had a significant influence on the concept and practice of adult teaching and learning is Paulo Freire (UNISA 2015). He also emphasised the learner-centred approach but he viewed teaching as a political process and highlighted the need for the educator and the learner to work together as equals and for both to be aware of a power imbalance between educator and learner, for the educator to respect the knowledge the learner already has and to help the learner apply their existing knowledge to a new situation.

For Freire, in addition to competence, adult learning should produce outcomes such as more self-understanding and increased self-respect; an ability to

challenge ideas without threatening people; greater openness to new opportunities and change; an ability to analyse problems and understand that solutions to problems lie in their causes; and the ability to participate in making decisions that affect society.

Freire believed that facilitators should encourage learners to engage in problem-solving and social tasks like group projects and presentations that empower learners. He also identified critical reflection as an important part of the learning process and he believed that the more critically aware learners become the more they are able to develop their own potential and transform society.

Jack Mezirow also emphasised the importance of critical reflection (UNISA 2015). He refined the concept of transformational learning to refer to learning that has a significant impact on the learner and shapes the learner's future development. Such learning is achieved through experience, critical reflection and discussions with peers, with critical reflection being the most important factor. Mezirow viewed critical reflection as the vehicle by which learners question their assumptions about the world and develop their world view. The learning environment required for transformative learning to take place is one in which learners have full access to information, can form their own opinions and are willing to search for common ground between different points of view. This theory involves learning through task-oriented problem solving to achieve short-term objectives such as improving their work performance and learning through communication about their feelings and ambitions.

The use of transformational learning as a training technique requires the creation of a learning environment that promotes a sense of safety and acceptance; group participation and collaboration; exploring alternative perspectives, posing problems and helping learners to examine the assumptions that underlie their beliefs, feelings and actions; giving feedback and encouraging self-assessment.

The SAQA concurs with these principles. SAQA's mission is to develop and implement an NQF that promotes the personal development as well as skills development of each learner and its values are aligned to the values of respect, dignity, personal growth and self-directed learning that underpin the theories of adult education. This implies that learning programmes should be educationally transformative. They should build on learners' existing frames of reference; be learner-centred, experiential and outcomes-oriented; encourage critical inquiry and develop learners' powers of analysis; and prepare learners for lifelong learning in a world of ongoing technological and cultural change. The NQF, therefore, is not just a framework of qualifications, it is a framework for the empowerment and development of learners and a way for them to reach their full potential.

However, the training providers accredited by the LGSETA are not required to use the methodologies of adult learning. In addition, they have been criticised by

municipal councillors and officials (Khunoethe 2021) for presenting their training material in a theoretical way and for not having the local government experience to provide relevant and practical examples.

Another challenge to effective implementation of the PSET system in local government is a lack of consistency and coordination between government departments. The spheres of national and provincial government are mandated by section 154(1) of the Constitution to support and strengthen the capacity of local government but a report by the Financial and Fiscal Commission (Peters and Van Nieuwenhuyzen 2013) finds that different government departments have different approaches to this mandate, especially regarding the training of municipal councillors. For example, some departments emphasise accredited training aligned to unit standards, while some prefer short courses and others deploy technical advisors to act as mentors. The report found that the differing approaches are not based on a shared theoretical understanding of training methods and were ad hoc and uncoordinated. In addition, the report found that the differing approaches can aggravate existing capacity challenges. The report also found that training impacts are not assessed even though evaluating the outcomes of skills development interventions is essential for developing government policy and ensuring that the interventions are relevant and efficient.

The Financial and Fiscal Commission's report makes several recommendations including a recommendation that training objectives should be clearly defined and independent exit evaluations of training programmes should be compulsory. Another recommendation is that human resource functions in local government should be strengthened and municipalities should be supported in filling critical vacancies with individuals who have the correct skills and knowledge for the post. Finally, it recommends that a municipality's skills development plans and programmes should be monitored to ensure that officials receive training that supports their continued professional development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding the skills development of municipal councillors, the NQF3 qualification needs to be reviewed and updated to improve its relevance to the job of a councillor, especially their financial oversight and governance roles. It also needs to be aligned to the Back-to-Basics approach.

Regarding data collection which is necessary for SETAs to identify training needs and plan for providing the skills required by their sectors, the LGSETA receives weak data because municipal administrations are weak in HRD functions, their WSPs are not well informed and their SDFs are too junior to have access to the data that the SETA requires. In order to improve the quality of data it receives,

the SETA needs to interact more with municipalities and support the development of their human resources and SDF functions.

In order to ensure a comprehensive understanding of skills needs, it is crucial to foster closer collaboration between SETAs, municipalities, and relevant stakeholders. This can be achieved through regular forums, workshops, and knowledge-sharing platforms where municipalities actively participate and provide input on their specific requirements.

The development of tailor-made training programmes is essential to address the unique challenges faced by municipal councillors. These programmes should focus on areas such as financial management, governance, service delivery, and leadership skills. By customising the training content and delivery methods to suit the specific needs of councillors, the effectiveness and relevance of the programmes can be significantly enhanced.

It is also important to recognise and value the informal learning experiences and skills acquired by municipal councillors throughout their lives. Implementing recognition mechanisms, such as RPL assessments or the development of PDPs, can acknowledge the competencies gained through practical experiences and informal learning. This approach provides a more accurate assessment of councillors' skills and knowledge, going beyond formal educational qualifications.

Furthermore, establishing mentoring and coaching programmes can provide valuable support to newly elected councillors. Experienced and knowledgeable individuals can serve as mentors, offering insights, sharing experiences, and providing guidance on effective decision-making, problem-solving, and community engagement. This mentorship contributes to the professional development and capacity building of councillors.

Lastly, COGTA's GAPSKILL should also be completed so that it can support the identification of skills gaps in municipalities.

These recommendations aim to further enhance the skills development and support systems for municipal councillors in South Africa. By implementing a holistic approach that encompasses collaboration, customised training, recognition of informal learning, mentoring, and continuous professional development, municipalities can better equip their councillors to meet the evolving demands and challenges of local governance effectively.

CONCLUSION

As a result of apartheid education policies, South Africa faced and still faces challenges in developing a skilled and competent workforce. This challenge also impacts local government. Skills development, in the way it has been carried out, has not improved the functioning of local government.

South Africa's HRD policy and legal framework is a well-considered, comprehensive framework for regulating and enabling the building of the capacity of individuals to play a constructive role in the socio-economic development of South Africa. The framework addresses the need for skilled human resources to support South Africa's overarching goals of economic growth, reconstruction and development and it gives rise to an integrated PSET system.

SETAs play a critical role in redressing the destructive impact of apartheid policies. SETAs are intended to provide access to qualifications for individuals who would be unable to develop their potential through formal education. SETAs are also intended to improve the quality of the labour pool and increase the skills and skill levels available to both the public and private sectors. However, they are criticised for failing to achieve these aims.

This article has highlighted some significant failures of the LGSETA in carrying out its mandate and has attributed them to a lack of training management fundamentals in both the SETA and the municipalities.

NOTE

- * This article is based on a PhD thesis of Dr Halima Khunoethe that was completed under the supervision of Professor P S Reddy in 2022, titled: *Evaluation of Local Government Capacity Building interventions by the provincial government in KwaZulu Natal*, at the University of KwaZulu Natal.

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The Role of the Parliamentary Budget Offices in Supporting Budget Reforms

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ABSTRACT

Parliamentary Budget Offices (PBOs) are independent financial institutions established primarily to provide parliaments with the necessary capacity to perform their legislative and fiscal oversight role through the enhancement of fiscal scrutiny and decision-making. Many parliaments do not have the necessary capacity in place which often affects the overall quality of government budgets. The promise of financial scrutiny is that it improves accountability, promotes public participation and enhances budget transparency. Among others, establishment of PBOs can mitigate the risks of financial indiscipline by disallowing amendments that could result in higher spending or budget deficits.

This article contributes to the existing literature on independent financial institutions by providing an analysis on the role of PBOs in supporting budget reforms. The methodology entails a desktop analysis approach by way of a literature and documentary review. The findings suggest that effective implementation and management of PBOs can result in improved budget processes and effective public finance management. A continuous monitoring and evaluation of the PBO as well as international lessons of experiences and best practices further contributes to the effectiveness of the office.

INTRODUCTION

The scale of the capacity of parliamentarians differs across the world, affecting the level of economic and societal developments in the respective country

(Mohammed 2009:63). The term 'capacity' in this context refers to a collective term for human, analytical, coordination, communication and credibility and independence elements (Mali 2019:3). Although governments are required to have skilled human capital and institutional capacity in place to effectively govern the country, the lack of technical support to analyse budget information comprehensively by parliamentarians makes it quite difficult to adequately scrutinise budget information (Bhanu, Duggal and Aquilina 2017:24). To keep up with their legislative and fiscal oversight role, parliaments require independent and non-partisan human and institutional capacity to provide independent analysis on budget and related financial matters. Many parliaments have enacted laws to ensure that such capacity is in place through the establishment of independent financial institutions such as Specialised Research Units, Legislative/Parliamentary Budget Offices or Fiscal Advisory Councils (Mohammed 2009:66). According to Hadley, Kraan and Welham (2018:152), an independent financial institution is an independent and non-partisan unit established with the aim of providing the executive (parliament, in the case of South Africa) with an impartial budgetary and economic analysis on matters relating to the budget and other money Bills such as the Financial Matters Amendment Bill, Division of Revenue Bill and Appropriation Bill etc.

The rationale for setting up an independent financial institution rests in the assumption that legislators need a source of information and analysis independent from the executive to effectively execute its legislative and fiscal oversight functions (Audu 2016:2). According to Krafchik and Wehner (1998:2), parliamentarians do not have adequate information or specialised ability to play an effective role in budgeting. The study conducted by Bisase (2017:n.p.) revealed that parliaments require high quality research and analysis focusing on short-, medium- and long-term budget outcomes, broad fiscal challenges facing the government, expenditure control and budgetary trade-offs affecting present and future spending, among others, to effectively exercise their fiscal oversight role. The lack of adequate information and technical capacity in parliaments is generally a norm in many developing countries. Many parliaments have established Parliamentary Budget Offices (PBOs) in an attempt to address an increased fiscal and legislative oversight function. Some examples of PBOs established worldwide include the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) of the United States of America (USA), National Assembly Budget Office (NABO) of Korea, Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) of Uganda and National Assembly Budget and Research Office (NABRO) of Nigeria (Bhanu 2016:5).

This article examines the role of PBOs in supporting budget reforms by way of a qualitative desktop approach. In qualitative research, a researcher interprets information collected from various sources such as case studies, internet and books about information relating to the topic of interest using a naturalistic approach (Aspers and Corte 2019:147). This article analysed sources with information

relating to independent financial institutions as well as budget reforms. The international lessons of experiences and best practices provided the case studies on how various PBOs across the world have contributed towards budget reforms in specific countries, including the USA, Canada and Nigeria.

It is against this background that the article aims to explore the contributions of PBOs in supporting budget reforms, particularly within the South African context. In doing so, this article provides an overview of the current literature on the concept of budget reform. Following this is a provision of different budget reforms introduced in South Africa post-1994 and a discussion on the role of PBOs in supporting budget reforms. This article will provide some international examples of experiences and lessons learned on the role of PBOs in supporting budget reforms. It will then provide an overall conclusion on the role of PBOs in supporting budget reforms.

CONCEPTUALISING BUDGET REFORM

A budget is a government's main economic tool that gives a far-reaching proclamation of the country's needs and priorities (OECD 2014:1). According to Nicolae and Anca (2010:19), a budget is a government's annual financial plan that indicates the estimated allocation and distribution of public funds across various government activities such as agriculture, healthcare, education and security. The process of budgeting is an essential instrument for executing fiscal policy and has a significant impact on the overall economy of a country (Krafchik and Wehner 1998:1). Government through budgeting, can mobilise and allocate resources, accelerate capital formation, generate greater employment and improve income and wealth distribution (Premchand 1975:25). Such a budget must be clear, transparent and credible in order to command trust, and to serve as a basis of accountability. Good budgeting is supported by, and in turn supports various pillars of modern public governance which include integrity, openness, participation, accountability and a strategic approach to planning and achieving national objectives (OECD 2014:1).

The concept of budget reform can be described as a continuous review and modification of government's budgeting processes and systems – a continuous process that will never be completed (Milano 2022). In support of this, Fölscher and Cole (2006:2) maintain that the budgeting system will always need to be more responsive to changing circumstances and demands. The concept of budget reform according to Van Reeth (2002:4) implies that either the existing budgeting system no longer fulfils its functions adequately, or that changes in the administrative and economic context are introducing new functions on the budgeting system. Based on the definitions provided, it can be concluded that budget reform

is a continuous modification of budget processes to ensure they are responsive to changing demands and circumstances of governments.

Budget reforms are designed to deal with the problem(s) of an individual country and are unlikely to be applicable to other countries. Although some problems may be relevant, some countries may not have the necessary tools required for the introduction of these reforms (Fölscher 2006:2). The reform process and the type of reform undertaken is determined by policy objectives and the context in which they take place. The success of the reform, however, is largely dependent on the extent of the situation when the reform was introduced (Filc and Scartascini 2007:158). The implementation strategy and the management of the reform further contribute to the effectiveness of the reform.

For budget reforms to be effective, they must conform to the principles of reforms as highlighted by the Commonwealth Secretariat (2005:3). Reform strategies should be implemented as part of government's overall strategy, which should be specific to the economic and societal contexts of that country. Stakeholder involvement should be at the core of the strategy to give credibility to the reform. Government should support the strategy by ensuring effective management of the reform through harnessing global best practices and using the available resources at hand in an effective, efficient and economic manner. Moreover, the progress of the reform must be monitored and evaluated continuously by setting key performance indicators and related benchmarks and measuring and analysing these indicators on a regular basis (Commonwealth Secretariat 2005:3).

Many budgetary reforms have been in countries that have experienced serious economic challenges such as budget deficits and public debts, especially during the economic recessions and depressions. For instance, the Great Depression of the 1930s as well as the Global Recession of 2008 are examples of economic crises that compelled many governments to introduce various budgetary reforms such as the introduction of a new intergovernmental system, a shift from annual budgeting to a multi-year budgeting system, modernisation of legislative frameworks governing public budgets and the establishment of independent financial institutions (Olivier 2016:48). Brumby (1998:1) maintains that some international lessons of experiences and best practices further contributed to this movement.

Many governments that started early with their budget reforms are reporting positive feedback, and more governments are moving in a similar direction (Fölscher and Cole 2006:2). Like any other government, the South African government also experienced serious economic challenges that necessitated the need for budget reforms, especially after democracy in 1994. The economic challenges experienced included but were not limited to inadequate tools to stabilise fiscal balances and manage required policy shifts, poor underlying information systems, hidden spending and inadequate mechanisms for quality information for use in the budgeting process and for accountability purposes (Ajam 2009:4). These

challenges compelled government to introduce public financial management reforms as one way of addressing such matters.

The fundamental characteristics of budget reforms places a different emphasis on the functions of a budget. The early budget reforms shaped microeconomic stability and strengthened public spending while the recent reforms emphasise efficient resource allocation and effective service delivery. The highlights of the reforms programme include the roll-out of a new intergovernmental system, introduction of three-year rolling spending plans, new formats for budget documentation and the enactment of new financial legislations (Fölscher and Cole 2006:2). Once a need for a reform is recognised and accepted, it becomes a part of government's fiscal strategy and a central element of good government policy. For budget reforms to be effective, they must conform to the principles of budget reforms, which include comprehensiveness and integration, a focus on policy prioritisation, use of information strategically, changing behaviour through incentives and ensuring budget stability and predictability (Fölscher and Cole 2006:4).

In summary, it can be concluded that a budget reform process is a never-ending process that seeks to improve the budgeting processes while focusing on the main functions of a budget, that is to stabilise the economy, improve allocation of resources for effective service delivery and distribute income and wealth (Parliament of RSA 2011:90). The authors envisage that the current reforms may be sufficient for now, but due to the inevitable changes in the political, societal and economic environments, more advanced reforms may be necessary. Moreover, these current reforms may further introduce some loopholes in the budgetary systems as time goes on while opening up a need for new reforms. The preceding section expands on the budget reforms by providing examples of budget reform initiatives introduced in South Africa after democracy in 1994.

BUDGET REFORMS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Since democracy in 1994, the South African government has been on a journey of reforming its budget system to keep up with the ever-changing economic and societal environments. The study conducted by Olivier (2016:48) provided different phases of budget reforms in South Africa post-1994 in which the first phase focused on decentralising public budgets through intergovernmental systems and emphasised outputs rather than expenditure regulations and focused on aligning policy and budgets (Medium-Term Expenditure Framework). The second phase focused on modernising financial management and enhancing accountability through the introduction of public management legislation (Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999). The third phase focused on building the capacity to manage the first and the second phases, improving transparency and thereby

demystifying budget information (Money Bills Amendment Procedure and Related Matters Act of 2009) (Olivier 2016:4). The following section expands further on these reforms.

The Medium-Term Expenditure Framework

The Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) is a budget reform initiative that seeks to translate government plans and policies into an expenditure programme within a multi-year macro-framework (Nwani n.d). The main purpose of this initiative is to increase fiscal discipline by linking policy planning and budgeting in a proactive manner (Zaman and Gebeily 2014:2). The two main objectives of this framework according to the Parliament of RSA (2011:40) are: (a) to set fiscal targets over a period of three years; and (b) to allocate resources to strategic priorities within these fiscal targets.

In South Africa, the MTEF was introduced in 1997 when government shifted from a traditional single year budget to a multi-year budgeting framework (Parliament of RSA 2011:40). The introduction of the MTEF was aimed at ensuring that budgets reflect government's societal and economic priorities and give substance to its reconstruction and development commitments. Moreover, the framework is used to provide government with a tool to manage the tension between competing policy priorities and budget realities (National Treasury 1997:n.p.; Wehner 2004:20). This ultimately, helps governments to reprioritise expenditures and make informed decisions that are affordable, aligned with policy prioritisations and are value for money in the medium-term.

According to the National Treasury (1997:n.p.) as well as the Parliament of RSA (2011:42), the benefits of the MTEF include generating an awareness of the need to look beyond the immediate urgencies, improving the link between policies and budget priorities and spurring greater attention to efficiency and effectiveness of public spending through implicit emphasis on results of expenditures. The shortfalls of the MTEF on the other hand include the lack of predictability, it is time consuming and it is too rigid. The MTEF cannot work in isolation to improve government spending and service delivery. For the MTEF to be effective, it needs to be integrated with and complemented by improvements in other public policy and management processes (Parliament of RSA 2011:42).

The Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999

Section 216 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996*, states that the "national legislation must establish a national treasury and prescribe measures to ensure both transparency and expenditure control in each sphere of government, by introducing: (a) generally accounting practice; (b) uniform

expenditure classifications; and (c) uniform treasury norms and standards” (RSA 1996). This provision has led to the passing of the Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999 (PFMA) into law. The PFMA is a budget reform initiative aimed at ensuring effective public finance management (RSA 1999 Section 2). According to the Parliament of the RSA (2011:43), the enactment of the PFMA marked the beginning of a period in which fiscal discipline and operational efficiency were emphasised.

Prior to the PFMA, public financial management in South Africa was regulated through the Exchequer and Audit Act 66 of 1975 and the Finance Act 88 of 1988. According to Siswana (2007:96), these Acts reflect the basis for expenditure control and were not intended to manage, but rather to control public financial management systems with no option for flexibility. The enactment of the PFMA was necessary in a sense that financial management was undermined. The PFMA essentially laid the foundation for subsequent budget reforms which would serve the purpose of cementing the objectives of the effective and efficient management of public finances in South Africa (Parliament of RSA 2011:43).

Although the PFMA was introduced with the aim of ensuring effective public financial management, the Auditor General’s annual reports on the other hand indicate that the issues of irregular and fruitless and wasteful expenditures still persist. According to News24 (2021), the Auditor General’s (AG) 2020/21 annual report has highlighted R3.21billion in unauthorised expenditure. According to the report, government experienced an increase of 34% in irregular expenditures and a deteriorating financial health of state-owned entities (SOEs). Poor public financial management will result in an increased financial burden on government and has a significant impact on the South African economy as well as service delivery. In the 2020/21 annual report, the AG expressed that the departments of health, education and public works are among the most affected departments alongside SOEs such as Alexkor and the South African Post Office. According to the AG’s 2020/21 annual report, these government departments have incurred 90% of all unauthorised expenditure and deficits amounting to R15.56 billion (Office of the Auditor General 2021:6). The implementation of the PFMA must be monitored and evaluated more consistently and strategised to ensure its effectiveness and to eradicate poor financial management.

Estimates of the National Expenditure

The Estimates of the National Expenditure (ENE) is a collective statement for budget allocation, policy prioritisation and accountability information (Parliament of RSA 2011:76). According to the National Treasury (2022:n.p.), as part of the integrated annual budgeting process, the ENE sets out planned government spending over the next three years (the medium-term). The information contained in the

ENE provides how government institutions intend to use their budgets over the medium-term to achieve their goals and priorities, which should be aligned with South Africa's broader development plans (National Development Plan: Vision 2030). The information on how government institutions have spent their budget in the previous three financial years is also included in the ENE report (National Treasury 2022:n.p.).

The establishment of the ENE in 2001 gave effect to Section 27(3) of the PFMA which prescribes the budget formats for the three spheres of government. These formats include but are not limited to the "proposals for financing any anticipated deficit for that financial year; an indication of intentions regarding borrowing and other forms of public liability that will increase public debt during that financial year and future financial years; and any other information as may be prescribed, including any multiyear budget information" (RSA 1999 Section 27(3)).

The ENE can be regarded as a tool to improve transparency, enhance accountability and allow for the review of monitoring and evaluation of government's service delivery and spending plans. Similar to the MTEF, the ENE can also be used to ensure that the budgets reflect the government's economic and societal priorities. The information provided in the ENE report is useful for conducting budget analysis and to determine the extent to which public funds are prioritised and the extent to which budget priorities are shifted among different programmes (National Treasury 2001:n.p.). The key distinct features of the ENE include the introduction of a new economic reporting format, improved quality of functional qualification, improved programmatic classification and mindful implementation (Parliament of RSA 2011:47).

As a budget reform initiative, the ENE is used to ensure that the budget reflects government's objectives and supports the extension and improvement of service delivery. Through the ENE, policy developments, legislation and other factors are outlined alongside departmental spending plans while details of departmental outputs and service delivery indicators are provided as additional steps towards setting measurable objectives for each expenditure programme in line with the PFMA (Parliament of RSA 2011:46). In addition to this, National Treasury (2022:n.p.) notes that the ENE can be used by parliament as well as civil society to assist in performing effective oversight roles.

The Money Bills Amendment Procedure and Related Matters Act 9 of 2009 (Money Bills Act)

The Money Bills Amendment Procedure and Related Matters Act 9 of 2009 (as amended in the Money Bills Amendment Procedure and Related Matters Amendment Act 13 of 2018) (Money Bills Act) grants parliament the authority to amend money Bills. The enactment of the Money Bills Act gives effect to the

requirements of Section 77(3) of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996* which states that “all money Bills must be considered in accordance with the procedure established by Section 75. An Act of Parliament must provide for a procedure to amend money Bills before Parliament” (RSA 1996 Section 77(3)). Essentially, the main purpose of the Money Bills Act is to provide parliament with the procedures to amend the budget and other money Bills, including the Annual Division of Revenue Bill, the Annual Appropriation Bill and the Adjustments Appropriation Bill and the Revenue Bills such as the Annual Taxation Laws Amendment Bills (Parliament of RSA 2019:7).

Within the budget reform context, the passing of the Money Bills Act seeks to strengthen parliament’s fiscal oversight role and ensure that parliament contributes to policy implementation by facilitating budget prioritisation (Parliament of RSA 2011:55). In line with the current legislative processes regarding the budget, the Money Bills Act provided for: (a) the establishment of the Finance and Appropriation Committees in both the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), (b) establishment of the PBO, and (c) enhancement of public participation in budgeting processes (RSA 2009 Section 4).

According to the Parliament of RSA (2021:58), the Money Bills Act, as part of budget reforms, requires the Assembly to submit a Budget Review and Recommendation Report (BRRR) annually after the adoption of the Appropriation Bill and before the adoption of reports on the Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS). The main purpose of the BRRR and the reports on the MTBPS is to provide an indication of whether amendments might be proposed to the fiscal framework and budget Bills when introduced the following year.

South African Parliamentary Budget Office

The passing of the Money Bills Act led to the establishment of the South African Parliamentary Budget Office (SAPBO) in 2013. The SAPBO is established as a juristic entity headed by a director to provide parliament, particularly the Finance and Appropriation Committees in both the NA and the NCOP, with an independent and professional analysis and advice on matters related to the budget and other money Bills (Republic of RSA 2018 Section 13(a)). The director of the office is appointed by the respective Houses on recommendation of the committees, and based on the requisite experience, qualifications and leadership skills on a five-year term subject to renewal (Republic of RSA 2018 Section 13(b)). The chairpersons in the NA and the NCOP as well as the chairpersons of the Finance and Appropriation Committees in both Houses conjointly serve as the Advisory Board of the SAPBO (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2019).

The director of the SAPBO, who is also an Accounting Officer, is responsible and accountable for the financial and human resource management of the office.

Some of the duties of the director of the SAPBO include but are not limited to protecting the assets and records of the office, managing the financial affairs of the office and maintaining effective, efficient and transparent financial and risk management of the office (Republic of RSA 2018 Section 13(g)).

To be effective, Section 35 of the Finance Management of the Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act 10 of 2009 provides for the financing of the SAPBO from parliament's budget annually, to enable the office to run its operations (Republic of South Africa 2009). The Amended Money Bills Act on the other hand grants the office permission to obtain the necessary information it requires from any government organisation. Such information must be supplied timeously and free of charge. The director of the office must report to parliament any inappropriate political or executive interference that prevents the SAPBO from fulfilling its duties (Republic of RSA 2018 Section 13(k)).

The duties of the SAPBO according to Section 15(2) of the Money Bills Act include reviewing and analysing financial documents scheduled in parliament, monitoring and evaluating documents with budgetary implications and undertaking additional work considered significant by the director in support of the implementation of the Money Bills Act (Republic of RSA 2009). In conducting its duties and functions, the SAPBO is able to produce the following outputs: (a) analytical reports relating to the national budget and the medium-term budget policy statement, (b) economic policy and fiscal briefs, (c) economic forecasts robustness reports, and (d) other research reports on request by parliament (Kithatu-Kiwekete and Jahed 2019:15).

Establishing an independent financial institution such as the PBO can result in a number of benefits to both parliament and the general public. Some of the benefits associated with an effective independent financial institution such as the PBO include simplified budget information for budget scrutiny purposes, enhanced budget transparency and accountability, enhanced budget credibility, improved budget processes, enhanced public participation in the budget process and rapid response to budget inquiries (Anderson 2009:4; Bisase 2017:n.p.).

Despite the abovementioned benefits associated with the establishment of PBOs, there are still persistent concerns regarding the effectiveness of these offices. The challenges facing PBOs are universal in nature. According to Audu (2016:8), common challenges facing PBOs include paucity of funds, political pressures, talent acquisition, resource shortfalls and information asymmetry. Chohan (2013:20) pointed out that in Uganda and South Africa, there is a challenge of acquiring and retaining talent while in Liberia, Nigeria and Zambia there are shortages of resources in PBO budgets. Thailand is also faced with the issues of political pressure and information asymmetry.

Within the SAPBO context, the study conducted by Makanya (2021:10) revealed some deficiencies about the office. For instance, the technical capacity

as well as the advice provided by the SAPBO is regarded insufficient for effective budget scrutiny and the research personnel of 10 people (including the director) is too small to deliver on the range and depth of analysis that the budget requires. The availability of analytical support and advice does not necessarily mean that parliamentarians will have the capacity to absorb or the will to use the information provided to them (Makanya 2021:10). These types of concerns question the effectiveness of the SAPBO. To address these concerns, the next section provides a discussion on the role of PBOs in supporting budget reforms.

In summary, the abovementioned reform initiatives are specific to the South African government and were introduced primarily to modernise the South African budget process and improve the overall financial management systems of the country. These budget reforms were introduced to promote transparency, accessibility, credibility and accountability in the budget systems. More significantly, these reforms were introduced to ensure that the government of South Africa prioritises its budgets and strategises its functions, policies and programmes in a way that will assist in improving service delivery while allocating public resources effectively and efficiently, stabilising the economy and redistributing income and wealth accordingly within the country.

ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICES TO SUPPORT BUDGET REFORMS

The PBO's main purpose is to provide the legislature with the necessary capacity for an effective legislative and fiscal oversight role (Johnson and Stapenhurst 2008:142). In doing so, the PBO has contributed in one way or another in supporting budget reforms. There are a number of ways in which PBOs have contributed in supporting budget reforms, including modification of budget processes, enhanced public expenditure planning, enhanced fiscal oversight and improved budget executions.

Chohan and Wales (2017:1), believe government budgets are inherently complex, often very large and constitute a number of moving parts underpinned by many economic assumptions and political predilections. These elements make the budget quite difficult to grasp, especially without the help of economic experts. PBOs are established to facilitate a greater understanding of public budgets. Anderson (2009:4) believes that the combination of a more transparent, simple, credible and accountable budget can promote a budget process that is more straight-forward and easier to understand and follow. This is because PBOs have the necessary expertise that enables the office to be able to make complex budget information understandable, not only to the legislature, but also to the media, academia and the general public. The expertise of the office can be traced back

to its personnel, which constitutes professional experts in the field of economics, public finance and public policy among others, and its principles of operations which include the legitimacy of the office, non-partisan and independent elements (Parliament of RSA 2018:9).

Through the expertise of the office personnel, PBOs can provide independent analysis and advice on the budget and related financial matters, build the capacity of parliament and facilitate budget discussions (Santiso and Varea 2013:7). Parliamentarians do not have the requisite technical knowledge and basic understanding of economic principles to effectively scrutinise budget documents (Makanya 2021:9; McLennan 2018). The PBOs offer parliamentarians the technical capacity necessary to analyse budget information and other financial matters for the purposes of budget scrutiny, enhanced budget transparency and accountability and enhanced budgetary and financial decision-making. To give credit to this, the SAPBO's scope of work includes the provision of advice and analysis on proposed amendments to the fiscal framework and on policy proposals with budgetary implications, monitoring of reports tabled and adopted in a House with budgetary implications and monitoring and reporting of the potential unfunded mandates that could arise out of policy or budgetary proposals (Parliament of RSA n.d).

Wehner, Brösamle, Dimsdale, Mathiesen, Merz and Mondo (2007:28) are of the opinion that financial scrutiny enhances accountability of the executive, facilitates budget debates and broadens public participation. While the lack of accountability can be regarded as a precondition for corruption, literature reveals that budgeting without effective checks and balances can lead to corruption and poor fiscal management. Fiscal management can be enhanced through fiscal transparency. Fiscal transparency can ensure that economic decisions are informed by shared and accurate assessment of the current fiscal position, costs and benefits of policy changes and potential risks to the fiscal outlook (International Monetary Fund 2018:1). PBOs can be used as tools to modernise financial scrutiny and enhance accountability.

According to Bhanu (n.d), parliaments play several roles when it comes to public financial management, particularly on matters relating to the budget. Among others, parliaments are tasked with mandates to approve budgets, scrutinise budget implementation and hold government accountable for its decision-making in achieving its objectives. The parliamentary control over public finance becomes primarily operative through the approval of the annual budgets. According to Wehner *et al.* (2007:7), many parliaments encounter several obstacles such as insufficient involvement in the medium-term planning, lack of understanding of key economic and fiscal matters and limited formal authority and organisational capacity to review budget, particularly in terms of its fiscal oversight role (Wehner *et al.* 2007:7). PBOs thus provide parliamentarians with sufficient capacity required to analyse complex and technical aspects of the budgets for the purposes

of improved financial decision-making on public finance management and enhanced fiscal oversight roles (Chohan and Wales 2017:2).

One way of enhancing parliamentary oversight is through public participation in the budget processes. Stakeholder engagement in budgetary oversight involves participation in drafting, approval, implementation and auditing of the national budget (Straussman and Renoni 2009:4). According to F Ischer (2006:7), a good budget reform changes the behaviour of budgetary actors such as the public, political parties and individual parliamentarians through stakeholder involvement in budgetary matters. Within the South African context, the Western Cape Government (2019: Internet source) noted the importance of public involvement. Section 72 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996) requires parliament and legislatures to provide forums to consider public concerns, receive petitions, facilitate public involvement in legislative and other processes and conduct business transparently.

According to Jahed (2020:67), the establishment of the SAPBO gave public participation, statutory oversight and financial management additional momentum. To conform to the element of good governance, public participation is enhanced through the publication of government information. In the same manner, the SAPBO must publish its information and engage the public on budgetary matters. Currently, all the reports and briefs of the SAPBO are published on the official website of parliament. To assess the effectiveness of this process, the SAPBO can use data analysis reports to indicate factors such as how many people have visited the site, most frequently asked questions, most searched items and user-friendliness of the site. The data analysis report can help in assessing the effectiveness of publishing the office outputs on parliament's official website and determine whether its work to the benefit of the public is effective or not. According to Straussman and Renoni (2009:4), this type of public participation initiatives improves the overall legislative capacity because budgetary stakeholders enjoy equal access to budget information and participation.

The establishment of PBOs as budget reforms have further enhanced public expenditure planning. Some of the innovations in public expenditure include the application of the cost-benefit analysis, demand management studies and projection of expenditures (Premchand 1975:26). PBOs often undertake and make use of these innovations as part of the formulation of the medium-term and annual plans in the budgetary processes, particularly to improve public expenditure planning.

In support of the implementation of the MTEF and the ENE framework as budget reform strategies, the SAPBO can assist in ensuring that government's budget reflects its economic and societal priorities. This can be achieved by analysing the government reports and advising parliament on budgetary matters by producing reports and briefs that help government reprioritise its expenditures and make informed decisions that are affordable and aligned with the policy prioritisations.

These reports can further be used to determine the extent to which public resources are prioritised and the extent to which budget priorities are shifted among different government programmes.

For instance, the SAPBO can use the AG's reports alongside government departments' ENE statements to determine planning and spending trends of the respective departments. The SAPBO can use the results obtained from such analyses to help government allocate funds in accordance with the department's spending and priority plans. This in turn, will improve budget planning and allocation, which ultimately improves service delivery.

According to Fölscher (2006:13), budget reforms such as PBOs can be used to balance predictability, rigidity and flexibility as mechanisms of budget reforms. These institutions should be able to balance predictability of funding and policy with flexibility to be able to respond to the ever-changing economic environment within spending rigidities of an ongoing public service. Similarly, PBOs could balance these budget reform mechanisms by providing parliaments with fiscal and economic forecasts that are predictable and yet flexible to change in the medium-term while addressing current economic issues (Fölscher 2006:13).

In summary, from the abovementioned, it can be concluded that PBOs play a vital role in supporting budget reforms and expand further on the reforms that are already established. PBOs provide parliaments with the necessary capacity to perform their fiscal oversight roles. This is done through the provision of independent analyses and advice on budget and other financial matters to parliament as well as society at large. The SAPBO can incorporate the works of the PFMA, ENE and the MTEF in consolidating its reports.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS OF EXPERIENCES AND BEST PRACTICES

Literature revealed that there are several independent financial institutions established worldwide (Johnson and Stapenhurst 2008:142). These institutions share a common goal, which is to improve the capacity of the legislatures and their fiscal and legislative oversight role on budgetary and related financial matters. In doing so, often these institutions encounter a number of universal challenges and strive to learn from other financial institutions. The main purpose of international lessons of experiences and best practice is to exchange knowledge, share experiences and identify lessons of best practices (Chohan 2013:19). The following are examples of international lessons of experiences and best practices on the role of PBOs in supporting budget reforms.

As mentioned previously, PBOs as budget reform initiatives enhance budget transparency, accountability and parliament's legislative and fiscal oversight role.

This is evident in the USA where budget processes were characterised by the lack of accountability, political pressures and presidential dominance. These challenges necessitated a greater need for an independent financial institution to provide the executive with independent analysis and advice on economic and budgetary matters. Established in 1974, the CBO successfully challenged the administrations of Presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan, Clinton, Bush and Obama. During President Ford's administration, for instance, the CBO challenged the economic recovery policies proposed by the Ford administration and observed that, although the budget committees were proposing expansionary policy, the executive's fiscal recommendations would actually slow down the economic recovery (Chohan and Jacobs 2016:366; Anderson 2008:137; Kopits 2013:5). By providing independent fiscal and budgetary forecasts and analysis, the CBO managed to save the economy of the USA. The office managed to reduce the bias in the revenue and expenditure estimates, increased fiscal and budget transparency and improved the overall understanding of the long-term fiscal implications (Kopits 2013:5).

Prior to the establishment of the PBO, parliamentarians in Uganda did not have the necessary information on budget-related matters, particularly matters relating to local revenue, national expenditure priority and macro-economic statistical information. The establishment of the PBO provided parliamentarians with the capacity building seminars and conferences that enabled the chairpersons to notice the need for parliament to play a more active role in the budget process (Kiraso 2008:311).

Currently, the PBO in Uganda provides parliamentarians with an independent economic analysis report on the performance of the economy. Through this report, parliament can monitor the implications of macroeconomic policies, poverty trends and economic growth or decline (Kiraso 2008:316). The office has significantly improved the relevant committees' capacity to understand expenditures, loans and foreign investment management. In the case of Uganda, parliament is now in a position to inquire with greater depth and negotiate loans and investment provisions that were perhaps previously unfavourable (Kiraso 2008:315).

According to Chohan (2013:18), there are two major drivers for the increasing need of PBOs, namely, (a) there is growth attributable to a decline in trust in the public sphere, and (b) there is change in public expectations whereby the public wants to be involved in the decision-making of the government, especially when these decisions affect them both directly and indirectly. Within the budget reform context, PBOs support public participation in all stages of the budget. Internationally, more governments are increasingly utilising PBOs to engage the public. Similar to the SAPBO case, in Nigeria, NABRO enhances public participation through the publication of its information, including all the reports produced on economic and budgetary matters through its Aides and Committees rooms (Audu 2016:7).

Although this type of information sharing might be considered time-consuming, PBOs require innovative ways to engage stakeholders in a timely and

cost-effective way. In Canada, the PBO is currently in the process of launching an ePBO (electronic Parliamentary Budget Office) to enhance stakeholder engagement deficiencies. First, the portal is designed to enhance the ability of members to share technical content easily and faster, and second, to allow for effective stakeholder interaction (Chohan 2013:19). The authors envisage that this type of initiative will enable the office to access all the necessary information required to produce and complete its reports and other duties without burdening its resources. Through improved access to quality information, the office will be able to produce quality economic and budgetary reports and briefs.

The PBO in Canada leverages acquiring top experts in the fiscal and economic fields from across the world (Chohan 2013:19). This strategy enables the office to produce quality economic and budgetary reports and further gives the office some sense of credibility. Similar to Canada, the CBO in the USA employs over 230 staff members with the necessary qualifications and expertise in the field of economics, public finance and public policy (Wehner *et al.* 2007:19). The importance of having qualified staff rests on the assumption that important fiscal forecasts and budgets must be based on the credible projections of macroeconomic developments, provide comprehensive information on government's fiscal objectives and budgetary plans and facilitate policy analysis and accountability (International Monetary Fund 2018:53).

One of the characteristics of budget reform is the modification or introduction of new budget systems. To ensure this, the work of the PBO must be credible enough to enable the modification of the budget processes. In enhancing the credibility of its work, the PBO in Canada focused on improving its budget analysis tools including the overall budget analysis, tax analysis, estimates analysis and costing models. More emphasis was placed on the power of simplicity. For instance, the Phillips curve and the Taylor Rule are employed as these mechanisms have significant implications on interest rates and inflation projections, allowing complex policy issues to be studied through simple and powerful equations (Chohan 2013:19).

In summary, international lessons of experiences highlighted various ways in which PBOs support budgetary reforms. PBOs as budget reform initiatives have contributed enormously to the budget processes of many economies. Various governments established PBOs to improve the capacity of their legislatures on matters relating to the budget. Understanding this notion, governments continuously invest in various resources necessary to give the office some sense of credibility. Continuous improvements through monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the office is critical to measure the extent of the effectiveness thereof. Through observation of international lessons of experiences and best practices, PBOs can further monitor and evaluate their performances and implement lessons learned for improvements.

CONCLUSIONS

PBOs as budget reform initiatives have revolutionised the way in which budget processes are conducted. The establishment of PBOs has contributed positively towards the support of budget reforms in a sense that they have improved budget processes. The modernisation and improvement in the budget processes can result in improved budget transparency, enhanced accountability, improved fiscal oversight, reduced budget asymmetries, enhanced policy prioritisation and budget allocation and improved public participation in budgetary matters, among others.

Although there are several benefits associated with the effective establishment of PBOs, some scholars argue that a few weaknesses still persist. Some of the universal challenges facing many PBOs include a lack of support from all stakeholders, inevitable errors of estimation and projections and failure to motivate sufficient attention to long-term debt sustainability. To address such challenges, many governments often resort to international lessons of experiences.

It is of crucial importance that governments invest in PBOs not only financially; and in human capital and other resources necessary. Investing in PBOs enables the office to not only produce quality work, but to also give the overall office credibility. The credibility of the office can enhance public and government trust in the work they produce for effective fiscal oversight.

This article focused on the role of PBOs in supporting budget reform and focused on budget processes of government. Future studies can explore other factors such as improved service delivery, positive interaction of government with the public and the public's ownership of their newly provided public value in terms of good/s or services that have been delivered, and more.

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Towards a Smart City Model for Local Government

The Case of South African Metropolitan Municipalities

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ABSTRACT

Similar to global trends, South African cities are rapidly transitioning towards smart cities with the application of advanced information and communications technology (ICT) and Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) e-readiness models. However, much still needs to be done to be comparable with investment-competing cities internationally. There is a dire need for cities to invest heavily in human capital and ICT infrastructure, such as broadband and wireless technology, to improve connectivity and the application of big data for service delivery. This requires political will and an integrated approach. However, a survey of smart city readiness models reveals that existing models are designed by particular countries and cities with unique circumstances. Cities also apply their own models and approaches in an uncoordinated, silo fashion. A model is required to incorporate these dimensions, making it possible for cities to follow a clear pathway towards e-readiness and to capitalise on the benefits that “smartness” brings. This article reflects on findings of an empirical study conducted to probe the smart city readiness of Gauteng-based metropolitan municipalities, with the purpose of designing a suitable smart city model. This model aims to inform and guide municipalities in their efforts to design and implement smart city initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Rapid urbanisation in developing countries like South Africa places significant strain on cities to cope with increasing service demands. For the period 2016–2022, Gauteng province was estimated to experience its largest yet inflow of approximately one million migrants (StatsSA 2022). Generally, most of the net migration to the province is to metropolitan municipalities such as the City of Johannesburg (CoJ), the City of Ekurhuleni (CoE) and the City of Tshwane (CoT).

Utilising smart technologies is one way in which cities can deal more effectively with challenges brought about by urban migration and service delivery issues, such as lack of adequate housing, employment opportunities, or safe and reliable water supply. According to the McKinsey Global Institute (2018), effectively utilising the current generation of smart city applications could aid cities in meeting 70% of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. There is thus relative consensus that making cities “smarter” – increasing e-readiness and maturity – could lead to improved service delivery and other enhanced city capabilities and capacities. In recognition of this, several smart readiness models and approaches have been developed by international agencies and entities involved in the local government arena. However, a survey of these smart city readiness models reveals that they are designed with the circumstances and conditions of particular countries and cities in mind. Cities also apply their own models and approaches in a relatively uncoordinated, silo manner. This causes city governance-related challenges such as limited interoperability of information and communications technology (ICT) systems, constrained dissemination and sharing of management information, and restricted alignment between service delivery statistics and municipal operations. In the case of Gauteng-based metropolitan municipalities, issues such as limited joint ICT planning, poor strategic programme alignment, and inadequate cross-border coordination are also highly problematic. It is evident that there is no universally applicable, integrated model available to guide South African cities towards greater smartness and Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) e-readiness.

The purpose of this article is to reflect on findings of an empirical study conducted to probe the smart city readiness of three Gauteng-based metropolitan municipalities, and designing a suitable smart city model. The model was populated by integrating core dimensions and best practices from existing international smart models and frameworks, and validated by the input provided by purposively sampled ICT managers at the CoJ, CoE and CoT. The model aims to guide municipalities in their efforts to design and implement smart city initiatives.

SMART CITY MODELS AND FRAMEWORKS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Notions of “smart” or “digital” cities emerged in the early 1990s and involve the active use of ICT in response to emerging urban development challenges (Boykova *et al.* 2016; Cocchia 2014; ITU 2016). There is general scholarly consensus that making cities “smarter” could lead to improved service delivery and other enhanced city capabilities and capacities.

Smart cities depend on the adoption of a broader strategic 4IR framework. Key technologies driving 4IR (aka Industry 4.0) include artificial intelligence (AI), augmented and virtual reality (AR & VR), and the Internet of things (IoT). These technologies reshape organisational processes, unlock exponential opportunities and encourage new ventures (Madangombe 2019). Davis (2016) points out that 4IR is about more than just technology-driven change; it is rather an opportunity to support city managers and policymakers to harness converging technologies in order to create an inclusive, human-centred urban future. This view is shared by Ash and Chandrasekaran (2017) and Roberge (2018), who maintain that 4IR in city governance could lead to a more effective, leaner, economical government.

The perceived success of cities in the application of smart technologies has led to the development of a variety of smart cities models and frameworks. Scholarly inquiry into smart cities can significantly benefit from a detailed assessment of these models and frameworks to extract best practices for adaptation and adoption by local cities. A brief synopsis of leading models and frameworks follows to aid in the design of a South African smart city model.

European Smart Cities Ranking Model

The European Smart Cities Ranking Model was published in 2007 by Giffinger *et al.* to rank European cities, taking into account their “perspectives for development” (Giffinger and Gudrun 2010:13). Giffinger *et al.* (2007) accentuate six domains to assess the overall e-readiness and performance of a smart city, namely:

- Smart economy
- Smart governance
- Smart people
- Smart environment
- Smart mobility
- Smart living.

These domains accentuate the multidimensional nature of smart cities. This model also highlights the relative importance of non-ICT factors on the success and performance of a smart city. However, the performance indicators and standards used are only suitable for European conditions and circumstances.

Smart Cities Wheel Model

Building on the work of Caragliu *et al.* (2011), Giffinger *et al.* (2007), Lombardi *et al.* (2012) and the ISO37120 (Sustainable cities and communities: Indicators for city services and quality of life), Adams and Cohen (2012) designed the Smart Cities Wheel Model. Similar to the European Smart Cities Ranking Model, the Smart Cities Wheel isolates six key performance indicators (KPIs) with which the e-readiness of a city can be assessed (Ceballos and Larios 2016). Each KPI comprises 18 working areas, which in turn are factored into 24 sub-indicators and 64 base-level parameters to gauge the smart readiness of a city (Cohen 2018).

This model is, however, only suitable for cities that are at a relatively advanced level of smart city readiness – those already invested heavily in service domains such as smart transport systems, green urban planning and open data access.

Smart Cities Framework (SCF)

The SCF was developed by the Smart Cities Council (SCC) and published in the 2015 Smart City Readiness Guide. The SCC is a network of leading ICT companies advised by top universities, laboratories and standards bodies on smart cities technologies and applications. The Readiness Guide is meant to serve as a roadmap to assist cities to transition through several layers of smart maturity by utilising suitable technologies to solve urban problems (SCC 2015). These problems revolve around service delivery domains such as infrastructure, energy, telecommunications, transportation, water and wastewater, health services, public safety and finance, among others. The SCF suggests six “enablers” to support these service domains, namely:

- Instrumentation and control
- Connectivity
- Interoperability
- Security and privacy
- Data management
- Computing resources (SCC 2015:24).

The SCF does not only measure smart city readiness from a technological point of view but also values non-technological aspects, especially social dimensions, to make smart city assessments more comprehensive (Achmad *et al.* 2018). However, the SCF does not measure maturity levels of smart cities, but rather uses enablers to assess smart readiness.

Technology-Organisation-Environment Framework (TOE)

The TOE Framework was designed by Dewi *et al.* (2018). The TOE framework aims to assess the smart readiness of a city by considering its technological, organisational and environmental interfaces (Baker 2012). Dewi *et al.* (2018:3) hold

that the TOE framework offers valuable assessment parameters but has limited applicability as a readiness measuring instrument.

Smart City Reference Model (SCRM)

The SCRM is premised on the idea that smart cities transition through layers of maturity to become “green, interconnected, instrumented, open, integrated, and intelligent” (Zygiaris 2012:217). The model comprises seven layers, 0 to 6, which range from the basic city layer to the innovation layer. Unfortunately, the SCRM does not emphasise interoperability and collaboration between cities.

Integrated Framework to Measure Smart City Readiness (IFMSCR)

The IFMSCR aligns technological and non-technological aspects such as political and societal support to assessing readiness levels (Noori *et al.* 2020:678). The IFMSCR follows a readiness process perspective by outlining the smart city development process, incorporating inputs (resources), throughputs, outputs (applications), and outcomes (externalities). It also considers broader systemic perspectives such as the socio-economic and political readiness of cities. Social readiness, for example, is concerned with the level of education, innovation, awareness, perceived usefulness, mentality and values of a smart city among the urban population. Equally important is political readiness assessment, which analyses the level of political commitment and support for smart initiatives (Noori *et al.* 2020:681).

Smart City Integrative Framework (SCIF)

The SCIF was developed by Chourabi *et al.* (2012) as a result of an examination of a wide array of literature from various disciplinary perspectives to identify eight critical factors for smart city readiness:

- Urban communities
- Local economy
- Built infrastructure
- Technology
- City governance
- Policy
- Organisation
- Natural environment.

These eight dimensions form “the basis of an integrative framework that can be used to examine how cities are envisioning smart city initiatives” (Chourabi *et al.* 2012:289). These factors could be classified in two categories: internal and external elements. Internal elements comprise the policy environment and the managerial and organisational resources employed to implement initiatives. The external elements include factors that could influence the direction of a specific

smart city initiative, such as “the reactions of people and communities who are positively or negatively affected by the initiative” (Gil-Garcia *et al.* 2015:296). The SCIF, however, does not assess smart city maturity levels, but rather acts as a roadmap towards smartness.

Smart Cities Maturity Model (SCMM)

The SCMM was commissioned by the Scottish Government and conceptualised in conjunction with the Scottish Cities Alliance and a management consultancy firm, Urban Tide (Scottish Government 2014). The model is based on the British Standards Institution Publicly Available Specification (BSI PAS181) titled “Smart City Framework: Guide to Establishing Strategies for Smart Cities and Communities” (Juniawan *et al.* 2017:99). According to Warnecke *et al.* (2018:658), the SCMM comprises the following:

- strategic intent
- data capturing, integration and analytics capabilities
- technology and integrated ICT architecture
- governance and service delivery modalities
- stakeholder engagement.

The model “identifies and measures the existing conditions of a city in order to map the city’s capabilities” (Juniawan *et al.* 2017:99). The SCMM is designed to guide cities through the process by identifying steps, investments and resources required to realise smart city ambitions. It considers five maturity levels that lead to an optimised smart city approach based on five key dimensions. However, Warnecke *et al.* (2018:658) criticise the SCMM for not enabling cities to assess their own maturity levels and “progress in relation to their own earlier scores”. The model does not allow for comparisons with more mature smart cities and is not quite suitable for developing contexts.

It is evident that these models and frameworks share a number of similar dimensions and are built upon one another. Smart city readiness in all these models, frameworks and guidelines is not only concerned with technological aspects, but also incorporates broader systemic issues such as how citizens, the private sector, city administrators and politicians value smartness.

BEST PRACTICE AND APPLICATIONS FROM LEADING SMART CITIES IN THE WORLD

The second part of data triangulation to design a smart readiness model for South African metropolitan municipalities comprises an assessment of best practices

and application from leading smart cities. Table 1 highlights some critical success factors extracted from global smart cities.

Table 1: Key features and lessons to be learned from leading smart cities

City	Key features and lessons to be learned
Amsterdam, The Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Amsterdam Smart City (ASC) project had political support and collaborated between the municipality and key stakeholders, such as the private sector, research institutions, universities and citizens. ▪ The ASC uses a holistic strategy that integrates environmental and societal goals with economic and technological objectives.
Bengaluru, India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The national government's 100 Smart Cities Mission project was designed to configure city into an industrial and technological park.
Búzios, Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Búzios Smart City project created a smart grid that generates renewable energy.
Copenhagen, Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The city adopted the Copenhagen Connecting Strategy, partly funded by the government and focuses on smartness in health, mobility, energy and climate, citizens, and quality living. ▪ Smart city initiatives in the city are rooted in 4IR infrastructure, co-creation and partnerships with the private sector companies and start-ups, universities and research institutions, citizens and civil society organisations.
Hong Kong, China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Hong Kong Government facilitates and encourages the city's transportation, telecommunications and technology sectors through effective public policy, incentives and collaboration.
London, United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The city devised a Smart London Plan, which relies on the exploitation of big data, IoT, cloud computing and digital technology to facilitate the achievement of the smart city strategy. ▪ The city council appointed the Smart London Board, which provides oversight in shaping and implementing the smart city strategy. It comprises academic and business experts together with entrepreneurs.
Moscow, Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moscow's city government plays a coordinating role in implementing a wide array of smart city projects in the city.
New York City, United States of America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The city developed a digital city roadmap that outlines the government's commitment to technology in the public service and presented a comprehensive plan to achieve the city's digital potential.
Paris, France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The city launched the Paris Smart and Sustainable City strategy to address challenges of urbanisation, resource scarcity and climate change through the city's digital transformation.
Reykjavik, Iceland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ True open-access fibre network offering 100% home connectivity in the city. ▪ E-petition and open innovation websites enable citizens to submit, debate and prioritise policy proposals and ideas.
Seoul, South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The focus of the strategy is on securing smart city infrastructure, innovative companies with cutting-edge technologies and smart citizens. ▪ Ongoing projects in smart mobility, smart waste and energy, smart citizenry and smart public space operate from the Office of the Mayor.

City	Key features and lessons to be learned
Shanghai, China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The government makes funding and resources available for human capacitation and technology, including the required smart city infrastructure.
Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developed an entire smart city ecosystem supported by infrastructure, technologies, policies, culture and capabilities.
Tokyo, Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tokyo has invested in smart technologies for smart transportation and renewable energy to lower carbon dioxide emissions. ▪ The city has a high penetration of broadband and WiFi access and has invested in knowledge management capabilities.

Source: (Authors' own construction)

An assessment of these applications reveals that one of the common features of successful smart city development is adequate national government, political and community support for smart city projects. It is also evident that sufficient policy guidelines and resources are devoted to these projects. This paves the ways for budget allocations, especially towards smart infrastructure building and human capital development within the ICT space. Partnerships with private sector enterprises strengthen the capacity of cities to adopt suitable technologies for public services.

Best practice and principles from an African perspective

Various cities in Africa have realised that ICTs play a significant role in their growth and development and have started to invest seriously in 4IR technologies. However, issues such as inadequate infrastructure, electricity generation capacity and governance concerns, among others, continue to be major challenges. Table 2 reflects some key features and lessons to be learned from cities on the African continent.

Table 2: Key smart city features and lessons from an African perspective

City	Key features and lessons to be learned
Casablanca, Morocco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The city invested more than 8 million euros in the City of Casablanca digital project by using big data and digital monitoring sensors to render essential city services.
Kigali, Rwanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The city developed the Smart Kigali Initiative to modernise ICT infrastructure and capacitate citizens to partner in service delivery initiatives.
Lagos, Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The city designed the national Nigeria Smart City Initiative, which has managed to secure significant investment from local and multinational ICT companies.
Moka, Mauritius	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moka is a relatively new city. It is being built around smart city technologies as a means of boosting the economy and improving the standard of living.

City	Key features and lessons to be learned
Nairobi, Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The city invested in the iHub, a tech incubation centre where developers and entrepreneurs connect and work side by side. The incubation centre has spawned 150 start-up companies and has created more than 1 300 jobs to date.

Source: (Authors' own construction)

Overall, smart city implementation in Africa is still in its early stages. Significant investment in ICT infrastructure and human capital development is required. Similar to cities in developed economies, African cities have also developed bold, smart city plans that are part of government policy to improve the quality of life for citizens and increase the cities' global competitiveness.

SOUTH AFRICAN STATUTORY AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS GOVERNING THE APPLICATION OF ICT IN CITY GOVERNANCE

An analysis of the statutory and regulatory framework governing ICT application in South African cities serves as the third leg of data triangulation. Since 1994, legislation was promulgated to improve service delivery. ICT technologies were employed in an effort to create a digitally inclusive society geared towards social development and economic growth. This statutory framework outlines government's vision for e-government, ICT norms and standards, ICT good governance and the modernisation of the public service.

Table 3: Key statutory requirements towards a smart city agenda

Statutory framework	Key compliance requirements for municipalities
Public Service Act, 103 of 1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Municipalities need to comply with e-government norms and standards as issued from time to time by the Minister of Public Services and Administration.
State Information Technology Agency (SITA) Act, 88 of 1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There are no legislated requirements for municipalities to utilise SITA services. However, the National Treasury recommends that municipalities consider utilising SITA to procure IT-related goods and services through a competitive bidding process.
Electronic Communication and Transaction Act, 25 of 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Municipalities and other government institutions are to accept filling in of documents and payments electronically. Public sector entities are allowed to issue permits, licenses or approvals in the form of data messages.

Statutory framework	Key compliance requirements for municipalities
Protection of Personal Information Act, 4 of 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Municipalities and other government institutions are required to comply with conditions for lawful processing of personal information as per the Act. ■ Municipalities have to abide by a code of conduct as issued by the Information Regulator.

Source: (Authors' own construction)

The statutory framework governing ICT within South Africa is general in nature and does not deal specifically with smart cities. It is clear that there is a gap in legislation – guidelines and policies are required to address this.

Several regulatory documents such as White Papers, official guidelines, strategies and standards have been issued by the South African Government to transform the public service by employing ICT solutions. This regulatory framework provides more focused, detailed direction for adopting and utilising ICT to progress towards smart cities.

Table 4: Key regulatory requirements towards a smart city agenda

Regulatory Framework	Key compliance requirements for municipalities
White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Batho Pele</i> advocates the following principles to guide public servants in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the way in which services are delivered: (1) consultation with citizens, (2) setting service standards, (3) ensuring courtesy, (4) ensuring access to services, (5) providing information, (6) openness and transparency, (7) dealing with complaints in a timely and accurate manner, (8) ensuring best value for money. ■ Use ICTs to put people first through its ability to improve consultations with the public through online and mobile ICT solutions; through its ability to provide tools for monitoring, reporting and evaluation; through ICT's ability to easily provide access to a wide range of audiences and many other applications.
National Broadband Policy: SA Connect (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This policy is aimed at creating opportunities and inclusive economic growth by ensuring that affordable broadband reaches a critical mass of South Africans. ■ Municipalities should benefit from broadband connectivity, which should be extended to the communities they serve.
Government-Wide Enterprise Architecture (GWEA) Framework Implementation Guide (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This guide provides a minimum ICT standard, including the enterprise architecture and ICT planning frameworks and methods to be used across all government departments and agencies. ■ Municipalities should apply the GWEA Framework implementation guide to produce municipal ICT plans or roadmaps that are fully aligned with municipal business plans, while observing the objectives and principles defined in the ICT House of Values.

Regulatory Framework	Key compliance requirements for municipalities
SALGA's Municipal ICT Governance Guidelines (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ According to these guidelines, the chief information officer or head of ICT should be an integral part of the executive management of a municipality. ■ In addition, an executive authority or political principal should provide the political ICT leadership, while the accounting officer or city manager provides the strategic leadership and ensures that governance of ICT is implemented and managed effectively.
King IV Corporate Governance Code on Municipalities (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The municipal council should govern technology and information in a way that supports the municipality setting and achieving its strategic objectives. ■ Municipalities are required to put measures in place to address the advances in 4IR technologies that are revolutionising businesses and society by transforming products, services and business models, and the impact of such technologies to cause disruptions, opportunities and risks for both public and private sectors.
National e-Government Strategy and Roadmap (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This is aimed at reducing the cost of public administration in South Africa. ■ It leverages the advances brought about by technological innovations (such as cloud computing, IoT, big data, mobile innovations, etc.) to drive the success of digitising government.
National Integrated ICT Policy White Paper (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This outlines a whole-government approach to digital transformation and coordination between government departments and entities as well as across all relevant spheres of government.
Public Service Regulations (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ These regulations address key areas of e-government and require public sector entities to manage IT effectively and efficiently to improve productivity, cost efficiency and public service delivery. ■ Municipalities need to comply with the Minimum Information Security Standards (MISS), which govern the minimum information security measures that municipalities must put in place for sensitive or classified information to protect national security.
National e-Strategy (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This strategy aims to transform South Africa into a fully digital society marked by widespread diffusion, uptake and usage of ICTs. ■ Municipalities should ensure that citizens possess the necessary skills and abilities to use ICTs, as well as developing comprehensive programmes to counter cybersecurity threats.
Presidential Commission on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The mandate of this commission is to develop an integrated national strategy and plan to respond to the 4IR. ■ It mobilises resources to support 4IR interventions and makes recommendations on mechanisms to measure the impact of these interventions.
White Paper on Science Technology and Innovation (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This has a strong focus on 4IR partnerships with stakeholders, such as relevant government departments, civil society, business and academia.

Regulatory Framework	Key compliance requirements for municipalities
Gauteng City Region (GCR) e-Government Strategy (2020–2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This strategy provides for the establishment of a GCR structure to coordinate, standardise, regulate and prioritise the implementation of e-government initiatives. ■ It is aimed at stimulating the ICT economy by encouraging public-private partnerships for developing and rolling out e-government services.

Source: (Authors' own construction)

Despite the relatively comprehensive statutory and regulatory framework, there is a gap as far as a clear roadmap towards smart cities is concerned. This gap calls for a tailor-made model to guide South African cities towards greater e-readiness for the demands that the 4IR will place on city governance.

METHODOLOGY

An exploratory qualitative case study design was used with the purpose of ascertaining the context, dimensions and strategic aspects of smart city maturity (i.e. e-readiness) among Gauteng-based metropolitan municipalities. Data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews. Based on the theoretical, policy and international orientation, an interview schedule was designed and pretested (piloted) with a sample of the target population to: (a) probe the status of e-readiness in the metros, (b) ascertain key challenges that city managers face, and (c) refine and validate the draft smart city readiness model. The target population included purposively sampled managers directly responsible for smart city projects, urban planning specialists, as well as ICT experts at the selected municipalities (see Table 5). Permission to conduct the interviews on the premises of the municipalities during office hours was obtained from the respective City Managers of the three metros. Ethical clearance for the survey was obtained from the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of North-West University (Ethics number: NWU-00650-21-57).

The smart e-readiness dimensions, extracted from the analysis of existing smart city models, served as a framework for the design of a draft model. The dimensions are:

- i. The City's ICT strategic intent
- ii. Data usage
- iii. Technological infrastructure
- iv. E-governance and service delivery modalities
- v. Stakeholder engagement.

These dimensions enabled the uniform comparative analysis of the selected cases. Each dimension was placed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = low maturity; 5 = high maturity/e-readiness). Each participant was asked to rate the perceived maturity/e-readiness of the city in each dimension.

Table 5: Sample size per case study

Case	Participants	Sample
City of Ekurhuleni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Manager: ICT Governance and Compliance Unit (1) ▪ Smart city project managers (4) ▪ Urban planning specialists (3) ▪ Network support engineers (2) 	10
City of Johannesburg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Manager: Smart/Digital City Office (1) ▪ ICT Security & Risk Manager (1) ▪ Smart city project managers (4) ▪ ICT technical specialists (4) 	10
City of Tshwane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group Chief Information Officer (1) ▪ Director: Management Information Systems (1) ▪ ICT Deputy Director: Cartographic Management (1) ▪ Urban planning specialists (3) ▪ E-Tshwane: technical specialists (4) 	10
Total		n=30

RESULTS: E-READINESS ASSESSMENT OF GAUTENG-BASED METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITIES

Gauteng, the smallest of South Africa’s nine provinces in terms of land area, is the most populous province in the country. It is the economic hub of South Africa, with a GDP that accounts for around 34% of the country’s total GDP. The province is home to many industries, including finance, manufacturing, mining and tourism. The CoE, CoJ and CoT were selected for empirical investigation to probe the smart city readiness of Gauteng-based metropolitan municipalities for this study. This section outlines the findings of the survey and includes an assessment of the e-readiness of these metros based on the participants’ responses.

Case 1: City of Ekurhuleni

The CoE is an important economic hub within the Gauteng city-region; it accounts for “nearly a quarter of Gauteng’s economy and contributes to over a third of the national GDP” (RSA 2021a:8). The economic activities of the metro include manufacturing, finance and business services, community and government services,

and hospitality (RSA 2021a:21). It is South Africa’s fourth-largest metropolitan area, behind Cape Town, Johannesburg and eThekweni. Ekurhuleni is a highly urbanised area with 99.4% of the population living in urban settlements (RSA 2021a:6).

Based on the opinions of the participants (Table 6), the maturity level of the CoE is on average 2.14, which, according to the SCMM, indicates that the CoE is moving from “ad-hoc smart city processes” towards a more “systems collaboration approach” and that smart city business cases are being built to showcase potential.

Table 6: City of Ekurhuleni smart city e-readiness

Dimension (maturity/e-readiness)	PS1	PS2	PS3	PS4	PS5	PS6	PS7	PS8	PS9	PS10	Average score
Strategic intent	3	1	3	3	2	2	3	2	4	2	2.5
Data usage	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	3	1.6
Technology infrastructure	2	1	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
E-governance & service delivery modalities	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	4	3	2.6
Stakeholder engagement	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Average score	2.2	1.4	2.4	2.2	2	2	2.2	2	2.6	2.4	2.14
*PS = participant											

Source: (Authors’ own construction)

Strategic intent

The CoE scored a maturity level of 3 (average 2.5) for its ICT strategic intent. This indicates that the municipality has a shared ICT vision, strategy and roadmap for becoming a smart city. Level 3 shows that “a business case has been established and shared investments are in place to secure scalable improvements to agreed outcomes with multiple partners across multiple domains” (Scottish Government 2014:12).

Data usage

For the data dimension, the CoE scored an average of 1.6. This means that the CoE is at “ad hoc level 1” maturity. According to the Scottish Government (2014:12), at this level, a municipality’s “data re-use and integration is limited by the range of disparate systems in use for different operations”. Such a municipality is facing “issues with data integrity, quality, privacy and security and data is used primarily for the delivery of a particular service” (Scottish Government 2014:12).

Technology infrastructure

The CoE scored an average maturity level of 2 for the technology dimension. Level 2, or “opportunist” level, implies that such a municipality has “some shared

or integrated architectures existing but deployed on a limited set of services” (Scottish Government 2014:12). It implies that certain technological challenges are identified and are being addressed by stakeholders. There is also some shared use of sensor networks by the municipality.

E-governance and service delivery modalities

The average maturity level of the e-governance and service delivery modalities dimension is 2.6. Level 3, or “purposeful and repeatable level”, means that a municipality’s leadership and governance models are evolving to share accountability for delivering system-wide outcomes. There is “greater input to problem solving and service design from providers, suppliers and users”, and there are “organisational budgets and structures, adapted to ensure effective and transparent delivery of system-wide approach” (Scottish Government 2014:12).

Stakeholder engagement

Based on the responses from research participants, the average maturity level of the stakeholder engagement dimension is 2. Level 2 reflects that a municipality only has some departments that are committed to use digital means to engage stakeholders such as citizens. The approach of such a municipality “predominantly focuses on using digital means to provide improved information and transparency to stimulate engagement” (Scottish Government (2014:14).

Overall, the smart city status of the CoE is at a stage where there is some strategic thinking and consideration for the use of ICT applications and some degree of data sharing and stakeholder engagement by utilising digital communication media.

Case 2: City of Johannesburg

The CoJ is the “most advanced commercial city in Africa and the engine room of the South African and regional economy” (RSA 2021b:5). The CoJ is also South Africa’s largest metropolitan municipality in terms of population size and economy. The region has a population of 5.4 million people within an area of 1 645 km² and contributes approximately 15% of the national GDP (*ibid.*). The CoJ’s economy is mainly dominated by finance, community services, trade, manufacturing and transport sectors.

Based on the opinions of the participants (Table 7), the maturity level of the CoJ is on average 2.48, which, according to the SCMM, indicates that the CoJ is moving from “ad-hoc smart city processes” towards a more “systems collaboration approach” and that smart city business cases are being built to showcase potential.

Table 7: City of Johannesburg smart city e-readiness

Dimension (maturity/e-readiness)	PS11	PS12	PS13	PS14	PS15	PS16	PS17	PS18	PS19	PS20	Average score
Strategic intent	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	4	2	2.8
Data usage	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	2.6
Technology infrastructure	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2.4
Governance and service delivery modalities	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	4	3	2.6
Stakeholder engagement	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Average score	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.4	2.2	2.6	2	3	2.4	2.48

Source: (Authors’ own construction)

Strategic intent

The CoJ scored a maturity level of 3 (average 2.8) for strategic intent. Similar to the CoE, the CoJ’s level 3, or “purposeful and repeatable” level, indicates that it has “a shared vision, strategy and roadmap for the smart city with multiple partners across multiple domains” (Scottish Government 2014:12). Level 3 shows that “a business case has been established and shared investments are in place to secure scalable improvements to agreed outcomes” (Scottish Government 2014:14).

Data usage

For the data dimension, the CoJ scored an average of 2.6, a maturity level 3. This means that there is a “data management and optimisation strategy agreed between partners and there is investing in advanced data management, capturing, analytics and big data applications” (Scottish Government 2014:14). At this maturity level, there is an extensive range of open data published with strategic intent to leverage innovation, and data is shared in key functional areas within the municipality.

Technology infrastructure

The CoJ scored an average maturity level of 2.4 for the technology dimension. Level 2, or “opportunistic” level, implies that such a municipality has “some shared or integrated architectures existing but deployed on a limited set of services. Technology barriers are understood and are being addressed between partners. There is also some shared use of sensor networks by the municipality”.

E-governance and service delivery modalities

The average maturity level of the governance and service delivery model dimension is 2.6. Level 3, or “purposeful and repeatable level”, means that a municipality’s leadership and governance models are evolving to share accountability for delivering system-wide outcomes. There is “greater input to problem solving and

service design from providers, suppliers and users”, and “organisational budgets and structures adapt to ensure effective and transparent delivery of a system-wide approach” (Scottish Government 2014:14).

Stakeholder engagement

Based on the responses of participants, the average maturity level of the stakeholder engagement dimension is 2. Level 2, or “opportunist” level, indicates a municipality with departmental level only “commitment to investing in digital channels to enhance citizen engagement”. The approach of such a municipality “predominantly focuses on using digital means to provide improved information and transparency to stimulate engagement”. At level 2, a municipality generally has plans in place “to address digital exclusion in specific service areas” (Scottish Government 2014:14).

The overall maturity level of the CoJ is level 2 (average score of 2.48). “Opportunist”, or level 2, maturity implies that the CoJ has introduced some level of system collaboration for managing the municipality and that there are cross-boundary partnerships emerging to focus on shared ICT outcomes. Overall, the smart city status of the CoJ can be summarised as a holistic system characterised by strategic intent and emergent sharing of data.

Case 3: City of Tshwane

The CoT is located in the northern part of Gauteng and is the largest metropolitan municipality in comparison to the CoJ and the CoE. The CoT covers 6345 km² in land area; it is headquarters to national government departments and home to 135 foreign embassies. The key economic drivers in the CoT include community services, finance, trade, manufacturing and transport. The municipality contributes approximately 10% of the South African GDP (RSA 2021c).

Based on the perceptions of participants (Table 8), the overall maturity level of the CoT is on average 2.42, which, according to the SCMM, indicates that the CoT is moving from “ad-hoc smart city processes” towards a more “systems collaboration approach” and that smart city business cases are being built to showcase potential.

Table 8: City of Tshwane smart city e-readiness

Dimension maturity levels	PS21	PS22	PS23	PS24	PS25	PS26	PS27	PS28	PS29	PS30	Average score
Strategic intent	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	4	2	2.8
Data usage	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	2.2
Technology infrastructure	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2.3

Dimension maturity levels	PS21	PS22	PS23	PS24	PS25	PS26	PS27	PS28	PS29	PS30	Average score
E-governance and service delivery modalities	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	4	3	2.7
Stakeholder engagement	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.1
Average score	2.6	2	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.6	2	3	2.4	2.42

Source: (Authors' own construction)

Strategic intent

Similar to the CoE and CoJ, the CoT scored an average maturity level of 3 (average 2.8) for strategic intent. Level 3, or “purposeful and repeatable level”, indicates that a municipality has “a shared vision, strategy and roadmap for the smart city with multiple partners across multiple domains”. Level 3 shows that “a business case has been established and shared investments are in place to secure scalable improvements to agreed outcomes” (Scottish Government 2014:12).

Data usage

For the data usage dimension, the CoT scored an average of 2.2. Level 2 maturity implies that there are “barriers to optimising data assets being discussed between partners and a solution is emerging. There is some advanced data sharing and analytics applications in place, with some data sets opened to the public” (Scottish Government 2014:12).

Technology infrastructure

The CoT scored an average maturity level of 2.3 for the technology dimension. Level 2, or “opportunist” level, implies that such a municipality has “some shared or integrated architectures existing but deployed on a limited set of services”. Technological challenges are identified and being addressed. There is also some network application of smart sensors to monitor service delivery (Scottish Government 2014:12).

E-governance and service delivery modalities

The average maturity level of the e-governance and service delivery modalities dimension is 2.7. Level 3 or “purposeful and repeatable level” means that a municipality’s leadership and governance models are evolving to share accountability for delivering system-wide outcomes. There is a “greater input to problem solving and service design from providers, suppliers and users”, and there are “organisational budgets and structures adapted to ensure effective and transparent delivery of a system-wide approach” (Scottish Government 2014:12).

Stakeholder engagement

Based on the responses from participants, the average maturity level of the stakeholder engagement dimension is 2.1. Level 2, or “opportunist” level, indicates that there is limited deployment of digital means to engage stakeholders. The approach of such a municipality “predominantly focuses on using digital means to provide improved information and transparency to stimulate engagement”. A level 2 municipality has plans in place “to address digital exclusion in specific service areas” (Scottish Government 2014:12).

Similar to the CoE and CoJ, the overall maturity level of the CoT is level 2 (average score of 2.42). Opportunist, or level 2, maturity implies that the CoT has introduced some level of system collaboration for managing the municipality and that there are cross-boundary partnerships emerging to focus on shared ICT outcomes. The overall smart city status of the CoT can be characterised as an emergent integrated system.

The smart city e-readiness assessments of the three metros revealed that Gauteng-based metropolitan municipalities are at a level 2 of becoming “smart”. This shows that there is still significant work to be done and a huge amount of investment required (e.g. technology, human capital and ICT infrastructure) to enable these metros to increase their e-readiness to maturity levels 3, 4 and 5. It is also evident that the Gauteng province and its citizens do not yet truly leverage or benefit from advances in smart city and 4IR technology.

The next section focuses on drafting a smart city model to guide Gauteng metros, and other South African municipalities in general, towards smart city readiness.

DISCUSSION: TOWARDS A SMART CITY MODEL FOR METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITIES

The process model presented (Figure 1) has foundations in the analyses of smart city models and frameworks, the statutory and regulatory urban governance frameworks in South Africa and the empirical findings of the smart city e-readiness assessment. These data sets were triangulated for the design of parameters and dimensions of the process model. The model makes provision for three governance layers, namely a national government (macro or external environment), provincial government (tactical environment), and local government (internal metro). National government is mainly responsible for developing national ICT and 4IR policies mandating the other spheres of government to respond. It is also responsible for budget and other resource allocations. Provincial government should conduct regular provincial smart city assessments of municipalities in its area of jurisdiction and adopt integrated provincial smart city policies to ensure

interoperability of systems among municipalities. Provinces should also develop smart city strategies and guidelines aligned with the provincial ICT strategy. The local sphere of government should approve a smart city strategy and set realistic goals and targets for implementation. It should secure a budget and invest in adequate infrastructure, hard- and software and ICT skills to operationalise the smart city strategy. Councils should also build a business case for smart city technologies and expand interventions to include other service delivery modalities. Collaborative agreements with stakeholders and partners are essential to support the municipality with this. The municipality should also establish oversight procedures for monitoring, evaluation and reporting purposes. Finally, due to the dynamic nature of ICT and 4IR technology development and a rapidly changing environment, the smart city strategy should be regularly reviewed and updated.

Recommendations for the application of the model

The following suggestions should be followed when applying the smart city model in metropolitan municipalities:

- National sector departments should develop a clear national smart city policy that is aligned with the existing national ICT and 4IR policy mandate. Such a policy should incorporate best practice emanating from countries in both developed and developing economies.
- Provincial government should formally adopt an integrated provincial smart cities policy, which makes provision for municipal coordination, stakeholder collaboration, and interoperability of systems among bordering municipalities.
- Municipal councils, in conjunction with the Office of the Municipal/City Manager, should design and approve a smart city strategy. This strategy should be aligned to the country's macro-ICT mandate as contained in the National Development Plan: Vision 2030 and related national policies and regulations. The implementation of the strategy should be supported by political commitment, clear goals, realistic targets and an investment of resources and infrastructure. The municipal budget should also make provision for the implementation of smart city projects, either as capital or operational budget allocations. Additional funding should be secured from external partners (e.g. technology companies). Councils should also build a business case for the smart city approach by showcasing successful smart city projects that have improved service delivery provision to the public. Once a business case for smart city technology has been implemented successfully, municipalities should then expand digitalisation to other service areas within the municipal administration. The successful implementation of the smart city model should also be supported by adequate governance and oversight structures and mechanisms (e.g. Section 79 committees, mayoral committees, internal

audit, etc.) to monitor and evaluate progress. Quarterly progress reports on smart city programmes and projects should be produced to assist national and provincial government oversight. Finally, the smart city strategy needs to be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that it still fulfils its intended purpose. Inputs and comments from stakeholders, including the private sector, need to be taken into consideration when reviewing and updating the smart city strategy.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article was to report on findings of an empirical survey conducted among three metropolitan municipalities in Gauteng province to gauge their smart city maturity levels. The survey was guided by existing international smart city models and lessons learned from smart cities around the globe. It was established that these three metros have a relatively low level (2) of maturity, which accentuates the need for a smart city model to guide progress towards higher levels of e-readiness. The successful implementation of the proposed smart city model can guide city councils towards effective e-readiness and 4IR maturity as they try to keep up with the demands of a rapidly changing technological landscape. By adopting international best practices, engaging stakeholders, ensuring interoperability and complying with national legislation, city councils can create a framework that enables them to leverage technology to improve the quality of life for citizens while driving economic growth.

NOTE

- * This article is based on Mukundi Maphangwa's doctoral thesis conducted at North-West University, titled *Towards a Smart City Model for South African Metropolitan Municipalities: The Case of Gauteng-based Metropolitan Municipalities* under the supervision of Professor Gerrit van der Waldt.

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Housing Delivery at the Masiphumelele Community

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the housing delivery challenges faced by the Masiphumelele community, a township in the Western Cape Province. The study aims to gain insights into the experiences and perspectives of key stakeholders involved in housing delivery, with the goal of informing effective strategies for addressing housing needs and improving the living conditions in the community. The article further explores the reasons why informal settlements and the degradation of housing persist in the community of Masiphumelele. The article utilised qualitative research methods involving focus group discussions with heads of households and online individual interviews with ward committee members and a ward councillor.

The research findings reveal several key issues. The lack of affordable housing options emerges as a pressing concern, exacerbating overcrowding and inadequate living conditions. Additionally, the participants highlighted overcrowding, flooding, fires, inadequate sanitation, unsafe living conditions and a high rate of unemployment as common challenges experienced by the community of Masiphumelele.

Based on these findings, the article presents recommendations to the City of Cape Town for enhancing housing delivery in the Masiphumelele community. These include the promotion of community-driven initiatives to ensure the inclusion of residents' voices in decision-making processes. The dates, times and places of municipal workshops and meetings must be announced as widely as possible to improve participation and communication with community members. The findings emphasise the significance of holistic and participatory approaches to address housing challenges,

ultimately aiming to improve the quality of life and promote housing development within the Masiphumelele community.

INTRODUCTION

The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* of 1996 proclaims the right to adequate housing for all South African citizens. More specific, the Bill of Rights states that all citizens have '*the right to have access to adequate housing*'. The government must take reasonable legislative and other measures within its available resources to achieve the progressive realisation of this right (Constitution 1996:Section 26). It is based on this premise that government should provide low-income households with housing to live in peace and dignity as underpinned in the Constitution of 1996. The realisation of this responsibility laid the foundation for subsequent policies on housing that focus on assisting poor citizens to access this basic need (Sikota 2015).

Housing affects people's health, education and quality of life. Yet, the national housing backlog in February 2022 was estimated at 2.6 million houses, that is 12 million people in desperate need of decent accommodation (GroundUp 2022). Challenges relating to the lack of housing are systemic and continue to compromise the enjoyment of the right of access to adequate housing. After three decades of democracy, there are still households that have no shelter; people are living in informal settlements, shacks and backyards (Segodi 2018:17). The right to housing has been plagued by poor planning, lack of coordination, low capacity, poor monitoring and a lack of political will. The backlog in housing is not only the result of insufficient legislative frameworks, but rather relates to ineffective and cumbersome policy implementation processes (Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI) 2018:5).

In the three years preceding the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a cumulative reduction of R15 billion from the Human Settlements capital budget, while the number of people living in informal settlements continued to rise (Department of Human Settlements 2021). According to South Africa's General Household Survey of 2020 (Statistics South Africa 2020), slightly more than 84% of South African households lived in formal dwellings, followed by 11.4% in informal dwellings, and 4.3% in traditional dwellings with Gauteng and the Western Cape provinces likely to have the largest number of households living in informal settlements (SERI 2018). The Western Cape Province is not immune to this assertion with approximately 19% of households living in informal settlements in the Western Cape. Out of that percentage, 17.6% of the households are located in

the City of Cape Town and are living in inadequate housing that is built with little or no planning for drainage or sewage systems, exposing residents to health risks. According to Brown-Luthango, Reyes and Gubevu (2017:472–474), these informal settlements are also prone to flooding in summer and fires during winter. Segodi (2018:18) and the Department of Human Settlements (2021) warn that backlogs in housing delivery, urbanisation and an increase in population contribute to the mushrooming of informal settlement in the Western Cape and the City of Cape Town. The community of Masiphumelele in the Western Cape is indeed not immune to the challenges brought about by overcrowding and delays in the provision of low-cost housing (Ntongana 2015).

This article focuses on the shortage of low-cost housing in the Masiphumelele community. The specific problem is that, despite the efforts of the City of Cape Town to provide low-cost housing to the residents of Masiphumelele, informal settlements persist and the degradation of housing continues.

In the light of the above problem statement, the following research questions arise:

- What are the main causes and challenges associated with low-cost housing delivery to townships, specifically to Masiphumelele, by the City of Cape Town?
- Why do informal settlements and the degradation of housing persist in Masiphumelele?

The overall aim of the article is to explore the causes and challenges associated with the shortage of low-cost housing delivery at the Masiphumelele community. To put the study in context, the article commences with a brief description of the effect of apartheid on the provision of public housing in South Africa before an overview of the case study, the Masiphumelele community, is provided.

APARTHEID AND THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC HOUSING IN SOUTH AFRICA

During the first half of the 20th century, black people were severely discriminated against. They were brutally treated and forced to live in hostels or servants' accommodation provided by their white employers. In the period following World War II, some areas in South Africa experienced rapid urbanisation. The government did not build new accommodation or homes to accommodate the influx of new residents to the cities. This led to overcrowding, poor living conditions and the absence of amenities. High rents and overcrowding subsequently led to land invasions and the growth of shack settlements. These difficulties were largely ignored by the government. By 1950, a substantial proportion of the urban black population lived in townships. The living conditions in the shack

township settlements were poor and lacked infrastructure and proper sanitation (Huchzermeyer 2013:295–315).

During the era of ideological apartheid from 1948 to 1994, black people were evicted from properties that were in areas designated for ‘whites only’ and were forced to move into segregated townships (Mgushelo 2018:28–33). Separate townships were established for each of the three designated non-white race groups, namely black people, coloured people and Indians as per the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950 and the Group Areas Act 41 of 1950. The Group Areas Act of 1950 became the cornerstone of the apartheid policy and played a fundamental role in shaping South Africa’s cities by preventing black people from living in certain areas. The Act imposed control over property transactions and occupation throughout the country. Moreover, it empowered the government to dictate residential areas to be group areas inhabited by designated races (Group Areas Act 1950:Sections 2 and 3).

Under colonialism and apartheid, institutionalised racial segregation and entrenched marginalisation of black people were all intended at securing the land and labour for white people. Black people were forcibly removed from their land and homes, and became the main and reliable source of labour for the colonial economy (Letseka and Maile 2008:4). White people continued to own colonially and apartheid acquired land after 1994 despite the arrival of freedom and the dawn of the constitutional democracy. This ownership is premised on the constitutional protection of existing property rights. The fall of apartheid and the dawn of democracy meant that the state of land ownership in South Africa remained dominated by white ownership (Letseka and Maile 2008:6–7).

Addressing the shortage of housing in South Africa is fraught with tension. South Africa is among the countries that are tarnished by colonialism and an apartheid planning inheritance. Areas designated for black, coloured and Indian race groups had different planning legislation. In addition, land-use management fell under municipal jurisdictions established prior to the Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998. This meant that a single municipality would have multiple land-use management schemes with different definitions for land uses which complicated the finalisation of land development applications. As a result, access to land remains a challenge (Mgushelo 2018:27–33). Since 1994, there have been major policy shifts towards the democratically elected government’s housing development mandate and to redress the apartheid misfortune that has disadvantaged the majority of the poor. Section 26 of the Bill of Rights as well as the White Paper on Housing of 1994 paved the way in ensuring that the right of access to adequate housing is realised as a post-apartheid ambition. In addition, the National Housing Forum and the Botshabelo Housing Accord of 27 October 1994 also served as building blocks towards reprioritising housing legislation and the implementation thereof (Phago 2010:86–106).

Other detrimental effects on public housing, include an influx in migration and rapid urbanisation. Migration to urban areas and a lack of access to land through formal means have left many urban residents poor. As a result, the urban poor are resorting to informal processes to address their land and housing needs on their own. This has seen many people dwelling in informal settlements, erected mainly on illegally occupied land (Godehart and Vaughan 2008). As a result, South African cities are characterised by severe housing and service backlogs, spatial inequalities, high unemployment rates and high levels of poverty. The systematic destruction of housing and a lack of low-cost housing in urban areas for non-white people left behind a persistent housing crisis that remains unresolved (SERI 2018:8). Cities across South Africa have remained severely segregated, divided and unequal, despite extensive government policy to reverse socio-spatial inequalities (Rogerson and Rogerson 2015:352; Turok 2020:393).

Since the collapse of apartheid in the 1990s, South Africa has struggled to deal with the social and economic problems stemming from that era. In the informal settlements on the edges of cities, residents continue to build their accommodation from cheap materials. Water and other essentials are hard to come by, violence and crime are prevalent, homes are exposed to flooding, and sanitation is poor. Therefore, housing demands far exceed supply in South Africa, the moving target, which simply refers to a target that is never achieved (Darabi 2018).

While the Human Settlements Development Grant allocations have generally grown, the delivery of subsidised housing and serviced sites have both been declining steadily over the last decade. From a peak delivery of 235 000 houses and serviced sites in 2006/2007, the delivery has declined to under 175 000 houses, sites and subsidised rental units in 2020/2021. Over the last three budget years, the delivery has dropped below 100 000 fully subsidised Breaking New Ground houses and 75 000 serviced sites. Subsidised rental housing delivery has also declined. Reasons for declining delivery of subsidised housing include institutional capacity constraints in municipalities, provincial departments and in state entities involved in housing delivery and finance, as well as project planning and implementation delays due to the shift of focus to mega-projects. Also, limited capital budgets and constraints limit the scale and effectiveness of social housing delivery. In addition, responsibilities for financing land and housing services gradually shifted from human settlements subsidies to additional financial responsibility of metros (Hornby, Kingwill, Royston and Cousins 2017:4–6).

Access to urban land in post-apartheid South Africa is therefore complex. These complexities arise from the past in which race was used as a basis to relegate most people to the margins of financial power and property ownership. According to these margins, people accessed land and housing in very different ways from those required by the formal property system (Hornby *et al.* 2017:3). It

is particularly for this reason that history matters, and the colonial and apartheid legacy should not be forgotten, ignored or exempted from the current land reality and discourse. The opposite, arguably, leaves apartheid acquired white land privilege and injustice to perpetuate unacknowledged and without remedy. In the end, forgetting, ignoring or exempting history allows for the dispossessor to continue to thrive and the historically dispossessed to be resentful. South Africa therefore needs to resolve its land issue as it hinders government's basic service delivery, particularly the delivery of housing (Oyeranmi 2011).

CONTEMPORARY HOUSING REALITIES AND CHALLENGES

Since 1994, various policies, strategies and programmes have been formulated by the post-apartheid government to address housing delivery challenges. Yet, the poor remain landless and homeless due to a lack of access to well-located land for housing. To this end, informal settlements and urbanisation in South Africa have drastically increased since 1994. The provision of public housing is commonly characterised by a slow rate in delivery due to ineffective policy implementation capacity and skills. Community unrests are also contributing to the lack of implementation capacity or the inability of the government to implement a housing policy (Isaac-Martin 2009:147–149). Nengwenkulu (2009:344) states that the scarcity or skills shortages alone, cannot reduce the public service delivery inertia. Nengwenkulu (2009:358) concluded that there are several factors that result in the slow pace of service delivery. Among other factors are shortage of skills, corruption, nepotism and the political agenda within the administration of departments. In addition, Burgoyne (2018:25) and Samson and Hall (2023:459) identified financial constraints, underspending due to capacity constraints, insufficient resources allocation and the lack of sustainable land as the key variables that influence the slow rate of housing delivery.

Despite South Africa's housing programme, urban housing backlogs keep on increasing. The growth in urban housing backlogs calls on government and the private sector to find and create solutions for the shortage of skills, community unrests and the lack of implementation capacity. There is indeed a need for private housing developers to cooperate more closely with government authorities and agencies at local, provincial and national spheres to address and shape the living conditions of the poor (Burgoyne 2018:24–26).

Transition from housing to human settlements

Following the former President, Mr Jacob Zuma's proclamation in 2009 to change the Department of Housing to the Department of Human Settlements, the focus

shifted from housing being just a roof over people's heads, to providing sustainable and integrated human settlements where people can work, pray, play and have access to amenities required for their day-to-day living. The transition from 'housing' to 'human settlements' represents a shift in the approach and understanding of providing adequate shelter and living conditions for the entire population without any discrimination (South African History Online 2022). There are several reasons behind this move:

- **Overcoming apartheid legacy:** South Africa's history of apartheid resulted in spatial segregation and the unequal distribution of resources, including housing. The move towards human settlements aims to rectify these historical injustices by promoting integrated and inclusive communities that are well-connected and provide equal access to amenities, services, and economic opportunities (Turok 2020:392–395).
- **Holistic approach:** The concept of 'human settlements' encompasses a broader perspective compared to 'housing'. It recognises that providing housing alone is not sufficient to address the complex challenges faced by communities. Instead, it emphasises the need for integrated planning and development that considers social, economic, and environmental factors to create sustainable and inclusive communities (Pieterse and Dubresson 2022:12–19).
- **Addressing informal settlements:** Informal settlements, also known as slums, are prevalent in South Africa. The human settlements approach recognises the need to address these settlements by providing formalised housing options and improving living conditions through upgrading programmes, basic services provision and infrastructure development (Samson and Hall 2023:457–459).
- **Sustainable development:** The concept of human settlements aligns with the principles of sustainable development, emphasising the efficient use of resources, environmental conservation, and promoting social and economic well-being. It seeks to create communities that are environmentally sustainable, economically vibrant and socially cohesive (Frayne and Karuri-Sebina 2020:79–83).
- **Integrated service delivery:** Human settlements encompass not only housing but also the provision of essential services such as water, sanitation, electricity, healthcare, education and transportation. By considering the broader spectrum of services, the approach aims to create self-sustaining communities that cater to the diverse needs of residents (Ntloko-Gobodo 2023:133–136).

Overall, the move from housing to human settlements reflects a paradigm shift towards a more comprehensive and holistic approach to address the housing needs of the population. It acknowledges the importance of creating sustainable, inclusive and integrated communities that go beyond providing mere shelter and that strive for improved quality of life for all residents (Buhlungu 2021:18–21).

OVERVIEW OF THE CASE STUDY: MASIPHUMELELE COMMUNITY

Masiphumelele is a township in Cape Town, situated between Kommetjie, Capri Village and Noordhoek in the Cape Peninsula. It was initially known as 'Site 5' and later renamed by its residents as 'Masiphumelele', an isiXhosa name meaning 'Let us succeed'. In the early 1980s, about 400 to 500 people first settled in the area. The dusty, overcrowded and mainly black suburb of Masiphumelele is surrounded by the affluence of Noordhoek and the other predominantly 'white' Southern Peninsula suburbs. In 1950, the Southern Peninsula, in which Masiphumelele is located, was declared a whites-only area while coloured communities who previously occupied the area were moved to Ocean View (Mascorp 2020).

Regarding the history of Masiphumelele, Ocean View is situated approximately 5km on the main road from where Masiphumelele is located while no nearby alternative was provided for African people. As a result, African people had to travel long distances in search of job opportunities. It became difficult to sustain transport costs with the meagre income that they earned. Unlawful occupancy of vacant land began to spring up. On 1 January 1987, the apartheid government made plans to forcefully remove the informal dwellers. This resulted in brutal actions by the police. In response to this treatment, concerned groups such as the Surplus People Project, the Black Sash, and a few white residents lobbied the apartheid government on behalf of the squatter communities and their case was heard in the Supreme Court division in 1988. The judgment was favourable, and the land was then allocated for a residential township in December 1990 (Mascorp 2020).

Only in 1992, did Masiphumelele become the permanent home for the Noordhoek and Fish Hoek informal communities, with Site 5 being the first serviced area. It was the first black squatter community to win the right to land in a white area, and the first community to have the power to exercise control in decision-making in the land and housing development process in the Western Cape. Later, approximately 8 000 people relocated after the initial allocation of land in 1992.

To date in June 2023, Masiphumelele has changed dramatically since the first arrivals in the early 1990s and its population has increased at a very fast rate which is currently more than 50 000 people and 23 000 households. The arrival of foreign nationals in Masiphumelele has been steadily increasing since 1994. In 2023, Masiphumelele represents a diversity of people from different parts of South Africa and across the African continent. Zimbabweans make up the largest share of the population, followed by Congolese, Ethiopians, Ghanaians, Malawians, Mozambicans, Nigerians and Somalis (Freedomhouse 2022:4–8).

The Masiphumelele community is made up of different types of dwellings that include formal housing and the Wetlands informal settlement. Masiphumelele has a clinic, a primary school, one high school and basic health services. The informal

dwelling is the area that is the subject of this study, though most of the shacks have been replaced by the Reconstruction and Development Programme houses. While it is a jumble of corrugated iron shacks and electrical wires, the wetlands informal settlement of Masiphumelele is home to over 20 000 people. Among the many problems the residents are facing, is a lack of toilets and a shortage of water taps. Like many South Africans who live in informal settlements, community members of Masiphumelele have to carry 25 litre buckets to fetch water from faraway taps. The smell of sewage and rubbish fills the air, and fire during winter and windy seasons holds a direct threat to the residents. Most shacks are deep in the informal settlement, and have layers of bricks and concrete as foundation to prevent groundwater flooding (Mascorp 2020).

The people in the informal settlement are likely to be there for the next 30 years. Unfortunately, poor access to housing in Masiphumelele increases the risk of health conditions, particularly in children, pregnant women and the elderly. The City of Cape Town failed to adequately address the dreadful unhygienic conditions in the Masiphumelele township, which are affecting the health and well-being of the residents. Illnesses like diarrhoea, respiratory tract infections and pneumonia are prevalent. The quality of life for many people in Masiphumelele is marked by poverty and high levels of crime and violence. There is undeniably a shortage of land, and where there is land, it cannot be used because it is privately owned (City of Cape Town 2013; Mascorp 2020).

The Masiphumelele community is characterised by a lack of formal tenure, public space and public facilities, inadequate access to municipal services, a lack of convenient and safe access to services, and non-compliance with planning and building regulations. Poor access to roads and road infrastructure also affects access to health services, and clinics (City of Cape Town 2013:2–5).

The problem of sanitation in Masiphumelele is critical and complex because of high population density, poor infrastructure, lack of space, lack of secure tenure and sustained poverty.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research design. For the single case study of the Masiphumelele community focus group discussions and individual interviews were identified as data collection instruments. Three focus group discussions were conducted with purposively selected heads of households from the Masiphumelele community. Individual interviews with four selected ward committee members and one ward councillor was scheduled thereafter. All the interviews, focus groups and individual interviews, took place through the online platform MS Teams. The interview questions posed to both participant groups

focused on the causes and challenges associated with the shortage of low-cost housing delivery to the Masiphumelele community by the City of Cape Town. The reasons why informal settlements and the degradation of housing persist in Masiphumelele were also perused.

The sample size was fixed, but room was also left for possible increase to ensure that a sufficient number of participants were accommodated. Table 1 lists the target groups, nature of each group, the site population per group as well as the relevant sample sizes.

Table 1: Target groups, population and sample sizes

Target group	Nature of group involved	Site population	Sample size	Sampling technique
Group A: Focus group discussions	Heads of Households who are permanent residents at the Masiphumelele community.	150	Three focus group discussions consisting of five participants per focus group $3 \times 5 = 15$	Purposive sampling
Group B: Personal online interviews	Ward committee members and one ward councillor	10	5	

Source: (Author’s interpretation)

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

To obtain the findings of the research, the collected data needed to be analysed using thematic analysis to get an in-depth opinion from the participants.

Focus group discussions

The data analyses for the focus groups are presented by quoting the interview question followed by the analysis of the data.

‘What challenges are encountered by the community of Masiphumelele due to lack of low-cost housing? Please motivate your answer.’

The challenges raised by the focus groups include overcrowding, flooding, fires, inadequate sanitation, unsafe living conditions, a high crime rate and high rate of unemployment. The general view was that these challenges are caused by the rapid increase of urbanisation. As a temporary housing solution, people end up building shacks while they are searching for employment in urban areas. These

shacks are often built in areas that are not suitable building areas. Frequent fires and flooding in the wetlands result in poor living conditions.

***‘Is there a need for low-cost housing in Masiphumelele?
Please motivate your answer.’***

All three focus groups agreed that there is a dire need for low-cost housing. The first and second group participants responded that they are faced with devastating fires which aggravate poverty and congested living conditions. The other challenge is the wetlands which impact poor sanitation infrastructures and flooding during winter. The third group raised the issues of poverty that leads to a high crime rate due to unemployment and an increase of immigration that leads to overcrowding. Overcrowding results in no spaces and entries for emergency and fire-fighting vehicles between the shacks.

The lack of access to land and the increase of the Masiphumelele population is a cry for basic services, such as water and electricity. Basic services would serve the interest of the community by ensuring a decent standard of living. Inadequate sanitation systems hold high health risks to the community. Access to sanitation and toilet facilities will advance the physical health of the inhabitants and will also provide the residents with a sense of human dignity (United Nations 2015:26).

‘What can be done to increase the rate of housing provision?’

All the focus group members agreed that the City of Cape Town must purchase land to build adequate houses for the Masiphumelele community. They hinted that the City of Cape Town is not using the municipal budget appropriately and that this matter must be addressed through official channels. The provincial government and the municipality must spend the total budgets received from the national government and not return any unspent money. The participants affirmed that the municipality must stop making promises and rather deliver on previous unfinished undertakings. The participants also felt that the community is often wrongly blamed for delays in implementing housing projects.

The participants from the second and third groups raised an additional aspect when referring to issues of internal strife among political leaders. They stated that frequent changes in political leadership harm the community because it causes unnecessary delays in housing delivery. For this reason, informal settlements and the degradation of housing persist in Masiphumelele.

***‘Are councillors involved in housing development?
If so, can you please explain their role?’***

All the groups agreed that the ward councillors are involved in housing development projects, however, various explanations of the extent of their involvement were provided. The first group responded that some of the councillors are not

in touch with the community needs. They are often absent from meetings and appear not to understand the municipal processes and requirements. The participants recommended that training be provided to the ward councillors to expose them to the operational requirements of the municipality. It was concluded in the first focus group's discussions that despite being involved in housing development, the councillors seem not to understand their core roles.

The second focus group emphasised that housing development in Masiphumelele relies solely on the Integrated Development Plan of the City of Cape Town. The councillors are therefore required to call quarterly community meetings to provide feedback on any development and to discuss possible hindrances. During these meetings, the residents would be granted the opportunity to raise their concerns on infrastructure maintenance. The items emanating from these meetings are carried over to the municipal housing budget after rigorous approval processes. Unfortunately, organising and attending council meetings over the last five years has become a tick box exercise with no or very limited effect on the municipal budget and housing development in the community.

The third group explained the role of the councillors is to be the link between the community of Masiphumelele and the City of Cape Town. It was confirmed that the councillors are close to the communities and should be helpful and knowledgeable about the community needs. Regrettably, there is limited or no communication between the community and the councillors. As a result, the community is not consulted about housing needs in their areas.

Individual interviews

The data analyses for the online individual interviews are presented by quoting the interview question followed by the analysis of the data.

'What are the problems that you experience in terms of planning for housing development?'

The interviewees agreed on increased migration to find job opportunities and the lack of access to land for development. The ward councillor confirmed that the attraction of economic opportunities in metropolitan areas causes the erection of temporary shacks as people seek work in the richer metropolitan areas while staying in informal housing structures.

'Does the municipality organise any workshops on housing development? If so what kind of workshops and what groups of people participate mostly?'

The ward committee members agreed that Integrated Development Plan meetings are being organised, but that the community do not attend these meetings. They

were not certain about the reasons for the community not attending information sharing meetings. The ward councillor revealed that workshops are organised by the municipality. He confirmed that councillors attend these workshops, and that they are knowledgeable about the needs of the communities. These workshops aim to obtain information on how the municipality can resolve housing development challenges. However, one of the interviewees believed the community does not show interest in what is happening in their local area.

‘What would be the best way to involve all community members in decision- making during housing development?’

The ward councillor agreed that not all community members are involved in decision- making about housing development. Some community members do not show an interest in local government issues. The ward committee members responded that the influences and roles of various role-players must be clearly outlined. Protocols should also be established to ensure that all opinions are raised, heard and considered. Further opportunities for engagement must be explored and lobbying processes for the items and money on the municipal budget must be enhanced. The City of Cape Town needs to extend opportunities for inclusion in its communication and housing development processes.

The ward committee members agreed that the City of Cape Town needs to establish common protocols and standards that can be clearly understood and upheld by all parties that operate within the informal settlements space. They confirmed that viewing public participation as critical for civil society cohesion is an important departure point for any communication process related to human settlements development. They also emphasised the importance of involving community members in decision-making during the housing development, as confirmed by Zondi and Reddy (2016:3).

‘In your opinion, why is there invasion of land? Please elaborate on possible mitigation plans.’

The ward committee members responded that land invasion is caused by the huge housing demand and the backlog in delivering low-cost housing by the municipality. Overcrowded households, insufficient delivery of housing stock and invasion are the direct result of these backlogs. The ward committee members also responded that the reasons behind unlawful land occupations are being investigated by the City of Cape Town, but it appears that overwhelming density, problems with urban management and a lack of available services in informal settlements are the main contributing factors. The ward councillor raised delays in basic service delivery as the reason for the invasion of land.

The ward committee members further commented that the City of Cape Town must execute its Constitutional mandate by acknowledging the right to housing

and by the provision of housing while ensuring compliance with the Prevention of Illegal Eviction and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act 19 of 1998. Alternative accommodation must be provided to immigrants. Unfortunately, this dynamic takes place within a resource constrained environment aggravated by unemployment and poor service delivery. The land should be developed by the City to acknowledge and support the different types of informal settlements.

‘In your opinion, does the municipality have the capacity to meet the housing demands?’

The ward committee members responded that the delivery of housing development is considerably constrained due to a lack of funding for housing development solutions. They stated that state-led housing delivery will never meet the total demand for housing opportunities. The ward committee members further confirmed that the City should establish effective intergovernmental relationships with other spheres of government, as well as improving the coordination of integrated human settlements management projects. They added that there is not a dedicated national government funding instrument that the City of Cape Town can utilise to provide emergency housing when responding to disasters.

The ward councillor responded that the City of Cape Town does not have capacity due to an under-budget from the province. The ward councillor also highlighted that considering the high levels of illegal land occupation and the evictions taking place from private residences, there is a danger that a shrinking local government fiscus will divert resources away from human settlements projects and interventions.

CONCLUSIONS

The following themes emerged during data analysis to find answers to the research questions ‘What are the main causes and challenges associated with low-cost housing delivery to townships, specifically to Masiphumelele, by the City of Cape Town?’ and ‘Why do informal settlements and the degradation of housing persist in Masiphumelele?’.

Community participation

The focus group discussions reveal that there is a lack of public involvement in housing developments and community programmes. In most cases, ward committees are being used for public engagement and to build mutual understanding with community members from different backgrounds. The focus group discussions clearly indicate that there is a lack of public involvement, despite the

legislative and policy provisions encouraging and promoting meaningful participation in community areas.

It was concluded that some of the councillors are not in touch with the community needs. They are often absent from meetings and appear not to understand the municipal processes and requirements. Unfortunately, organising and attending council meetings over the last five years has become a tick box exercise with no effect on housing development in the community.

Community development

According to Steyn-Kotze (2010:146), the reality of democracy lies in the expectation that lives will improve towards better quality of life. The focus group discussions as well as the individual interviews confirmed that the Masiphumelele community must continue to champion their community needs to eventually improve their standard of living.

The interviewees maintained that the City of Cape Town is allegedly not using the municipal budget appropriately and that this matter must be addressed through official channels. In addition, frequent changes in political leadership harm the community and cause delays in housing delivery. For this reason, informal settlements and the degradation of housing persist in Masiphumelele.

Access to land

Land is a complex challenge in South Africa, and not only in the City of Cape Town. Land in South Africa is irreversibly tied to the history of dispossession and oppression. The government's response to land claims by black people focuses on land restitution, redistribution and redress in rural areas (South African Cities Network 2015). The Masiphumelele community do not enjoy their human right to housing as stated in Section 26 of the Constitution of South Africa of 1996. The delay in housing delivery directly leads to the increasing number of informal settlements and land invasion. The City of Cape Town must thus be committed to ensuring that those requiring housing in the Masiphumelele area are accommodated on-site or within close proximity to the site. However, there are households that are willing to relocate outside of the valley. In addition, land should be made available to accommodate an expanding urban population.

Housing provision

Housing services are aimed at improving the quality of life of the less privileged members of society. South Africa has different spheres of government: a national, a provincial, and a local sphere of government. The *Constitution of the Republic*

of South Africa of 1996 sets out the powers and the utilitarian value of each sphere of government. The Constitution of 1996 also enshrines the right of everyone to have access to adequate housing. The Housing Act 107 of 1997 provides for the facilitation of sustainable housing development processes. It lays down general principles applicable to housing development in all spheres of government and defines the roles and responsibilities of national, provincial and local governments in respect of housing development (Ntloko-Gobodo 2023:134–136).

The Masiphumelele community has been neglected for a long time by the City of Cape Town. Most of the participants felt hopeless due to slow service delivery and delays in housing provision. The community is faced with devastating fires which aggravate poverty and congested living conditions. The other challenge is the wetlands which impact poor sanitation infrastructures and flooding during winter. High levels of poverty lead to a high crime rate due to unemployment. An increase of immigration also leads to overcrowding. Overcrowding results in no spaces and entries for emergency and fire-fighting vehicles between the shacks.

The focus groups revealed that there is significant under-spending on budget items for low-income housing owing to a lack of capacity by the City of Cape Town to implement housing projects. However, the individual interviews with the ward committee members and the ward councillor confirmed the opposite. They stated that the municipality must work with minimum funds from the provincial government. A conclusion on this matter could not be reached through the interviews.

The qualitative data undeniably confirmed that there are several constraints that hamper the provision of housing. A decline in the number of units constructed per annum is also evident in the Masiphumelele community. The lack of collaborations between community members, City officials and ward councillors negatively affect any current or future housing policy measures. The constant expansion of informal settlements with little or no access to basic services and infrastructure, poses difficulties to any housing project.

Social conditions

The community of Masiphumelele is densely populated. The study showed that there is a dire need for access to land and adequate housing in Masiphumelele. The residents of Masiphumelele are staying in shacks, in the backyards of houses and in Reconstruction and Development Programme houses because they are unemployed and cannot afford to pay rent. Many of the participants felt that the government, particularly the City of Cape Town, makes empty promises to better their lives.

The Masiphumelele community is faced with poverty, unemployment, shortage of low-cost houses and a snail pace of implementing housing projects. The community is known for the wetlands which causes poor sanitation infrastructures

and flooding during winter. Also, fires occur often in summer and during windy weather. There are limited facilities for children, sport fields are occupied by temporary structures and crime is growing daily. Although the City of Cape Town has made good progress in decreasing the service delivery gap in informal settlements, the organic form of informal settlements makes it difficult to provide municipal utility services, such as water, sanitation and electricity.

The main concern remains housing and a lack of accommodation. Housing delivery is taking place very slowly and some elderly people have been waiting for almost 20 years while the younger generation have already received low-cost housing from the City of Cape Town. Therefore, the municipality must improve its administrative processes as a matter of urgency.

Low-cost housing

The lack of low-cost housing will persist for as long as public participation is low, limited and not encouraged. Proper shelter and housing for every citizen, especially the poor, provides a crucial foundation for any economic development. The Masiphumelele community's living conditions are extremely unhealthy, and the high rate of unemployment makes it difficult for the City of Cape Town to generate economic development. Also, the housing backlog remains a challenge due to frequent changes in councillors and political leaders. Much remains to be done to overcome the housing backlog and to develop sustainable settlements. Looking ahead, integrated housing development and cooperation with all relevant stakeholders should be strengthened.

Urbanisation

The increase in urban migration is a challenge for the City of Cape Town to provide more low-cost housing. The surge in informal settlements is making it difficult for the municipality to speedily eliminate the poor housing conditions. The provision of low-cost housing is not adequately addressing the issue of rapid urbanisation and urban land issues. Some interviewees felt excluded from the quest for access to shelter, basic services and the employment opportunities from the City of Cape Town.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made to the City of Cape Town on how to address problems associated with housing delivery at the Masiphumelele community:

- The heads of households from the Masiphumelele community revealed that there is limited communication between them and the City of Cape Town. The municipality can only improve people's lives if it produces and implements co-decisions between the community, the City and other relevant stakeholders.
- The City of Cape Town should speed up the identification of available land to build houses.
- The dates, times and places of municipal workshops and meetings must be announced as widely as possible to improve attendance, participation and communication with community members.
- Protocols should be established to ensure that all opinions are raised, heard and considered. Further opportunities for engagement must be explored and lobbying processes for the items and money on the municipal budget must be enhanced. The City of Cape Town needs to extend opportunities for inclusion in its communication and housing development processes.
- The wetlands areas must be secured to curb the recurrence of informal settlements.
- The City of Cape Town must deliver housing development projects by spending all the grants that it receives from national and provincial governments.
- The councillors are close to the communities and should be helpful and knowledgeable about the community needs. Training must be provided to the ward councillors to expose them to the operational requirements of the municipality.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, this article sheds light on the housing delivery challenges faced by the Masiphumelele community in the Western Cape Province and presents valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of key stakeholders involved in housing delivery. The findings of the study highlight the pressing issues of a lack of affordable housing options, overcrowding, inadequate living conditions, flooding, fires, inadequate sanitation, unsafe living conditions, and a high rate of unemployment in the community.

To address these challenges, the article provides recommendations to the City of Cape Town for enhancing housing delivery in Masiphumelele. These recommendations emphasise the importance of community-driven initiatives that prioritise the inclusion of residents' voices in decision-making processes. It is crucial to announce the dates, times, and places of municipal workshops and meetings as widely as possible to improve participation and communication with community members.

Moreover, the research underscores the significance of holistic and participatory approaches to tackle housing challenges effectively. By adopting a comprehensive perspective that considers the socio-economic factors influencing housing delivery, policymakers and stakeholders can develop strategies that promote the improvement of living conditions and foster housing development within the Masiphumelele community.

While this article provides valuable insights, there is still a need for further research to deepen our understanding of the housing issues in Masiphumelele and explore potential solutions. Future studies could investigate the specific barriers that hinder the provision of affordable housing options, such as land availability, financing mechanisms, and regulatory frameworks. Additionally, research could focus on the long-term impacts of community-driven initiatives and participatory approaches in addressing housing challenges and improving the quality of life for residents.

Furthermore, it would be beneficial to explore innovative approaches and best practices from other similar contexts or regions to identify transferable strategies that could be applied in the Masiphumelele community. Comparative studies and case analyses can provide valuable insights into successful housing delivery models that have effectively addressed similar challenges.

In conclusion, addressing the housing delivery challenges in Masiphumelele requires a multi-faceted and collaborative approach that involves the active participation of residents, policymakers, and stakeholders. By building on the recommendations provided in this article and conducting further research, it is possible to develop more effective strategies to improve housing conditions and promote sustainable development in the Masiphumelele community.

NOTE

- * The article is partly based on a dissertation for a Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree under the supervision of Dr C Alers, titled: Monqo, B.P. 2022. *Evaluating housing delivery at the Masiphumelele Community*. Unpublished MPA dissertation. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

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Public Financial Management Reforms and Service Delivery in the Northern Cape Department of Health

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ABSTRACT

This article explores why public financial management reforms do not always result in an improvement in service delivery. Extant research indicates that public financial management reforms are implemented not only to improve the management of public finances, but also to enhance the delivery of quality services. The implementation of public financial management reforms should aim to improve service delivery, however, this is not always the case, as the implementation of these reforms does not always lead to improved service delivery. Moreover, despite the implementation of multiple public financial management reforms, public health programmes' performance and outcomes remain poor, while the burden of disease increases. Based on a case study conducted in the Northern Cape Provincial Department of Health (NCDoH), this study found that there are several systemic challenges that influence the effectiveness of the implemented reforms towards improving service delivery. The outcomes point to aspects such as poor leadership, political interference, lack of capacity, lack of consequence management, an inadequate budget, and poor internal control as the main factors preventing the reforms from being effective, thus leading to poor service delivery. The article recommends that the department appoints managers who will establish and pursue a culture of accountability and effectiveness within the department while promoting effective service delivery. This is relevant because affordable, quality healthcare is a key

concern of all countries and a necessary ingredient for the sustainable long-term development of any country.

INTRODUCTION

Government institutions are entrusted with providing goods and services up to the point at which their supply equals the demand for the services (Pauw, Van der Linde, and Visser 2015:25). However, when the government is no longer able to achieve this, it becomes a necessity to implement effective policies that initiate reforms aimed at enhancing service delivery. Public financial management reform is an example of such reforms, and it requires managerial leadership with creative and innovative personnel that can adapt to the changes necessary for the development and improvement of an institution (Fritz, Verhoefen and Avenia 2017).

Public financial management reforms have evolved throughout the years, but their primary role remains focused on enhancing service delivery. These reforms are aimed at improving public service delivery and assisting governments in alleviating the challenges affecting effective service delivery (Nyamita, Dorasamy and Garbharran 2015; Fritz *et al.* 2017). South Africa has implemented four phases of public financial management reforms aimed at enhancing service delivery (Hendriks 2012:2). However, these reforms have not yet yielded the expected results (Bandyopadhyay 2016:2; Diamond 2013:10, Malakoane, Heunis, Chikobvu, Kigozi and Kruger 2020:20). Moreover, the researchers indicate that it is not clear why these reforms are ineffective, thus creating a knowledge gap to why there remains a disconnect between the public financial management reforms and service delivery.

There is a research gap as to why service delivery remains poor despite the implementation of public financial management reforms. The study examined the challenges causing the gap between public financial management reforms and service delivery. The study used a case study conducted at the NCDoH for empirical findings. Currently, the public financial management reforms implemented within the department are ineffective, as the department faces multiple forms of financial mismanagement year after year, which have led to financial instability and poor service delivery of the department (Auditor-General Report 2021). The 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 annual reports of the NCDoH further highlight that the implementation of the budget is affected by issues such as difficulties in finding qualified personnel, poor infrastructure development, and socio-economic challenges within the province. However, there is little

information explaining the reasons for the ineffectiveness of the implemented reforms within the department, explaining why these reforms do not relate to improved service delivery.

Through a qualitative research design, this research provides an understanding of public financial management reforms and service delivery. It focuses on the public financial management reforms in South Africa specifically, the research gap, and provides an overview of the public financial management reforms and service delivery in the NCDoh. The article further provides an empirical analysis of the challenges affecting the effective implementation of public financial management reforms and service delivery, thus highlighting the empirical reasons to why public financial management reforms do not relate to improved service delivery within the NCDoh. The article provides recommendations on ways to improve the existing gap between public financial management reforms and service delivery.

CONTEXTUALISING PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REFORMS AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Olivier (2016:47) defines the management of public financial resources as the process through which the budget is measured against the performance of the institution, which is done to improve and promote institutional outputs and ensure efficient and effective service delivery. Thus, when an institution fails to achieve its objectives, public financial management reforms become a tool to help manage and alleviate the challenges experienced in the management of its financial resources (Ajam 2016:44; Mansur 2016:1). Public financial management reforms can be defined as those incremental processes, procedures and systems that an institution adopts and implements with the aim to radically transform the institution so that it achieves improved management and financial benefits (Miller, Hart and Hardley 2021; Hadden, 2017a:2; Pretorius and Pretorius 2009:4).

Authors such as Kanyane (2014), Vabo (2014), Zweni (2017), Kioko, Marlowe, Matkin, Moody, Smith and Zhao (2011) and Miller *et al.* (2021) submit that public financial management reforms are central to the provision of public services. Furthermore, Rao (2013:1) asserts that "... sound public financial management reforms are necessary for effective service delivery performance, whereas poor public financial management systems are sufficient to result in poor service delivery performance". This view is confirmed by Hadden's (2017b:2) submissions that "... sound public financial management reforms lead to improved citizen service delivery" and "... the effectiveness of public financial management reforms [is] are directly linked and aimed toward improved public service

delivery". According to Cangiano (2017:1), public financial management reforms are adopted to improve the functioning of public institutions by emphasising the importance of achieving optimal results through effective and efficient service delivery. Ajam (2016:43) asserts that, "The nature of public financial management reforms is to address challenges and inefficiencies experienced within the financial management of the public sector". This view is supported by Tkachenko (2020:84) and Mansur (2016:1) who posit that these reforms assist in addressing and strengthening sound financial management within public institutions by eliminating weaknesses and challenges that arise in the public sector. Public financial management reforms, thus, assist an institution in better promoting and managing its financial resources in an economic, efficient, and effective manner that promises improved service delivery (Miller *et al.* 2021; Mansur 2016:1; 2015:7).

Public financial management reforms are implemented to address and strengthen weaknesses and challenges that hamper the effective and efficient implementation of public financial management systems (Tkachenko 2020:84). Furthermore, these reforms exist to assist governments in managing risks and structuring public resources for sustainable management. According to Cangiano (2017:1), public financial management reforms are also adopted to improve the functioning of the public sector through improvement of public procurement, and this emphasises the importance and necessity of achieving outcomes and delivering value-for-money services (Ajam 2016:43). From the above overview, an inference can be made that public financial management reforms are strategies formulated and implemented to assist the government in managing and improving its financial management for enhanced service delivery.

Moreover, public financial management reforms are implemented to help governments become more functional and operational in resolving their financial crises; improve public procurement such that it promotes value for money; manage financial risks, and, ultimately, provide quality public goods and services by emphasising and focusing on effectiveness and efficiency in the management and utilisation of financial resources (Miller *et al.* 2021; Bett 2018:1; Bizhan 2019:2; Commonwealth Secretariat 2016:1; Bandyopadhyay 2016:1). All over the world, countries have implemented public financial management reforms to better their respective countries and the lives of citizens through quality, efficient, effective, and sustainable service delivery (Hedger and de Renzio 2010:1; Hendriks and Maposa 2020:46; Diamond 2013:12; Mansur 2016:1). However, despite these reforms, various countries, including South Africa, continue to face budget deficits, weak economic growth rates, and poor service delivery (Hedger and de Renzio 2010:8). In a study by Fritz *et al.* (2017), the authors emphasise the need to clearly identify the gaps between public financial management reforms and service delivery for effective remedies and improvement of services.

Rao (2013:4) points out that although previous studies suggest that public financial management reforms are a critical element in the improvement of public service delivery, “it is still unclear as to what degree public financial management reforms contribute to these improvements”. This is confirmed by Hardley’s (2014:2) assertion that despite the progress the public sector financial reforms have made and the role it has played in stabilising developing countries, there is not much evidence on how public financial management reforms have improved service delivery. Hardley (2014:2) further suggests that there is an unexplained gap between public financial management reforms and service delivery that needs explanation, while Hadden (2017a:1) rightfully asks, “... if these two concepts are intertwined, why don’t public finance reforms always improve service delivery?” Furthermore, Miller *et al.* (2021) assert that public financial management is seen as either a “bottleneck or enabler of better service delivery”, thus the manner in which finances are managed will affect service delivery.

In a study determining the role of public financial management in enhancing and improving service delivery, Piatti-Fünfkirchen and Schneider (2018:1) indicate that while the effectiveness of public financial management reforms is vital to the provision of quality services, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding about how public financial management reforms enhance service delivery. Likewise, in a research study investigating the relevance and importance of why public financial management reforms matter, Kioko *et al.* (2011:118) infer that there is no clear link to why the gap between public financial management reforms and service delivery exists, and they, therefore, urge scholars to take advantage and continue to examine and find answers to how this gap can be understood and thereafter approached. In a study assessing the effectiveness of public financial management on service delivery within the public sector, Welham, Krause, and Hedger (2013:1) indicate that an improvement in public financial management will have a positive impact on health service delivery. However, according to Ajam and Fourie (2016:45), this is not the reality in many countries, as governments implement financial reforms yet there is no improvement in service delivery or the lives of the citizens. A key question then is if the literature suggests that public financial management reforms should lead to better service delivery, why is this not a reality for many countries, including South Africa?

It can hereby be concluded that the gap between public financial management reforms and service delivery “remains unexplored”, creating a knowledge gap as to why public financial management reforms do not always affect service delivery and encouraging more research studies into finding knowledge about and reasons for this gap (Ajam and Fourie, 2016:10; Nyamita *et al.* 2015:28; Piatti-Fünfkirchen and Schneider 2018:1).

PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REFORMS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Seeking to improve the country's financial management, the South African government has implemented public financial management reforms in four phases (Hendriks 2012:2). The first phase took place between 1994 and 1998, with the introduction of the new fiscal classification system compatible with Government Financial Statistics and the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) that sets out the three-year spending plans of the national and provincial governments (International Consortium on Governmental Financial Management 2008:2; Hendriks 2012:2; Olivier 2016:48). This phase focused on decentralisation and implementation of new systems that would ensure every individual in the country has access to equal and quality service delivery. The government changed the public financial management system to align new policies to the budget and to expand the budgetary processes to enhance the performance of public departments (Ajam and Fourie 2016:18).

This phase was succeeded by the second phase (1999 to 2002), which was aimed at improving and promoting effective financial management, as a response to managing increased government expenditure that coincided with the transformation of the public sector (Ajam and Fourie 2016:1; Commonwealth Secretariat 2016:12; Olivier 2016:49). This phase modernised the financial management of public institutions, enhancing service delivery, and promoting accountability within the South African public sector, as the government focused on empowering managers and promoting accountability (Hendriks 2012:2; Olivier 2016:49). It was with this phase that the government sought to strengthen performance budgeting and reporting mechanisms by establishing the Accounting Standards Board and the Generally Recognized Accounting Practices (Ajam 2016:44; Olivier 2016:47).

The third phase took place between 2003 and 2006, with a focus on public-private partnerships, supply chain management, and risk management (International Consortium on Governmental Financial Management 2008:2; Nyamita *et al.* 2015). This phase introduced a robust approach, which focused on performance measurement and service delivery through established performance measurement indicators (Commonwealth Secretariat 2016). This approach integrated the legislative frameworks, strategies and policies that allowed the government to develop suitable performance measures in line with its strategic plans. Supply chain and procurement were some of the key focus areas during this phase (Hendriks 2012:2; Olivier 2016:47). Furthermore, this phase saw the implementation of policies and frameworks that sought to enhance processes such as procurement management and risk management, which required managers to function and operate within an approved legal framework (Olivier 2016:48; Commonwealth Secretariat 2016:12; International Consortium on Governmental Financial Management 2008:2).

The last phase commenced in 2007 when the Integrated Financial Management System was introduced (Hendriks 2012:1). This phase is still ongoing and aims to improve the quality of financial management information needed for decision-making (Commonwealth Secretariat 2016:3). In this phase, public financial management reforms promised a unified approach for enhanced public service delivery and improved capacity (Commonwealth Secretariat 2016:13). The fourth phase mainly focused on improving transparency within public sector institutions, building capacity, and linking the strategic plans to the budget, through enhanced information technology mechanisms and enhanced evaluation and monitoring mechanisms. The major reform that took place within this phase was the integrated financial management information systems reform, which was set to be completed by 2011. However, the implementation of this reform in South Africa has been challenging, with the government still having different management information systems (Olivier 2016:48; Auditor-General Report 2022).

The consolidated Auditor-General Report of the financial year 2021/2022 stresses that, despite the progressive steps taken towards reforms and transformation in the management of public finances, public financial management remains poor “and, in some areas, there is patent regress” (Auditor-General 2022:2). The Auditor-General Reports for the financial years 2018/2019 and 2021/2022 further highlight the evidence of severe flaws in the financial management of both the provincial and national governments that have “not been addressed over the past few years” and that pose challenges. Despite the efforts made towards public financial management reforms in South African public institutions, these challenges continue to adversely affect public service delivery (Bandyopadhyay 2016:2; Diamond 2013:10).

The Department of Health in South Africa plays a crucial role in the well-being of citizens, as its functioning directly affects citizens’ lives. The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (Act 108 of 1996) section 27 stipulates that “... everyone has the right to have access to healthcare services”, and this right requires the government to play an active role in the provision of healthcare services. To fulfill this constitutional obligation, the government’s expenditure on public healthcare services represents the second-highest single-sector expenditure (National Treasury 2020; Nyamita *et al.* 2015). The South African government spends more of its budget allocations on the public health sector than any other African country, yet public service delivery in this sector is not commensurate with this spending (Malakoane *et al.* 2020:3). In a study conducted by Malakoane *et al.* (2020:3), it is confirmed that despite the implemented public financial management reforms, public health programme performance and outcomes remain poor, while the burden of disease increases.

An average of 85% of the Northern Cape population is dependent upon the NCDoh for primary healthcare services. With a dependency rate consistently this high, it is crucial that the department effectively and efficiently manages its

budget in such a manner that healthcare services will reach every person in the province dependent on the department for primary healthcare (NCDoH 2020; NCDoH 2021). However, the department is experiencing management challenges and budget pressures which have made it difficult for the department to provide effective and efficient services to its residents. The department has constantly underspent on its budget, which has led to residents being deprived of their human right to “basic healthcare” as constituted by the Constitution.

The Annual Performance Reports of the department indicate that the department has been trying to develop effective reforms that will enhance service delivery and improve the functionality of the department. However, these efforts have not been effective, as the level of service delivery within the department remains below average (NCDoH 2021). Moreover, the department is challenged with serious financial mismanagement, resulting largely from financial misconduct. In the financial year 2020/21, the department accumulated a total of the following.

- R253,793 million in unauthorised expenditures
- R512,649 million in irregular expenditures
- R4,814 million in fruitless and wasteful expenditure (NCDoH 2021).

These amounts of unacceptable expenditure have crippled the functioning of the department and consequently led to poor service delivery for the residents of the Northern Cape province (Auditor-General Report 2021). In the last decade, the office of the Auditor-General has been warning against poor financial management within the department, related to the poor implementation of reforms, high level of unacceptable expenditure, mismanagement of public funds, lack of compliance, and bad ethical behaviour within the department, all of which have placed the department under severe budget constraints and led to poor service delivery (Auditor-General Report 2021). Moreover, the department has received “Qualified Audit Outcomes” consecutively for the years under review, with the opinion that the financial health of the department is unstable and in danger of collapsing despite the implemented reforms and measures aimed at enhancing service delivery (Auditor-General Report 2019–2021).

Therefore, the need arises to determine what challenges are affecting the public financial management reforms implemented. This will answer questions on why public financial management reforms do not always lead to improved service delivery, a gap that this study sought to explore.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative case study design to collect data. This enabled the researchers to gain deeper insight and understanding of the challenges affecting

the implementation of public financial management reforms, thus leading to poor service delivery. The study used a literature review and empirical study in data gathering. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 senior managers who were purposively selected based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement with the implemented public financial management reforms. These 14 participants were purposely chosen as they are actively involved in the formulation, adaptation, implementation, and evaluation of these reforms; thus, they were the most suitable candidates to give the relevant and accurate insight required by the research. An interview guide consisting of open-ended questions was prepared to ensure consistency in all interviews. The empirical data was analysed using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis computer software package that allows content analysis and thematic coding. While literature was utilised to provide a theoretical framework for the cross-analysis of the empirical data, the Nvivo software enabled a thematic coding of patterns from all the empirical data, which enabled the researchers to draw an inductive analysis from all the responses. This data was thereafter scrutinised and analysed against the official documents of the department, for validity and credibility. Ethical approval was obtained for the study.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

From the interviews conducted with the 14 employees from the NCDoh, data analysis indicates that there is a relationship between the public financial management reforms and service delivery within the NCDoh, as these reforms are primarily implemented to enhance the management of finances, which would subsequently lead to the improvement of service delivery. However, there are a number of challenges experienced when implementing reforms, thus leading to poor service delivery. From data analysis, five themes emerged as challenges affecting the implementation of public financial management reforms in enhancing service delivery in Table 1.

Table 1: Challenges affecting public financial management reforms

Challenge	Sub-theme	Category
1. Poor Administrative leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unfilled management positions ▪ Instability in leadership positions ▪ Fear of political leaders ▪ Poor accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Too many acting positions ▪ Culture of suspension/ changing management ▪ Managers follow political and unethical mandates ▪ Lack of consequence management

Challenge	Sub-theme	Category
2. Lack of skilled and competent employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rural province ■ Lack of necessary skills and competencies ■ Skills mix 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Difficulty retaining skilled employees ■ Employment based on political affiliations and not skills ■ Need for talent management
3. Lack of proper internal control systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Poor oversight management ■ Poor infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reluctancy to implement the recommendations of the Auditor-General ■ Discrepancies in the procurement processes ■ Technological advancements ■ Poor control and monitoring mechanisms
4. Budget challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Vertical imbalances in equitable share (nationally raised revenue) ■ Too many accruals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Imbalances (equitable share) ■ Over-burdened financial system ■ High interest balances ■ Unacceptable forms of expenditure
5. Political interferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Undue interferences in the administration of the department ■ Poor political commitment to driving reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rule by fear

Source: (Researcher's own compilation)

Challenge One: Poor administrative leadership

The analysis found a strong indication of poor leadership within the department, which is evident in vacant management posts, instability in the leadership positions, and lack of accountability. The entire research sample indicated that poor leadership was a challenge for the effective management of public financial management reforms. Participants indicated that there was a high number of unfilled posts within the department. To verify this, the researchers reviewed the official Departmental Annual Reports (NCDOH 2016 – 2021) and found that it was mainly in middle management positions where the vacancies were. Some of these unfilled posts dated as far back as 2015, which indicates that the department has been functioning without these critical role-players for years. This raises a great concern as to who manages the critical functions that should be managed by personnel for which positions were vacant. Participants indicated that such functions are often left to the top management, which then gets overburdened and thus is unable to perform them.

Participants indicated that the department was in desperate need of capable and experienced leaders. They also emphasised the need for stability in these management positions. Participant 6 stated that, "Currently, most of the programme

managers are appointed on ‘acting capacity,’” which causes further instability and uncertainty within the leadership. A perusal of the departmental official documents suggested that five of the seven programme managers at the time of data collection were acting in those positions. Moreover, the department had four different MECs, five different heads of departments (HODs), and the HOD who during the data collection period had been in the “acting capacity” for almost two years. The participants indicated that this instability in leadership positions was further deterring the achievement of the departmental objectives and goals.

Participants indicated that leadership lacked courage to hold staff members accountable for unethical behaviour. They emphasised the need for consequence management within the department. Participant 14 indicated that “leaders do as they please and get away with it”, indicating a real lack of sound leadership within the department, as accountability is crucial in the achievement of good governance (Kamau, Rotich and Anyango 2017:260). Participant 6 indicated that “there is a deliberate transgression of laws and no consequence management, which only promotes unethical behavior”, while participant 13 indicated that “the reason corruption flourishes in the department is that it is condoned instead of being punished, why would you stop doing bad if there are no consequences?”.

These assertions give relevance to the Auditor-General’s Report concerning the lack of accountability within the department as one of the key causes of financial instability within the department (Auditor-General Report 2017:112). Therefore, there is a need for strong leaders who will hold public officials accountable for any type of unethical behaviour, thus promoting good governance and fiscal discipline in the operations of the department. Sound leadership is a crucial element for the success of any department or organisation and without it, failure is imminent, which is the dilemma currently experienced within the NCDoh.

Challenge Two: Lack of skilled and competent staff

Lack of skills and competencies in critical operations was flagged by all participants as one of the key challenges to the ineffectiveness of public financial management reforms within the department. The lack of skills and competencies was linked to three attributes, namely:

- Flawed and corrupt retention and recruitment processes
- Poor training and low morale in the workplace, and
- Urbanisation.

Flawed and corrupt retention and recruitment processes

Undue political interference within the recruitment and retention processes of the institution was cited by 13 of the interviewed participants. This statement was supported by responses of participants 4 and 5, which emphasised that the recruitment

and retention processes are so corrupt that programme managers are unable to appoint anyone within their programmes since public officials are appointed based on political affiliation and not merit. The participants believed that this is done to serve the interests of political office bearers, as the appointed officials become the “political trustees” working within the administration of the department. The loyalty of such personnel is then steered towards their political leaders and not the roles and duties of the job titles they hold. Moreover, such employees are often not skilled, are inexperienced or are not capable of performing administrative functions.

Poor training and low morale in the workplace

Participants indicated that poor training and skills development by the department is the result of departmental training not being taken seriously, causing poor development in capabilities, which accordingly limits the effectiveness of reforms. Participant 7 was of the view that there is a lack of desire from personnel to develop and achieve targets. In addition, there are poor training initiatives within the department. Participants 2, 3, 7, 10, and 14 indicated that there was a need for a skills audit and talent management to place the right people in the right positions within the department.

Urbanisation

Five of the participants indicated that a factor contributing to the department not having qualified and experienced personnel is that experienced people flock to urban areas for better opportunities. This was verified through document analysis of the department’s Annual Performance Reports, which indicated that it is difficult to retain the required skills and competencies in the department due to the Northern Cape being a rural province (NCDoH 2019). These five participants specified above emphasised that even when they try to recruit the best people in their programmes with permission from the executive authority, their requests are often rejected by experts who indicate that they cannot relocate to a rural province such as the Northern Cape. Participant 14 posited that, unfortunately, the bad reputation of the department does not work in the department’s favour when trying to recruit skilled individuals. They also highlighted that should the department strive for effectiveness; individuals would reconsider employment opportunities in the department as everyone wants to be part of effectiveness.

In line with the above responses, the literature review indicated that employing personnel based on merit is fundamental for the effective implementation of public financial management reforms and that the inadequacies caused by lack of skills and capacity have resulted in serious financial constraints, affecting the provision of quality service delivery (Dlanga 2020:1). Furthermore, Maitseto (2015:22) is of the view that lack of sound leadership by the executive authority, hampers every chance of reforming the public sector.

Challenge Three: Lack of proper internal control systems

Study participants indicated that there is an absence of proper control systems and proper monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that money is spent as approved in the Appropriation Act by Parliament. Moreover, participants and the Departmental Reports indicated that the recommendations of the Auditor-General were not being implemented. Ten participants identified weak internal control systems as a systemic challenge that negatively affects the effective implementation of reforms aimed at improved service delivery. Participant 6 indicated that there was no proper control systems and no proper monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that money is spent as approved in the Appropriation Act. Participants 13 and 14 indicated that the internal control systems do not consider the recommendations of the Auditor-General. Participant 8 insisted that “without internal controls, failure is imminent and there is a lack of integrating systems effectively and efficiently due to the failing reporting systems that are isolated from the financial systems”. This leads to overspending and poor financial reporting because of lack of internal controls within the department.

Furthermore, the consolidated Auditor-General Report 2017/18 emphasises that internal control systems within the department are weak and do not function as they should, thus leading to financial misconduct, a persistent lack of accountability, and financial mismanagement (Auditor-General 2018). This was supported by participant 9, who indicated that the executive authority overrides the internal control systems and further detailed this reasoning by suggesting that the officials face corruption charges because they are instructed not to follow systems, and out of fear of losing their source of income, they are indirectly forced to follow the given instructions. Several other participants gave similar detailed examples, indicating that there are no records of meetings, especially those where crucial decisions were taken, as such meetings were intentionally not recorded. They indicated that the minutes submitted to higher offices were fabricated, leaving out important aspects, which is deliberate sabotage that initially leads to lack of correspondence between the approved plans and the implemented actions.

Challenge Four: Budget challenges

All 14 participants indicated that the mismanagement of the budget had played a role in the ineffectiveness of public financial management. This is a factor admitted by the department in its annual reports for the financial years 2016/17–2020/21 that the researchers analysed, which indicate that challenges in the management of the budget have led to unacceptable forms of expenditure, including unauthorised, irregular, and fruitless and wasteful forms of expenditure. The Auditor-General’s Reports on the department (2016/17–2020/21) support this, as the reports indicate

that the department is flawed in the processes of managing the budget, which has adversely affected the provision of public services in the department (Auditor-General Report 2019). There are three budget-related challenges:

Inadequate allocations from national government.

According to participant 1, the budget allocation system is biased against the department, as it does not take into consideration the vastness of the province, which poses a challenge for the department to effectively distribute services across the entire province with a limited budget. Participants 14 and 5 referred to this as a “make-do system”, where the department has the challenge of low population density over a large geographical area but with limited funds, and managers are left with financial shortfalls that make it impossible to achieve objectives. Participant 3 said:

There is a problem of vastness within the province, we need an extra budget to reach everyone and added that the socio-economic factors of the province are not considered in the budget allocation as more than 70% of the population is dependent on the Department for basic healthcare services.

However, the data in the department’s annual performance reports indicates that the department underspends annually on its budget, thus forfeiting millions of rands that could have been used for the provision of services and implementation of programmes through the establishment of proper budgeting mechanisms. Moreover, the department has lost millions of rands year after year, which

Table 2: Budget overview: appropriated budget, actual expenditure and under-expenditure

Financial year	Appropriated budget ('000)	Amount spent ('000)	Amount underspent ('000)
2015/16	4 228 733	4 168 265	60 468
2016/17	4 494 185	4 369 137	125 048
2017/18	4 630 292	4 567 352	62 940
2018/19	4 854 311	4 837 479	16 832
2019/20	5 230 191	5 183 452	46 739
2020/21	5 616 038	5 537 620	78 418

Source: (NCDoh 2015/16 – 2020/21)

could have covered these claimed shortfalls had the department adhered to its budget as appropriated. The following Table indicates the expenditure patterns discussed here.

Table 2 quantifies and emphasises the department's need to better implement mechanisms that will enable it to budget and spend its allocated budget appropriately to enhance the provisioning of effective healthcare services and improve departmental performance. However, it is crucial to note that although the department underspends on its budget, there are departmental programmes that overspend on its budget annually.

Unfunded mandates

Unfunded mandates are those items added to the budget, without financial allocation. Data analysis found that unfunded mandates create a misalignment between the approved budget and the implemented budget, thus contributing to the high amount of unauthorised expenditure that is incurred annually. This view is supported by the literature review, which indicated that the misalignment between the planned budget and the implemented budget creates a gap that leads to the ineffectiveness of implemented reforms (Basheka and Phago 2014:155). Participants noted that the budget is over-committed, ignored, and burdened, resulting in cash flow problems that further worsen the financial position of the department. Participant 2 further indicated that the unfunded mandates create a gap between the budget and outputs, as the budget is not implemented for achieving the stipulated objectives.

Increasing accruals

The study found that, increasingly, the department has been starting its financial years with accruals. Accruals entail that transactions are accounted for in the financial year in which they occurred, irrespective of the year the money for these services was paid or received (Fourie and Opperman 2023). This partially results from the high amounts of unacceptable expenditure, and it directly affects the budget for the ensuing years. Participant 2 stated that service providers are not paid on time, which leads to accruals and high and unnecessary interest, further causing fruitless and wasteful expenditure and a bad reputation for the department. Moreover, participants believed that these accruals were a result of non-compliance with relevant legislative frameworks, ignorance, delays in paying service providers, unethical behaviour, and an "I-do-not-care attitude" from public officials, all of which challenge the effective implementation of the approved budget.

High levels of corruption

The NCDoH is characterised by high levels of corruption, which the Auditor-General has been flagging for years (Auditor-General Reports 2015/2016 to

2021/2022). Participants highlighted that lack of consequence management encouraged such corrupt behaviour, and that corruption is the root cause of the mismanagement of public funds committed, always for selfish gains. These assertions are supported by the Auditor-General's Reports for the financial years 2015/2016 to 2020/2021, which emphasises that corruption plays a significant role in the mismanagement of funds, irregular expenditure, unauthorised expenditure, and fruitless and wasteful expenditure, and yet there remains no accountability for these unethical acts. Furthermore, the literature reviewed indicated that unauthorised and irregular expenditures are crippling the government's ability to fulfill important mandates and deliver value-for-money services to its citizens, as financial resources become insufficient for scheduled activities (Baloyi and Beyers 2019:468).

The Auditor-General Report (2020:6) indicates that it would be difficult – almost impossible – to revive the financial health of the NCDoh as the department started its 2022/23 financial year with an overdraft of R100 455 million and with R590 189 million debt from the previous financial year. Furthermore, the department currently has claims amounting to over R1 890 billion against it, with a current total of R8 664 billion in irregular expenditure resulting from fraud and corruption in the awarding of tenders (Swanepoel 2022). Most of these cases remain uninvestigated, further crippling the financial health of the department as the public financial management reforms within the department remain ineffective. Subsequently, the study found that the poor implementation of the budget within the department affects the effective and efficient implementation of public financial management reforms and has had adverse effects on service delivery.

Challenge Five: Undue political interference

The data analysis found that interference from political office bearers is a critical reason for the ineffectiveness of the public financial management reforms in the department. Subsequently, 13 of the participants indicated that what happens in the department is not politicians intervening to ensure that the government is managed effectively, but interference in the administrative operations of the department, which consequently disrupts the functioning of the department. Participant 4 boldly indicated that, “we are managers on paper but puppets in reality, but we are being managed by the politicians in higher seats”. Others asserted that political office bearers had too much power and influence over the administrative leaders in the department. Participants iterated that managers have no choice but to bow to the politicians, who are not even skilled or experienced to effectively manage the healthcare system, as they have limited knowledge about the dynamics and complexities in the department.

The undue political interference highlighted above overrides the administration mandates so much that the working environment has become hostile and “divided by those who support corrupt political acts and those who want to serve the people” (Participant 14). Moreover, the administration is unable to perform its prescribed duties and functions effectively and duly as a result of the fear of political office bearers, whose self-interested motivations pose a real challenge to the effective functioning of the entire department. This supports the statement by Naidoo (2016:106) that too much political power and interference often disrupt internal procedures and corrupts the administrative system. Jordaan (2013:22) further declares that, “Where there is no political commitment, external pressures will influence the degree to which reforms are implemented”.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study set out to investigate the causes of the gap between public financial management reforms and service delivery. While literature indicates that public financial management reforms will improve service delivery, Miller *et al.* (2021), Welhem *et al.* (2013), Hadden (2017) and Scott (2019), highlight that this is not the case, as many countries, including South Africa, have implemented reforms, however, service delivery remains utterly poor. The study found that there is a knowledge gap in the relationship between these two concepts and thus, there was a need to determine the reasons why financial management reforms do not relate to improved service delivery using a case study design at the NCDoh. The findings of the study indicated that the primary objective of the public financial management reforms implemented within the NCDoh is to enhance service delivery. The empirical study illustrates a trend of five key elements resulting in the disconnection between public financial management reforms and service delivery. These are poor leadership, lack of skilled and competent personnel, a lack of proper control systems, budget challenges, and undue political interference in the administrative functions of the department. However, all the identified challenges draw a pattern leading to one element: inadequacies created by the human factors within the department, thus leading to ineffective reforms. Moreover, corruption has created a bad reputation for the department, thus negatively affecting the implementation of the reforms.

The study finds that there is a lack of compliance with statutory requirements and processes put in place to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in the management and implementation of public financial management, leading to the challenges experienced in the implementation of the reforms. More empirical research in investigating the effects of political leadership in the management of public finances must be explored by researchers in the future, as this will help

enable a better understanding of the threats posed by undue political interference on the administrative functions of departments. Moreover, there is a need for more research on how current legislative frameworks should be amended to limit the power and influence of the political office bearers, without compromising accountability within the administrative functions of the departments.

In view of the findings discussed above, the study provides the following recommendations:

- There is an urgent need for leadership that is deeply committed to ensuring that the department fully embodies accountability, consequence management, ethics, fiscal discipline, and good morals. The department needs to appoint managers who will establish and pursue a culture of accountability and effectiveness within the department while promoting effective service delivery and standing up against political executives who consistently interfere in the administrative functions of the department.
- The department needs to implement new retention and recruitment strategies that will promote skills and capacities within the department. Moreover, the establishment of a strong leadership system will enable the recruitment and appointment of staff based on merit, thus promoting the implementation of reforms and enhanced service delivery reforms and value-for-money service delivery. Without sound and effective leadership and management, it will be difficult to achieve the desired results of reforms (Hammerschmid, Van de Walle, Andrews and Mostafa 2018:3).
- Service providers must be paid within 30 days of service provision to avoid high interests and accruals by the department. Failure to follow this prescript results in the accumulation of interest that contributes to consistent fruitless and wasteful expenditure.
- The department needs to build strong internal control systems that will ensure policies are fully implemented and they fully respond to the public financial management processes and prescripts. Without these, corruption, mismanagement of the budget, and ignorance of critical aspects will continue to grow, destabilising the financial health of the department.
- There is a need for new policies that will enforce accountability and consequences for non-compliance to statutory requirements, by administrative officials, without needing the authorisation of political office bearers. Failure to do this will impact the current policies and reforms negatively. The role of political leaders has negatively affected the administration of the NCDoh, and their power over administrative leaders, compromises accountability.

The latter will derail progress and implemented policies and reforms within the NCDoh if not addressed effectively.

CONCLUSION

The literature on the relationship between public financial management reforms and service delivery is limited, and as a result, researchers such as Hadden (2017a), Jordaan (2013), and Ajam (2016) have urged researchers to do investigations and contribute to new literature related to the implementation of public financial management reforms. In light of this, the present study has contributed to the literature with new knowledge of public financial management reforms, which can be used henceforth by researchers, other authors, and relevant stakeholders in work relating to the implementation of public financial management reforms and service delivery. The significance of this article lies in the empirical proof that public financial management and service delivery are intertwined but also showed that this relationship is strained by the challenges posed and experienced by the personnel within the department.

The study identifies new literature that illustrates where in the value chain the relationship between public financial management reforms and service delivery is broken within the department. It is therefore up to the government and the management of the NCDoh to work on these aspects so that it can effectively implement service delivery. An inference is hereby made that the human factor in NCDoh personnel's behaviour is the key reason for the disconnect in the relationship between public financial management reforms and service delivery. This assertion presents new knowledge and empirical evidence that is currently not available in the available literature. Thus, the study has contributed new research literature with empirical evidence to the public administration and management research field on the challenges affecting public financial management reforms, leading to poor service delivery within the NCDoh.

NOTE

- * This article is based on a PhD thesis of Dr Constance Motsitsi, titled *Public financial management reforms and service delivery in the Northern Cape Department of Health*, completed in 2022 under the supervision of Professor Chris Hendriks, at the University of the Free State.

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Employing the Ubuntu Approach as a Lens to Enhance Risk Management Skills at a Municipality

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ABSTRACT

In South African cities, the approach to risk management skills training has relied heavily on positivist research approaches. However, such professional research models tend to restrict employees' input on risk mitigation. Consequently, despite the existence of rich African philosophical approaches, such as Ubuntu, the methods of teaching and learning risk management in municipalities are ineffective. Some ineffectiveness is the result of ignorance of utilising the Ubuntu philosophy for the identification, assessment and mitigation of risks with a view to enhancing the internal operations of an organisation. The practice of Ubuntu in teaching and learning, with specific reference to risk management, encourages a culture of group solidarity in the research environment that embraces brotherhood and sisterhood for survival. The question this article seeks to answer is: How can the use of the Ubuntu philosophy as a lens enhance the risk management skills of municipal officials? A single case study was conducted at Xhariep District Municipality in the Free State. Data was collected from municipal officials through participatory action research. The article recommends a culture of integrated teamwork driven by Ubuntu principles. Such a culture will contribute to human resource development, which will improve employees' competency and self-esteem for the provision of better and higher-quality services to the Xhariep communities.

INTRODUCTION

Municipalities are faced with an array of challenges, including effective methods for the improvement of risk management. In this context, this article seeks to use the Ubuntu approach as a lens to enhance risk management skills in a municipality. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is selected as the methodology. The article presents the background information that underpins its aim. It reviews the literature on the historical origins of the Ubuntu philosophy and argues for Ubuntu as an effective approach to teaching risk management skills. It also focuses on the effectiveness of the Ubuntu approach in teaching risk management skills. It presents the theoretical framework, namely the Ubuntu philosophy that underpins the study concerning its aim. It then provides a brief discussion of the research methods, results, a recommendation and a final conclusion.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

This article aims to employ the Ubuntu philosophy as a lens that can enhance risk management skills in a municipality. Risk management is the process whereby an organisation identifies, assesses and mitigates risks (Cagliano Grimaldi and Rafele 2015). It is also explained by Managa (2012) as a process that involves monitoring projects and their finances towards sustainability. Ubuntu is an African philosophy that translates African experience into action and, with its origin in the African conception of being, highlights humanity and the spirit of togetherness in the learning environment (Ngubane 1979; Khoza 2006:xx–xxi). An Ubuntu approach facilitates collaborative problem-solving skills and advanced information-gathering processes (South African Qualifications Authority [SAQA] 2012). Employing the Ubuntu philosophy as a lens entails an approach that teaches the identification, assessment and mitigation of risks through problem-solving and knowledge acquisition (Zmeyov 1998).

The literature shows that there are challenges that are critical to effective methods for teaching risk management. Goddu (2012) indicates that collaborative problem-solving is a challenge facing teaching and learning risk management skills in municipalities. Previous research projects that the Xhariep District Municipality undertook relied largely on mainstream positivist research approaches characterised by an expert-researcher-driven research process (Otukile-Mongwaketse *et al.* 2016). As observed by Otukile-Mongwaketse *et al.* (2016), this researcher-centred approach does not involve the staff in planning the skills development process. McDonald (2013) echoes this view by stating that the hierarchy present within a traditional research approach holds the researcher to be the sole producer of knowledge, operating in an autocratic relationship. In view of all that has been

mentioned so far, one may suppose that the Ubuntu approach presents multiple realities in the research processes due to the collaborative and social aspects of knowledge creation.

In addressing the challenges mentioned above, many strategies have been initiated and employed. Jozwiak (2004) states that training and the ability to work in teams is an effective method for the improvement of risk assessment. Ajewole (2014) encourages collaboration and teamwork from different departments as a solution to organisational problems. In this sense, Ubuntu is an approach that promotes sharing in education, which affirms the importance of social connectedness, interdependence, communalism, sensitivity towards others and caring for others in the learning environment (Le Roux 2000). This article argues that by infusing Ubuntu philosophy into research and teaching methods, common goals can be better achieved in Xhariep District Municipality for the benefit of the local communities. Consequently, teaching and learning would create unity and cohesion that would lead to transformation and development for humankind. The individual is absorbed into the collective, yet retains an identity as an empirical being.

A municipality is an organisation that is responsible for, among other things, skills development processes such as skills assessment (Municipal Training and Skills Development Policy 2022; Kawai and Tasaki 2016). With a focus on enhancing risk management, the basic function of municipalities is to ensure the quality provision of services to communities. In this sense, knowledge together with practical skills in risk management is crucial for cities to achieve their objectives and common goals. This article defines risk management as the process whereby an organisation identifies, assesses and mitigates risks (Cagliano Grimaldi and Rafele 2015). Similarly, Managa (2012) asserts that it also involves monitoring projects and their finances towards sustainability. The article argues that for an effective teaching and learning risk assessment process, the use and recognition of Ubuntu elements could build up teamwork and practices of Ubuntu in the family and the community at large. This is because Ubuntu philosophy is an approach that not only infuses humanity in adult teaching and learning, but also promotes ethics, values, morals and traditional African communal justice (Letseka 2014; Bangura 2005; Mbigi and Maree 2005; Dia 1996). Together these aspects of Ubuntu contribute towards effective teaching strategies for risk management and challenge the social oppression that frequently limits the potential growth of municipalities and municipal officials. In this article, Ubuntu is used as a way to encourage the use of an integrated approach to research processes and the teaching of risk management.

In Xhariep municipality, previous research projects have shown that the method of teaching risk management skills was not effective and lacked a coordinated team in research (Baliyan, Oitsile and Motlhabane 2018; Zou and Mickleborough 2015; Olaye and Onajite 2015; Meyer 2014). The risk management training processes were basically dominated by research experts and ignored the voices of

the participants. Jacobsen (2011:32) states that risk management, with specific reference to risk assessment, has ontologically been categorised as naïve positivism, cultural relativism and scientific proceduralism. In fact, this research model restricted employees' input and ignored their prior experience in the risk management teaching and learning environment. This method also discourages a culture of solidarity as the principle of Ubuntu. Consequently, Ubuntu as a lens involves a humanistic approach that sees employees as having value in their own right. Similarly, Niyitunga (2020:55) has found that this mode of learning and teaching supplanted African values and continues to perpetuate division among local communities. Consequently, the training process of the city administration board is not in line with White Paper 6 (RSA DoE 2001b), which calls for an inclusive education and training system that meets all the needs of learners and maximises their participation in the curriculum (Department of Higher Education and Training 2015). This article argues that ineffective methods for teaching risk management have implications for productivity and sustainability in the municipality. Central to this argument is the question: how can the use of the Ubuntu approach enhance risk management skills in Xhariep District Municipality?

THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF THE UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY

There has been a debate among scholars about whether African philosophies do or do not exist (Nafukho 2016; Letseka 2000). However, Nafukho (2016) claims that African philosophies do exist since, according to Letseka (2000), "all people have a philosophy that guides the way they live, their perceptions of others, and the decisions and choices they make about every aspect of their lives". This entails that employing Ubuntu as a lens for the assessment of risks could create a spirit of togetherness in the working environment, which could lead to municipal employees' group achievement that belongs to the entire municipal community.

According to Gade (2011), Letseka (2013) and (Nkondo 2007), African philosophies exist in both unrecorded and recorded forms. In recorded forms, African philosophy, Ubuntu in particular, has appeared in writing since 1846. However, the first systematic written exposition thereof was found in the 1950s in the novels of Jordan Kush Ngubane (Lodge 1999). Before 1980, Ubuntu as an African philosophy was most commonly described as "Human nature", "Humanity" or "Humanness" (Gade 2011). This confirms that Ubuntu expresses an integrated form of an African society, which is further described as an "excellent African quality" (Davis 1936). As a philosophy and a way of life, Ubuntu is associated with many African societies and certainly those in southern Africa (Nkondo 2007:89). Ngubane (1979:113) also sees it as "the philosophy which the African experience translates into action".

In view of the abovementioned, Khoza (2006:xx–xxi) confirms that Ubuntu has its origins in the African conception of being, meaning that all of humanity has a common background and *ipso facto* belongs together. Ubuntu creates unity and cohesion in research, which leads to coordinated learning and teaching activities related to risk assessment for the transformation and development of humankind. This implies that the individual is absorbed into the collective, yet retains an identity as an empirical being. It is argued in Khoza's (2006:xx–xxi) article that Ubuntu infers "I am because you are, and you are because we are". Thus, working as a family is a viable option for managing motivation in the workplace (Carr, MacLachlan, Kachedwa and Kanyangale 1997:906). Ubuntu is necessarily an approach that could assist in the central role of collaborative learning for risk management. For instance, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* [a person is a person because of others] is a common idiom that expresses humanity across African society. All these reflect a belief system of collectiveness and interdependence with others (Nkondo 2007:89–90).

Choane (2021) found that the Ubuntu approach is a relevant one when it comes to designing and implementing an effective method of teaching risk management skills in a municipality. This is because the applicability of the Ubuntu approach to working in a team in an organisation contributes to problem-solving skills. As indicated by Karsten and Illa (2005), Ubuntu is an approach that could lay a good foundation in management. McFarlin *et al.* (1999) write that African management philosophy can be summed up in one word, namely Ubuntu. That is what characterises Afrocentric leadership as collectivism, which constitutes a common bond and ensures a collective integrated community (Shonhiwa 2006:41). According to Nyerere (1968), all human beings are regarded as members of an extended family.

Ubuntu is an approach that promotes sharing in education and training, which affirms the importance of social connectedness, interdependence, communalism, sensitivity towards others and caring for others in the learning environment (Le Roux 2000). This article argues that by infusing Ubuntu philosophy into the education research process, common goals can be reached and capacity building takes a front seat. This could be accomplished by encouraging inclusivity and connectivity in learning activities and the accommodation of learners' prior experiential knowledge, which serves as a rich resource for the foundation of their self-identity (Cooper 2011:41). As noted by Khoza (1994), Ubuntu is an approach that expresses collectiveness instead of individualism. It follows that in risk management teaching and learning processes, the Ubuntu philosophy promotes unity and rejects isolation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section focuses on the principles of Ubuntu philosophy as an appropriate lens to demonstrate the aim of the study. These principles build on one another,

interconnect and overlap, and inform the type of education at the workplace that could be guided by Ubuntu and used to promote collaborative problem-solving for the enhancement of risk assessment. These Ubuntu objectives emphasise humanity in all aspects of teaching and learning processes, which shows connectedness or the integration of knowledge acquisition in risk management. As far as the Ubuntu approach is concerned, its principles, as identified below, embody the connectedness of human beings for the benefit of collective education on risk management at the workplace.

Solidarity is related to the Ubuntu philosophy

A broader perspective has been adopted by Mbigi and Maree (2005) and Dia (1996), who argue that Ubuntu is a philosophy that believes in group solidarity. This implies that working collectively as a team in an organisation increases the competence and self-esteem of officials for the survival of the African community. Consequently, African communities are strong and capable when working as collective human beings within an organisation. Community members in a municipality could survive deprivation and poverty through interdependence and interconnectedness. Solidarity is a cornerstone of the Ubuntu philosophy. Moreover, employing the Ubuntu approach in an African learning environment for assessment of risks can improve employees' skills and enhance their identification of risks in an organisation (Nkondo 2007; Jozwiak 2004).

Ubuntu inspires sharing with fellow human beings

As an indigenous cultural norm, Ubuntu entails a positive commitment and contribution towards a group of people and their relations with each other. The holistic description of Ubuntu involves the concepts of "humanity towards others", "I am because we are" and "a person becomes human through other persons". It also implies that a person can survive with the help of other people. As an approach, Ubuntu encourages a universal bond of sharing that connects all of humanity (Chimuka 2015). In essence, Ubuntu promotes fellow human beings who perpetuate learning together and share ideas for the development of and life changes in the community (Letseka 2012; Chachine 2008). As a result, in a learning environment, Ubuntu strengthens sharing and relationships to achieve set common learning goals (Quan-Baffour 2014).

Elements of the Ubuntu philosophy

Ubuntu as a philosophy portrays an African worldview of harmony, respect, caring and passion for fellow human beings, no matter where they come from.

Humans lead gregarious lives where they are in one way or another other dependent on or connected to others. This notion is affirmed in the view that one is a human being because of being with other human beings. Human life is defined in terms of one's relationship with others, hence the need to love, respect, cooperate and share with, and have compassion for others (Quan-Baffour 2014). Indeed, without others, one ceases to be human. Louw (2010) asserts that Ubuntu inspires people to expose themselves to others, encounter the difference in their humanness and inform and enrich their own.

According to Letseka (2000), Ubuntu promotes moral norms and values such as "altruism, kindness, generosity, compassion, benevolence, courtesy, and respect and concern for others". In other words, people living in communities that embrace Ubuntu treat others with a sense of *botho* or Ubuntu, justice and fairness (Letseka 2012:48). It means that by using a cooperative method of teaching and learning risk management skills, municipal officials could work in teams to share experiences and support one another (Quan-Baffour 2014:240).

Ubuntu cultivates teamwork

African societies are cohesive and productive in tradition, especially when working together as one family in their social grouping. The latter is confirmed by studies that have been conducted in Malawi and Tanzania, showing that among the most prominent values in African societies is the salience of the group (An Afro-centric Alliance 2001). This traditional collective action could be so strong that Africans may view success and failure in an organisation as caused by group spirits. For example, before accepting any reasonable offer, such as a promotion, an employee may seek out the ideas of other members of the group before deciding, and may even turn down the development altogether for fear of the social consequences thereof. Any successful opportunities or weaknesses are taken as a group achievement or failure that belongs to the entire community. For instance, in Eastern and Central Africa, the family remains and is likely to continue to be a centrepiece of collectivism. This is supported by Carr, MacLachlan, Kachedwa and Kanyangale (1997), who argue that working as a family is a viable option for managing motivation in the workplace.

Bangura (2005) posits the principle of Ubuntu as an approach to adult learning and teaching that is informed by humanity and the spirit of togetherness in the learning environment. In this regard, Choane (2021) has found Ubuntu to be an appropriate approach to teaching risk management at Xhariep District Municipality, as it intends to promote an integrated form of education that expresses humanity (Van der Walt 2010) and advocates collaboration in research (Murithi 2009; Muwanga-Zake 2009). The approach could also assist in the central role of the learning and teaching approach in the workplace (Waghid and Smeyers 2012).

RESEARCH METHODS

Previous research projects that the municipality undertook for training on risk management skills relied largely on mainstream positivist research methodologies characterised by an expert-researcher-driven research process (Otukile-Mongwaketse *et al.* 2016). As observed by Otukile-Mongwaketse *et al.* (2016), this approach to teaching risk management has not involved the staff in planning the skills development process. It is evident that such a professional research model restricts employees' input. Part of the problem that leads to the ineffectiveness of risk management skills is the teaching method used, which tends to be teacher-centred and ignores the Ubuntu principles of teamwork. This method is a traditional approach to teaching based on top-down dissemination of knowledge and does not encourage collaborative learning. In light of the above, PAR was selected as a methodology for the study. PAR was considered a crucial method for being able to accommodate the diversity of employee training at Xhariep District Municipality. The participatory nature and goal of PAR were central to this study because of its new ways of conceptualising and democratising the relationship between researcher and co-researcher (Netshandama and Mahlomaholo 2010:111; Kemmis 2006:473; McTaggart 1998).

A case study of Xhariep District Municipality was conducted, and data was gathered through discussion meetings, workshops and observations. Pseudonyms were used to present the responses from participants. A team of eight municipal officials and the researcher diagnosed the problem, which involves challenges surrounding the effective teaching of risk management skills at Xhariep District Municipality. In so doing, the researcher and co-researchers collaboratively took into account the principles of Ubuntu and both played a central role in decision-making, because PAR takes into account local actions to resolve social injustices. Designing a useful tool such as an Ubuntu philosophy for teaching risk management at Xhariep District Municipality, required a teaching and learning environment that was highly respectful to collectively generate lasting solutions to problems (Tetui *et al.* 2017:104).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: ABSENCE OF A COORDINATED, COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING TEAM TO ENHANCE RISK MANAGEMENT SKILLS

In this section, the discussion data derived from the Xhariep District Municipality in the Free State, South Africa, are presented. The results are interpreted through the lens of Ubuntu for employing a strategy to enhance risk management skills. This is done to understand the co-researchers from the viewpoint that human beings create relationships with other persons and that true identity is revealed through interaction in the community.

Theories of collaborative learning assert that, in its essence, a joint team promotes the sharing of resources to solve problems about risk assessment (Zou and Mickleborough 2015:148). It means that by using a suitable method of teaching and learning risk management skills, municipal officials could work in teams to share experiences and support one another (Quan-Baffour 2014:240).

The SAQA (SAQA 2012:9) attests that adequate training programmes in areas of skills development and financial management provide municipal officials with the ability to identify, assess and mitigate risks. Wicks and Reason (Qhosola 2016:137) observe that a team creates an environment (positive climate) of active, involved, exploratory learning through increased involvement in the community.

Contrary to the principles of good practice, the empirical data shows an absence of teamwork at Xhariep District Municipality. This became evident during the first discussion meeting when we created a coordinated team. One of the team members, Brains, made it clear in a statement that there was no coordinated team that could work together to achieve the common goals of the municipality. Brains said, "Before I attended this group discussion, I did not know that sharing my experience on mitigating factors towards risks with my colleagues is a rich resource".

The phrase "before I attended this group discussion" implies that before the coordinated team was formed, Brains felt isolated and denied the opportunity to share his experience with his co-workers. The phrase "I did not know that sharing is a rich resource" shows that the existing structures and those holding political power excluded the contribution of municipal officials to the mitigation of risks at the municipality. The implication is that Brains has been waiting for this kind of opportunity to share and find solutions to problems that are faced in the assessment of risks at Xhariep District Municipality. Brains' feeling of isolation and being denied the opportunity of sharing his ideas with his co-workers indicates ignorance and an inability to promote Ubuntu principles to share in improving risk management skills, and a disregard for the importance of working together and strengthening caring for others in the working environment (Le Roux 2000:43).

The absence of a coordinated team was also evident from the marking of attendance registers during the discussion meetings and workshop sessions.

Table 1 provides a summary of attendance that was recorded at workshop discussions and during the observation of risk assessment learning activities. The Table reflects the presence and absence of the co-researchers at the workshop meetings, showing the lack of support of the team. The Table illustrates that there was no support structure to encourage teamwork that could offer the co-researchers an opportunity to work as a collective and solve problems the organisation faces. Besides that, co-researchers were not aware of the collaborative learning approach to the assessment of risks at the municipality. However, the literature shows that a coordinated team creates a positive climate in a working environment and increases community involvement (Qhosola 2016:137).

Table 1: Attendance register of discussion meetings

Team members	15 Jun. 2018	22 Jun. 2018	29 Jun. 2018	3 Aug. 2018
Brains	✓	✓	X	✓
Atlanta	✓	X	✓	X
Ruth	✓	✓	X	X
Zara	✓	X	X	X
Mpendulo	✓	✓	✓	X
Ralph	✓	X	X	
Shembe	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sophia	✓	✓	X	✓
Siyamthanda	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vista	X	✓	✓	X
Key: ✓ = present and X = absent				

The absence of a coordinated team became more evident when I posed the following question to the group members: “Do you have sufficient resources like teamwork for the effective implementation of risk management skills at your municipality?” At the research site, Ruth demonstrated the non-availability of teamwork through the following verbal expression: “We are experiencing these group sessions for the first time at our municipality where we are working as a group and shar[ing] ideas towards mitigation of risks”.

In the extracts above, the phrase “the first time” clearly shows that the collaborative learning approach was a new concept to the municipal employees. It means that they did not have opportunities to share their experience and expertise in risk management training programmes before the intervention of this study. There is a clear need for employing Ubuntu as a useful tool for teaching risk management at Xhariep District Municipality (Mohokare Local Municipality 2019/2020:8). Through their verbal expressions, the municipal officials showed interest in working as a team, as is clear from the word “we”. In their view, working as a team would contribute to individual skills development and delivering services to the community. What is more, words such as “we” appear more than once, which shows the connection between the co-researchers and the researcher. This is consistent with Ubuntu objectives that emphasise humanity in all aspects of teaching and learning processes, including elements such as connectedness and the integration of knowledge acquisition. Lastly, the phrase “share

ideas” means that the employees wanted to share expertise and increase hope for the Xhariep community.

Because of the lack of a coordinated team at the research site, the municipal officials could not find an opportunity to reflect and learn from other team members. The co-researchers Brains and Vista confessed as much in the same workshop when expressing excitement about this study. I observed their interest through their expression when Brains said, “This is a new approach to us, and we believe this study is going to help us,” and Vista said, “[The] municipality should be advised on [acting] hand in glove with the communities”.

The phrase “we believe this study will help us” indicates that before the start of the study, there were limited structures that could offer assistance to the co-researchers to improve their lives and achieve the objectives of the organisation. The coordinated team, therefore, gave them a platform to share their experience with community members and with me.

The participants Brains and Vista indicated the municipal employees’ deprivation of empowerment as individuals, and this perpetuated their economic situation, which contributed to poverty, deprivation and inequalities in the communities of Xhariep. The results show that people living in communities embrace Ubuntu principles by committing to treating others with a sense of humanity, justice and fairness (Letseka 2012; 2000).

In the same discussion and observation meeting, Ruth demonstrated the absence of a coordinated team by expressing her view as follows: “I used to attend a workshop offered by COGTA, and the timeframe for training looks enough to deliberate on issues of municipalities, but this approach of learning together is new to us”. Here, the phrase “I used to attend workshops” implies individual versus group risk management teaching and learning programmes before the study was conducted. It means unequal opportunities and limited efforts to unify employees as one community in programmes that train risk management skills.

The use of “I” and “we” or “us” in this observation in the workshop discussions provides the opportunity to acknowledge that there are discursive practices that affect effective teaching of risk assessment at Xhariep District Municipality. These findings point to social ills influenced by power relations in social structures such as local municipalities. The inability to work as a team when solving issues at the local level is seen and needs to be addressed if one believes in the emancipation agenda using the Ubuntu approach.

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation is that there is a need for a coordinated team using an Ubuntu approach to teach risk management at a municipality. The responsibility

of the team should involve planning and monitoring municipal projects and finances towards sustainability. The team should recognise community members' background experience when planning projects and contributing to knowledge-building and practical strategies to assess risks.

A collaborative problem-solving team is recommended as an empowering, critical and reflexive tool for teaching risk management skills and thinking about the diversity of experiences in the identification and assessment of risks at a municipality. Placing the team front and centre in the adult teaching and learning environment will help the municipality and its officials mitigate risk factors.

CONCLUSION

A coordinated team led by the spirit and values of Ubuntu would also enhance confidence and job satisfaction, which could contribute positively towards better service delivery and improvement of the lives of municipality employees and the people they serve. The ability to empower one another in teamwork aimed at successful implementation could mitigate risks at the organisation.

NOTE

- * This article is partly based on a doctoral thesis that was completed under the supervision of Prof Sechaba Mahlomaholo at the University of the Free State. M.P. Choane 2021. *Enhancing risk management skills at a municipality using an adult education approach*. Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education Studies. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State.

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Challenges and Successes of the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System

The Role of the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in the Presidency

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ABSTRACT

Performance monitoring and evaluation is one of the core drivers and policy imperatives in South Africa, with an increasing acceptance of the need to improve governance, accountability, and continuous transformation in the public service. The government-wide monitoring and evaluation system (GWMES) was approved and adopted by the South African government in 2005 as a mechanism to ensure the systematic collection and use of performance information to evaluate government performance through programmes.

The article aims to investigate the extent to which the GWMES has been institutionalised in the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), the milestones, challenges, successes, current practices and sustainability of the system in the DPME in the Presidency. The article entails the following thematic areas: the development of performance monitoring in government; contextualising the progress, practice and development of monitoring and evaluation in South Africa; the GWMES and the role of the DPME in terms of the institutionalisation of a monitoring and evaluation system in government; the successes and challenges as they apply to various settings and perspectives within the South African context. The article utilised unobtrusive research methods (conceptual and systematic documentary analysis) for the exploration of legislation, official documents

and reports to conceptualise monitoring and evaluation in South Africa. Findings confirm strides that have been made and the conducive environment with enhanced capacities, skills development and legislation that has been created for the system. This is with an acknowledgement of the complexities and the elaborate nature of the institutional arrangements and intergovernmental relations for monitoring and evaluation, which continue to constrain the delivery environment.

INTRODUCTION

The formation of the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, now called the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in the Presidency, aimed to coordinate a systemic programme of policy performance monitoring and evaluation across government through the government-wide monitoring and evaluation policy framework. Key enablers to this mandate have been the development trajectory set by the National Development Plan (NDP) and the subsequent outcome-based approach, which provided for the alignment of the delivery agreements of ministers with the departmental strategic plans to improve coordination within and among departments. This has placed the department at the centre of government to institutionalise the GWMES through its policy framework, to improve the quality of service delivery, measure results and foster accountability and evidence-based decision-making.

The state's capability has also been tried and tested on its ability to maintain the constitutional order of democracy and the rule of law. What is missing and noted in the value chain, according to the 15-year review, is the absence of a comprehensive system of government accountability and medium-term planning supported by a system for monitoring performance and service delivery (Presidency 2008:115).

Given that the necessary conditions and enabling policy environment for monitoring and evaluation are in place, an understanding of whether the development initiatives are impacting the quality of service delivery requires a credible, honest and systematic assessment and evaluation of selected interventions to make an informed conclusion.

The article first highlights the development and progress of performance monitoring in the South African government. The next section focuses on the context, development and practice of monitoring and evaluation in South Africa. It then focuses on the context and process of the GWMES including the development and governance of the GWMES, the key defining features of the GWMES and

the institutional set-up for the planning, monitoring and evaluation value chain in South Africa. The article then proceeds to the role of the DPME concerning the implementation of the GWMES. This section is followed by a discussion of the responses to the GWME framework about the success factors and challenges.

DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS OF PERFORMANCE MONITORING IN GOVERNMENT

Within the context of a developmental state, the democratically elected South African government has a core mandate of pursuing the socio-economic transformation of society as a high-priority agenda (Khotso 2016 in Masombuka 2018). According to Netshitenzhe (2014 in Masombuka 2023), this is a prerequisite to remain relevant, adequately deal with social challenges, and ultimately protect the hard-earned democracy. This commitment is explicitly justified in Chapter Two of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996, which affirms the progressive realisation of socio-economic rights within available resources and reasonable measures that must be put in place by the state.

As the first reflection after the 1994 transition, the 10-year review makes a fair analysis of the need for an encompassing framework for integrated activities and improving the performance of the state (Presidency 2003:103–107). This aspiration is premised on policy coordination and implementation across the three spheres of government to ensure the realisation of national development objectives. According to Ile, Eresia-Eke and Ile (2012:12), the need for improved policy monitoring and evaluation was premised on the desire to do more while optimising resources, given the demand to provide equitable quality services for all. The 15-year review acknowledges progress in transforming institutions and developing policies to align and integrate with the challenging global environment (Presidency 2008). Given the current challenges and opportunities brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, these policies might require further adaptation to be relevant to the current environment.

According to the Presidency (2008:115), this reflection led to the proposal for a thematic strategy to focus on growth and transforming the economy, fighting poverty, building social cohesion and state legitimacy, international cooperation, and building a developmental state in response to the identified shortcomings. Part of building this developmental state included focusing on the medium- and long-term planning capacity; strengthening systems of coordination, planning, monitoring and evaluation; and finally improving capacity to implement monitoring and evaluation systems across government (Presidency 2008:123–124). This policy direction aligns with some of the key factors and preconditions for a developmental state, which includes strategic orientation, coordination of systems,

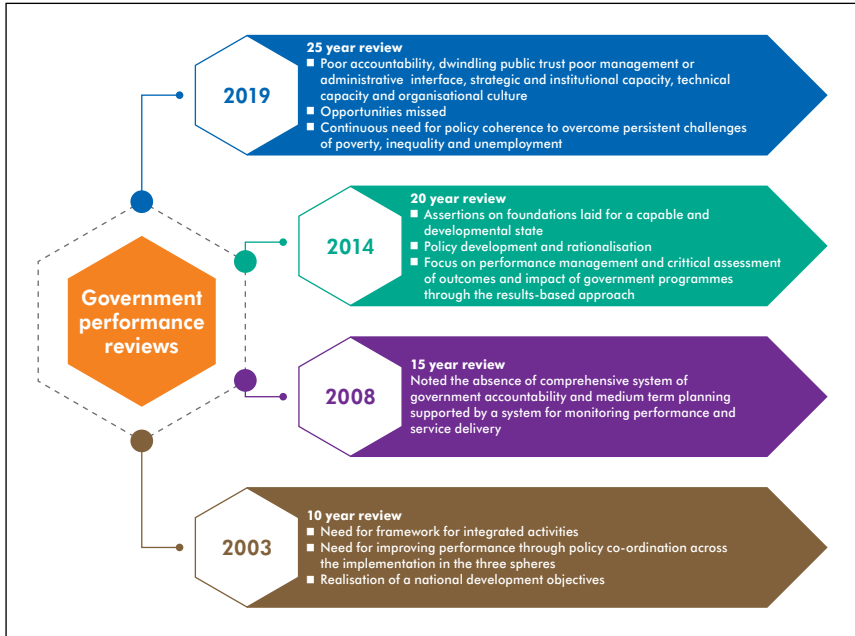
investing in a technical capacity to deliver and balancing the relationship between democracy and development in investing in economic development policies, as advanced by Khotso (2016 in Masombuka 2023) and Mulaudzi (2020:152). The above trajectory indicates consistent commitment and momentum towards improving the quality of service delivery. However, typical indicators of such improvements and success are yet to find expression in terms of measurement.

Embracing the concept of a developmental state has been firmly reflected in almost all policy development and the trajectory of government since 2009, as reflected by Pampallis (2014:107). Key to the 20-year review was the assertions on foundations laid for a capable and developmental state, notwithstanding weaknesses in how some state structures continue to function. Mouton (2010:97) and Gumede (2017:7) also affirm the foundations laid during the first term of President Nelson Mandela on the development of policy and rationalisation, piloting new programmes to be implemented by President Thabo Mbeki's administration. The focus on performance management and critical assessment of outcomes and the impact of government programmes through the results-based approach became the hallmark of President Jacob Zuma's administration. Both Netshitenzhe (2014 in Masombuka 2023) and Gumede (2017:10) allude to the prominence of improving government performance through the adoption of the NDP by the Cabinet and Parliament in 2012 as a development trajectory for the country. The formalisation of monitoring and evaluation capacity and performance agreements to improve accountability throughout the three spheres of government became a seal of the political will. According to Ngcwaweni (2014:31–32), this has been a beacon of hope, supported by society and a hallmark of the centenary celebrations of the ANC in 2012 and the ultimate adoption of the NDP.

Affirmation was further given by Minister Collins Chabane (2012 in Masombuka 2023), addressing secretaries of association of the legislative sector of South Africa that "When this administration came into office last year, we undertook to work harder to build a strong developmental state... We said it would be a state that responds to the needs and aspirations of the people, and which performs better and faster... We are building a performance-oriented state, by improving planning as well as performance monitoring and evaluation...". A linear and consistent development in improving the performance of the government can be observed from the above reviews. This also suggests that necessary preconditions such as strategic orientation, coordination, programmatic articulation and institutional mechanisms have been put in place for implementation and accountability according to the imperatives of the NDP (Presidency 2014 in Masombuka 2023).

A jubilee into democracy brought to the fore important milestones and achievements made by South Africa as a young democracy with emphasis on the continuous need for policy coherence to overcome persistent challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment (DPME 2019:6). Despite the challenges,

Figure 1: Trends in government performance reviews



Source: (Researcher’s own compilation based on 4 Presidency review reports – 2003, 2008, 2014 and 2019)

the noted trends from the above reviews continue to suggest a consistent political will and support for the importance of accountability, performance monitoring and evaluation, as summarised in Figure 1.

Worth noting in the reflections is the acknowledgement of gaps and areas of improvement, which provides an opportune environment to self-correct. Contrary to the previous trend and reviews, the agility, capability and responsiveness of the state to socio-economic challenges, among others, has been questionable in the 25-year review of government performance. Although the trend continues to embody a linear progression of policy direction for performance monitoring and evaluation, the punctuation by changes in political leadership and corruption have somehow impacted the impetus for accountability (Masombuka 2023).

The review further alludes to opportunities missed and identified maintenance of accountability, dwindling public trust and poor management of administrative interface, strategic and institutional capacity, technical capacity, and organisational culture as persistent challenges for attention in realising the objectives of a developmental state (DPME 2019:195–197). The above elements were further laid bare by the Covid-19 pandemic, which not only affected livelihoods and exposed inequalities but also brought to the fore some of the weaknesses in the

governance and accountability system that were manifested by corruption. On a positive note, the pandemic also ushered in an opportunity for the acceleration of the digitisation of the environment, which calls for the transformation and review of current policies. The ability to successfully confront the Covid-19 pandemic also presented an opportunity for South Africa to accelerate the implementation of some long outstanding structural reforms to transform the economy and opportunities that contribute to strengthening governance and accountability that is technologically enabled and responsive.

Dassah and Uken (2006:711) acknowledge that preconditions to foster accountability, transparency, performance monitoring and evaluation did not exist after 1994. However, these reviews assume that necessary conditions to optimise accountability, monitoring and evaluation systems have been created through the various policy reforms, and thus, positive results are inevitable. The reviews also assume that an organisational set-up with programmatic articulation and institutional mechanisms for implementation, has been enabled through various transformation measures discussed above; hence, reference is made to missed opportunities and persistent challenges that continue to impede progress.

The above government performance reviews further suggest that the results are not as expected and that public confidence and trust in government continue to decline as the quality of services further deteriorates. Patronage network corruption is emerging as another chronic disease with a negative influence that works against this desired capable and developmental state. While acknowledgement of the shortcomings is regarded as a positive move towards taking responsibility in leadership and accountability to the public, consequence management remains weak, if not enforced at all. Given this context, adequate investment in skills and resources remains imperative in sustaining any system for improvement, and noting the technical nature of monitoring and evaluation, it becomes inevitable for continuous development of processes that translate into an accountable yet effective, efficient and improved means of working.

CONTEXTUALISING THE DEVELOPMENT AND PRACTICE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The quest to sustain public sector reforms demands sustained and deliberate coordination interventions to foster compliance with and accountability for the implementation of development policies. According to Goldman (2017:6) and Engela and Ajam (2010:20), 1994–2005 was characterised by the disintegrated and sporadic application of monitoring and evaluation systems and functions in government. This placed little or poor accountability and coordination of efforts towards the provision of quality basic services, and this necessitated an integrated,

comprehensive system of accountability and results-based monitoring that would put South Africa on par with other developing countries and compliance with international standards. Ile, Eresia-Eke and Ile (2012:23) note that policy-making and monitoring thereof was mainly informed by the quest to improve quality and benchmarking contributed to a better perspective on South Africa by comparison and setting above-average standards of improvement. Linked to accountability and sound governance is the economical use of resources in compliance with prescriptive management systems.

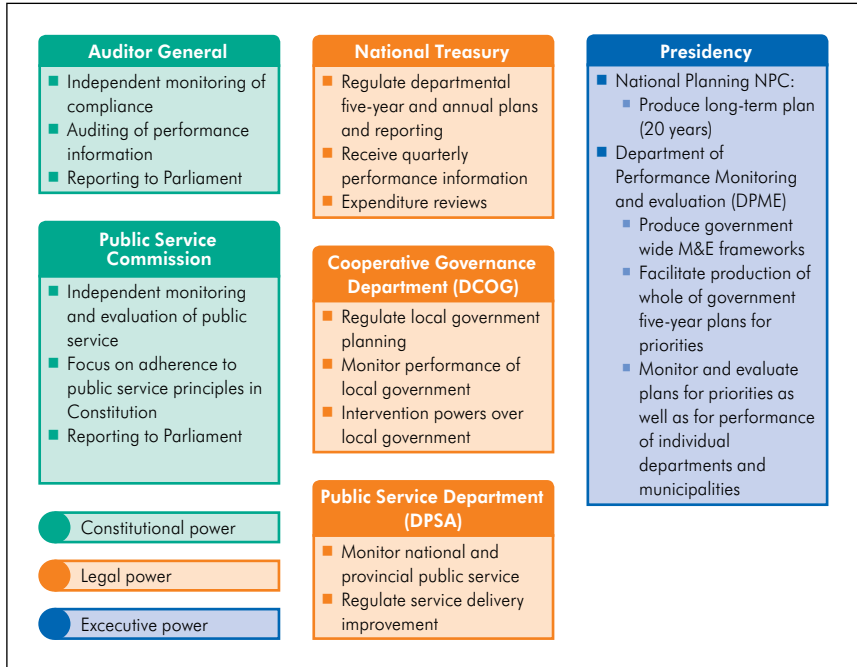
According to Goldman, Philips, Engela, Akhalwaya, Gasa, Leon, Mohamed and Mketi (2014:352), the two main reform approaches that supported this process encompassed “*a strong public expenditure reform*”, spearheaded by the National Treasury through the Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999, regulating financial management across the three spheres of government. Further to this was the development of the departmental strategic and annual plans for accountability on the commitments. Although the plans are approved by Parliament as the highest oversight body and audited by a legislated institution such as the Auditor General, departments continue to falter in realising their respective plans without any punitive measures.

The second approach is the organisational development by the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) through the White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service (1995) that focused on performance management systems, knowledge management, continuous learning and the subsequent introduction of monitoring and evaluation. In strengthening intergovernmental relations, the role of leadership in institutionalising monitoring and evaluation as a strategic management function remains crucial throughout the three spheres of government. Clear roles, responsibilities and adequate investment for resources is another prerequisite to comply with principles and values governing public administration, monitoring and evaluation (Public Service Commission (PSC) 2008 in Masombuka 2023).

The semi-federal system adopted by the South African government on the separation of powers (three spheres of government) had implications for governance and the capacity to deliver basic services. While acknowledging the autonomy of each sphere of government, a common approach for planning, monitoring and evaluation systems meant complexities for local government, provincial and national governments, especially for shared or concurrent responsibilities, as postulated by Goldman (2017:4) and Ijeoma (2018 in Masombuka 2023).

The link between monitoring and evaluation necessitates a credible system supported by relevant frameworks to measure government performance, thus the GWMES and its related framework. With monitoring and evaluation as a multidisciplinary and skills-intensive portfolio, it further complicated the environment and the intergovernmental structure with delicate powers and functions to implement.

Figure 2: Key role-players and mandates



Source: ((Adapted from Goldman *et al.* (2012:2) and Philips *et al.* (2014:394))

Supported by either the legal and/or the constitutional mandate, the following institutions, as depicted in Figure 2, are key role-players in the monitoring and evaluation space with their respective mandates, as submitted by Goldman *et al.* (2012:2) and Philips *et al.* (2014:394).

Linked to the mandates is a further depiction of the main stakeholders and their sources of authority/power in the practice of monitoring and evaluation in South Africa, namely, the Auditor-General, PSC, Department of Cooperative Governance, DPSA and the DPME in the Presidency. The Auditor-General and the PSC are Chapter 9 institutions with constitutional power reporting directly to Parliament on public performance. The National Treasury, Cooperative Governance and the Public Service and Administration departments are regarded as government centres with legal power to regulate the entire public service. These institutions perform their respective duties by regulating, monitoring and reviewing relevant sectors and have legal powers to impose sanctions aligned with enabling legislation according to the respective mandate. The Presidency, with the DPME as a supporting institution, has executive power over other institutions through the planning, reporting, monitoring and evaluation of the entire government’s performance.

A deduction from the above display of mandates and sources of authority suggests that the DPME does not have constitutional or legal power but has executive power over other institutions. This has implications for the DPME given its role in supporting the President and the need to enforce sanctions on those institutions that do not comply with the management prescripts in terms of performance planning, reporting, monitoring and evaluation.

The practice of monitoring and evaluation in South Africa

According to Plangemann (2016:71–73), performance monitoring and evaluation should be seen as an integrated, comprehensive and results-oriented system. It is based on a combination of management tools and incentives to enhance service delivery, fiscal management, government focus and capacity to achieve overall government outcomes through a sequenced approach. Lopez-Acevedo, Krause and Mackay (2012:13–23) further note that such systems are usually designed and implemented in response to a diagnostic study. The authors further submit that implementation can be challenging, requiring strong leadership, sustainability and continuity beyond a change in government administration and political leadership. According to Rabie and Goldman (2014:4), the importance of performance monitoring and evaluation is well articulated because “if you do not measure results, you cannot tell success from failure; if you cannot see success, you cannot reward it; and if you cannot reward success you are probably rewarding failure”. The authors further agree that “if you cannot see success, you cannot learn from it; and if you cannot recognise failure, you also cannot correct it”. Public trust and support can be won through results, and it is only when results can be demonstrated that government institutions can win public trust and support.

Various international influences penetrated developing countries, including South Africa, through donor communities and solidarity funding. According to Dassah and Uken (2006:708) and Malesela (2016:55), this traction came with the demand for sound accountability mechanisms with programme monitoring and evaluation as one of the key elements. Drawing from the contextualisation above, it can be argued that a reasonable pattern of accountability is emerging and a fertile ground for improvement has been paved. This is further supported by a bold commitment from the Presidency (2009:3) in the outcomes approach that “Government must be more effective in its actions and the quality of its services” by addressing the “need to serve than to steer” (Naidoo & Thani 2011:5), through influencing the spheres of control in ensuring better outcomes and impact of programmes and interventions.

There is also a consensus that although monitoring and evaluation is advancing in political recognition and support in the public sector, “its ability to influence the efficacy of policies, projects, programmes and interventions remains

unclear” (Goldman, Olaleye, Ntakumba, Makgaba & Waller 2021:55). This is a further affirmation of some of the issues submitted by Phillips *et al.* (2014:404), which includes sustainability and simplifying the system for its effective use to inform decision-making and policy reviews based on performance results. This can only be enabled by leadership and supporting institutional arrangements that enhance the demand for and use of monitoring and evaluation results, which is the main intention of the GWMES. This further suggests that evidence and results are only useful when they can influence and inform the decision-making process. This will indeed strengthen various government interventions and initiatives by reinforcing emphasis on demonstrable outcomes and impact over time.

Given the complexity of monitoring and evaluation as a discipline and a system to implement, Dassah and Uken (2006:709) and Cloete (2009:307) acknowledge that countries are still experimenting and adapting to what works and does not work for a comprehensive, customised and functional monitoring and evaluation system. An emerging consensus noted by the authors is the coordination framework for monitoring and evaluation activities provided by the GWMES and a key requirement for good governance. This is supported in South Africa by established national systems that are standardised and institutionalised for accountability purposes, such as dedicated champions for monitoring and evaluation supported by Ministries, the National Strategic and Annual Performance Plans and Monitoring and Evaluation Systems and the GWMES.

Cultural barriers also provide challenges to monitoring and evaluation, such as turnover in leadership creates instability and inhibits learning (Goldman *et al.* 2021:54). Systemic challenges include limited technical capacity within the public service, disintegrated systems wherein monitoring and evaluation are separated from planning and budgeting, resulting in the duplication of reporting requirements and fatigue. Concerning the evaluation and the absence of a system to follow-up on the improvement plans, Goldman *et al.* (2018:10) seek the involvement and intervention of Parliament in holding respective departments accountable for implementing their respective improvement plans and reporting on the progress thereof. South Africa also remains weak in the involvement of civil society in holding the government accountable for its electoral mandate and performance monitoring (Goldman *et al.* 69:2021).

Looking at the strengths and challenges (Goldman *et al.* 2021:67–68), it seems as if South Africa emerges to be progressive about leadership, culture and systems, although the focus is required on the technical capacity for evaluations and improvement in the system interface (planning, monitoring, evaluation). The diverse nature of the systems and coordination is another strain on the government with the burden and dependency on the agencies. The DPME coordinates performance monitoring reports on priority outcomes, while quarterly performance and

financial monitoring are reported to the National Treasury. These multiple reporting lines put a strain on the line functions departments with duplicate reporting and frustration that reinforces compliance rather than learning and improvement (Porter & Goldman 2013:5).

Monitoring and evaluation remains a guiding tool in deciding against a variety of competing priorities and the most appropriate strategies and approaches to employ. While monitoring tracks progress against pronounced government priorities, evaluation determines the relevance of an intervention, fulfilment of the policy imperatives and ultimately a justification on the value for money (Masombuka 2023). This means that, for the purpose of this article, monitoring and evaluation continue to be two distinct but interrelated management functions with complementary roles in informing decision-making.

THE GOVERNMENT-WIDE MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

The political environment continues to influence the appetite and obligation to measure performance and to account for the broader society. The demand and ownership in building a result-based monitoring and evaluation system is the basic requirement for the success of any monitoring and evaluation system, especially for developing countries (Kuzek & Rist 2004:32) for cooperation and coordination. The key drivers anchoring the effectiveness of such a system are the incentives towards compliance with institutions such as the Auditor General in auditing the accuracy and reliability of reporting against plans (Phillips, Goldman, Gasa, Akhalwaya & Leon 2014:403).

The GWMES, according to the Presidency (2007:12–15), is regarded as a primary management system and a policy framework that seeks to institutionalise performance management embedded within the public service that is well defined and compatible with other existing management systems. This is envisioned by promoting the practice of monitoring and evaluation, building institutional capacity, clarifying institutional roles and responsibilities, and integrating monitoring and evaluation into the management function. Common features of an effective and functional GWMES include a high level of central governance and coordination; monitoring and evaluation results; and using information to inform planning, budget and policy reforms (Lopez-Acevedo, Krause & Mackay 2012:24–25). While the national evaluation forms part of the key components of the GWMES, the focus has been on building institutional capacity for monitoring with the gradual introduction of evaluation at a later stage. With the DPME as the custodian of the GWMES, it becomes a central point of coordination and an allowing environment for implementing the framework.

Development and governance of the GWMES

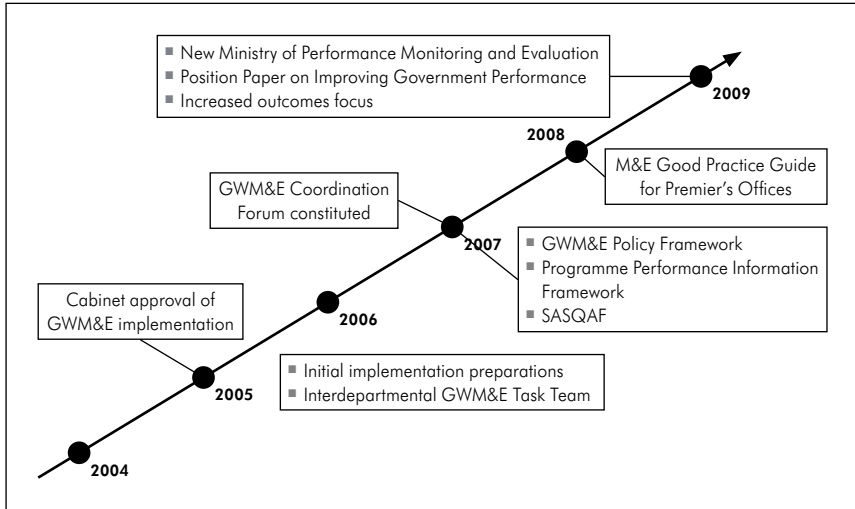
Attempts to give traction to the GWMES date back to 1990 and the subsequent renewal of the effort in 2004, wherein the ANC's Manifesto identified monitoring and evaluation as a government priority to pursue (Masuku & Ijeoma 2015:11). These attempts show the progressive development of the GWMES that is characterised by events and scenarios marking the maturing of democracy while trying to improve accountability and keep up with the inheritance of a fragmented country. The operationalisation of the commitments made in the Mbeki administration through social compacting and evidence-based information to translate resources into tangible socio-economic outcomes has been evident in the initial discussions led by the DPSA in 2005 on the development of the GWMES.

The adoption of the GWMES by Cabinet in 2005 resulted from coordinating a systematic programme for policy monitoring and evaluation across government, that is, local, provincial and national. This was a response to fragmented systems and an attempt to a more coherent, comprehensive and integrated approach to monitoring and evaluation (Masuku & Ijeoma 2015:6). The GWMES in South Africa is said to be motivated by the following factors, as indicated by Cloete (2009:298), among others:

- Requirements for regular reporting to the United Nations Millennium Goals Initiative on the eradication of poverty.
- The need to assess sustainable development through a monitoring and evaluation system that had been nonexistent, and South Africa being the host for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.
- The requirement by donors for an accountable monitoring and evaluation system for project reporting and the value for investment.
- Compliance with international good governance practice.

Further impetus emanated from the subsequent transfer of the function from the DPSA to the Policy Coordination and Advisory Services (PCAS) in the Presidency in 2007, which was the turning point in the Mbeki administration for the institutionalisation of monitoring and evaluation. The relay was also noted in the Zuma administration, and the greatest growth was the creation of the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Ministry in 2009 and the establishment of the National Planning Commission (NPC) in 2010 (Mouton 2010:182). The NPC ushered in long-term planning for government with an emphasis on the improved implementation of government programmes (Gumede 2017:5). The conceptualisation and proclaiming of the DPME was "to drive the function of performance monitoring and evaluation across national, provincial and local government" (Ile, Eresia-Eke & Ile 2012:12) to improve service delivery (Plangemann 2016:71).

Figure 3: Development trajectory of the GWMES



Source: ((Adapted from Angela and Ajam (2010:6) and Dlamini and Migiro (2016: 379))

The delivery agreements became a yardstick for accountability at the coalface of service delivery and policy level between the three spheres of government through various coordinating committees with a greater focus on public sector performance. The elevation of accountability is further attested by Netshitenzhe (2014 in Masombuka 2023) and Mouton (2010:182) on the coherence in policy development and coordination through monitoring and evaluation capacity. This is further expressed in the delivery requirements set out in performance agreements from the President to respective Ministers, including the Members of Executive Councils in Provinces.

A further commitment was propelled by the outcome-based approach aimed at improving government performance, improving results and having a positive impact on the lives of people, which informed the policy document on *Improving Government Performance: Our Approach* (2009):7). Figure 3 summarises the milestones and development trajectory of the GWMES from 2004 to 2009.

According to the above trend necessary institutional arrangements and provisions were made to enable the implementation of the system with the policy framework, the constitution of the coordinating forum and the practice guide for the provinces. According to Ile *et al.* (2012:93), the monitoring and evaluation framework in 2007 became an important aspect of building a good system for planning in developmental work and was first published on performance information management (Tshatsinde 2015 in Masombuka 2023). The authors (Tshatsinde 2015 in Masombuka 2023) further submit that such a system should also have

a descriptive outline of processes and the performance component. Such provision is explicitly stated in the framework within the policy context for supporting the governance frameworks in South Africa with a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities. Much as there are systems that already exist, there is also an acknowledgement of some gaps in completing the value chain of policy review and understanding the success of such policies.

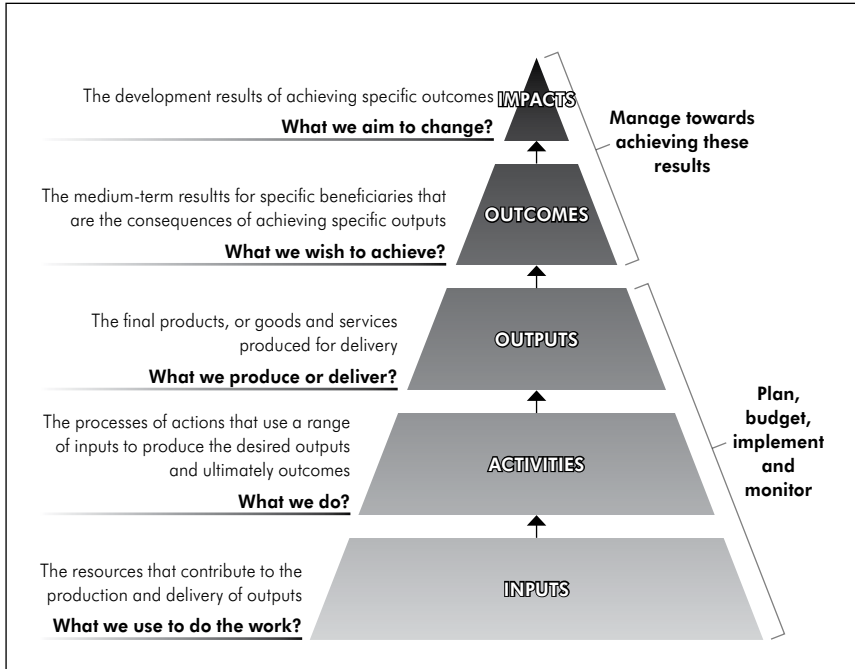
The framework seeks to enhance systems into a structured and coordinated approach to implementation. It provides a basis for the measurement and realisation of outputs, outcomes and their impact. This provision is made by grouping the main three components of the system, also referred to as data terrains, each with its own framework, namely, “programme performance information; social, economic and demographic statistics; and evaluation” (Presidency 2007:7). A critical assessment from Cloete (2009:307), however, is that the system, although emerging from complex attributes, is operating incomprehensibly without a formal hierarchical structure. The argument on the line of authority that is not clearly defined among the stakeholders, with the potential for the duplication of functions and turf battles among those that are regarded as the centre of government and line departments, may not be entirely factual and thus is not supported.

Key defining features of the GWMES

The programme logic model depicted in Figure 4 assists in identifying fundamentals that require attention and “within the context in which the policy is taking place” (Auriacombe 2011:43) and, in this regard, the GWMES. The trademark of this system is that the planning process should also generate milestones against which progress is gauged, and this is one of the defining interfaces between planning, monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation systems in this context refer to processes, structures, policies, strategies and accountability relations in government (Engela & Ajam 2010:29). The system should be supported by enabling conditions, capacity and organisational culture for the monitoring and evaluation function to influence planning and decision-making for service delivery improvement. This emphasis is illustrated in the National Treasury’s Framework for Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans (National Treasury 2010 in Masombuka 2023).

While there is acknowledgement of the challenges and milestones in entrenching the monitoring and evaluation system that is customised to each country, South Africa emerges to be more progressive in terms of pace and time (Dassah & Uken 2006:718). The establishment of forums and governance structures, monitoring and evaluation units in departments, and guidelines for monitoring and evaluation for national and provincial departments, continues to be a foundation and support system in entrenching the culture of result-based monitoring

Figure 4: Results based on managing performance



Source: (Adapted from the PSC 2008 in Masombuka 2023 and Auriacombe 2011:43)

and evaluation. Measuring objects that have been clearly defined and indicators formulated according to the result-based pyramid suggests that the outputs of government interventions should indeed contribute to improving service delivery and enhancing accountability; however, experiences on the ground suggest otherwise. The current trends in corruption and the dwindling public trust in government and its institutions also suggest otherwise. Continuous capacitation in the form of technical skills, resources and enabling infrastructure, requires optimisation, and coupled with consequence management for noncompliance on the use of public funds against the approved allocations, remains an area of concern.

Institutional setup for the planning, monitoring and evaluation value chain in South Africa

The Presidency through the executive authority, remains the champion of the GWMES and DPME in its proclaimed role of strengthening linkages between planning, monitoring and evaluation functions, playing a key coordinating role in ensuring that the system is entrenched and institutionalised in departments.

A plethora of scenarios is suggested by various scholars on typical elements that could either enable the institutionalisation of monitoring and evaluation or assist in understanding the extent to which monitoring and evaluation has been institutionalised. According to de Coning and Rabie (2014 in Masombuka 2023), monitoring and evaluation must spread across the organisation and should be supported by an institutional readiness assessment to roll out the function. Creating a favourable environment for institutionalisation is when the organisation is developing, the organisational culture is sustained, capacities are developed, and policies and values are embedded into the organisation for the monitoring and evaluation practice to emerge.

Kimaro, Fourie and Tshiyoyo (2018:209–216) suggest that political will, creating demand and ownership of the monitoring and evaluation system, is one of the enabling environments for the institutionalisation of the system. They further posit that this should be supported by a dedicated budget for implementation and building capacity, clear roles and responsibilities, together with sanctions and incentives attached to the use of the monitoring and evaluation system. Mtshali (2014:70), on the other hand, suggests governance, structural arrangements, value systems, human resources, training and professional support as key guiding elements to institutionalising monitoring and evaluation systems at a departmental level.

The policy framework for the GWMES (Presidency 2007:19–21) provides the following guiding principles intended to facilitate institutionalisation:

- The implementation plan should integrate and build upon existing sector reform initiatives to maximise resources and improvements.
- The policy framework should strive to consolidate, incorporate and align monitoring and evaluation initiatives towards improving overall government performance.
- A customised and sector-specific approach across government with delineated roles and responsibilities for the optimal use of resources.
- Minimising the administrative burden of compliance with clear reporting lines and designated data sources across sectors and different spheres of government. System integration and ease of data exchange should be emphasised in monitoring and evaluation systems that are IT-based and enabled.
- Preconditions for conducting evaluations should be enabled by enforcing credible monitoring and statistical standards.
- Periodic reviews of the GWME policy framework implementation to adjust and adapt the system as the environment evolves.

The above principles provide a framework for assessing the extent to which the GWMES has been institutionalised, notwithstanding the variation, complexities and baselines in the implementation environments of different sectors. Table 1 consists of a checklist of features that could be used to assess each performance

management element for the institutionalisation of monitoring and evaluation (Kimaro, Fourie & Tshiyoyo 2018:210). These include: a) defining measurement object; b) formulation of indicators; c) data collection and analysis; d) reporting; and e) use of monitoring and evaluation information.

Table 1: A checklist of institutionalised monitoring and evaluation features

	Element	Monitoring and evaluation checklist
a	Defining measurement object	Strategic/business plans informed by monitoring and evaluation information
		Annual plans cascaded from the main plan
		Institutional structure(s) for facilitating monitoring and evaluation functioning
b	Formulation of indicators (or monitoring and evaluation system)	Monitoring and evaluation systems/framework linked with institutional plans
		Indicators measuring various levels of implementation
		Budget to support monitoring and evaluation activities
		Monitoring and evaluation policies, tools, procedures in place
c	Data collection and analysis	Monitoring and evaluation plan setting out data collection mechanism
		Monitoring data collected on periodic basis
		Evaluations conducted by the local government
		Available IT infrastructure to support monitoring and evaluation data analysis
d	Reporting	Performance reports generated from the monitoring and evaluation system
		Performance information produced widely shared with internal and external stakeholders
e	Use of monitoring and evaluation information	Structural arrangements/regulations to enforce use of performance information in place
		Sanctions and rewards decisions taken against performance
		Decision-making processes (planning, budgeting, implementation approaches) and meetings informed by monitoring and evaluation information, eg, performance indicators and reports
		Strategic plans reviewed based on performance information

Source: (Adapted from Kimaro, Fourie and Tshiyoyo (2018:210))

Looking at the system as a credible means of accountability, the GWMES becomes a critical set of components for assessment. Based on the above elements and related checklist, the literature that has been reviewed thus far suggests a level of compliance on the first four elements with some of the indicators. The exception is the use of monitoring and evaluation information, which has not been optimal, suggesting a dedicated focus, especially on enforcement, sanctions and rewards against performance.

THE ROLE OF THE DPME CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GWMES

Section 85(2) of the Constitution provides for the legislative mandate of the DPME through the executive authority by the President. The basis for the DPME was to drive the government priority outcomes and monitor the delivery of the associated plans. This meant that for the DPME, the design of systems and interventions needed a strong technical base and also to be politically feasible with a cutting edge and government-wide footprint (Plangemann 2016:74). Such an organisational design demanded sound technical capacity and expertise on monitoring and evaluation backed by international exposure. This led to the setting up of the capacity building unit within the DPME together with the monitoring and evaluation community of practice premised on the people-centred approach (Ile, Eresia-Eke & Ile 2012:67). The technical support from a variety of stakeholders, including local and international stakeholders, academia, the private sector and research institutions, influenced the design and shape of the DPME as the champion of the monitoring and evaluation system for the country (Plangemann 2016:77). The subsequent cabinet approvals for various initiatives, support and leadership provided by the President, the Minister and the DPME management enabled initial engagements and appetite with departments on prototyping, piloting and upscaling, as reflected by Philips *et al.* (2014:400) on the lessons learned. The establishment of the DPME is seen to be operating beyond facilitating planning, monitoring and evaluation but also to be enhancing good governance (Malesela 2016:71) in the public service.

The role and mandate of the DPME has evolved over the past 10 years to adapt and maintain its relevance to changes in the organisational environment. The 2012 strategic document (DPME 2012:5) outlined the mandates for the DPME on performance monitoring and evaluation, and the key to that was the Programme of Action (POA). In contrast, progress on the identified national priorities was reported on (Plangemann 2016:74). The promotion of good monitoring and evaluation practices is further expressed through the coordination and support of an integrated government-wide performance monitoring and evaluation system by

creating a policy platform and capacity building across all spheres of government (DPME 2012:19). Table 2 provides details on the monitoring, evaluation and planning functions of the DPME prior to the merger with the NPC as modified from Philips *et al.* (2014:395).

Table 2: Functions of the DPME prior to the merger with the NPC

Priority/Function	Expected deliverable
Monitoring and evaluation of national priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) outcome plans (delivery agreements) ▪ Monitoring progress against the delivery agreements ▪ Evaluating to see how to improve programmes, policies and plans ▪ Operation Phakisa – intensive planning, monitoring and evaluation, and problem solving on priority programmes, building on the Malaysian experience
Management performance monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assessing the quality of management practices in individual departments (MPAT) at the national/state level ▪ Assessing the quality of management practices and delivery in local government (LGMIM)
Monitoring and evaluation of frontline service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitoring of the experience of citizens when obtaining services (join with states), including citizen-based monitoring ▪ Presidential Hotline – including tracking responses and follow-up
Implementation of the GWMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National monitoring and evaluation policy frameworks ▪ Monitoring and evaluation platforms across government – nationally, provincially ▪ Structures of monitoring and evaluation units/capacity development ▪ National Evaluation System ▪ Five-yearly reviews of changes in the country, ie the 20-year review ▪ Annual production of development indicators ▪ Data quality issues

Source: ((Philips et al. (2014:395))

As noted from the Table, the focus of the DPME has been on performance monitoring without a planning component. The main four functions have been monitoring and evaluating the national priorities, management performance, frontline services and implementation of the GWMES. The merging of the DPME and NPC was yet another change in the organisational environment that necessitated adjustments to locate the entire value chain of planning, monitoring and evaluation in one institution (DPME 2015:15). This reconfiguration, according to Gumedé (2017:5) and Kimaro, Fourie and Tshiyoyo (211:2018), was meant to strengthen linkages between planning, monitoring and evaluation functions, thereby enhancing the implementation of the NDP. Mapitsa and Khumalo (2018:8–9) suggest

another model for pursuing and understanding monitoring and evaluation. This includes the technical element focusing on data systems and information infrastructure; the institutional element consisting of national policies, organisational systems and stakeholder collaborations; and finally, the governance element, which deals with leadership capabilities, oversight, accountability and the overall culture of monitoring and evaluation. The three elements, when linked, facilitate organisational change and contextualise the environmental factors.

The delegation of the PFMA function of managing strategic and annual performance planning to the DPME by the National Treasury in 2014 meant further incorporation of the assessment of departmental strategic plans and annual performance plans to ensure alignment with long- and short-term plans of government to the DPME mandate (2015:13). Kimaro, Fourie and Tshiyoyo (2018:211), in their consideration of factors influencing the interrelationship between performance management, monitoring and evaluation, support the integration of national monitoring and evaluation systems with national planning systems to harmonise and coordinate overall performance information.

According to Kimaro *et al.* (2018), this integration becomes the driver and influence on the monitoring and evaluation practices, which includes the demand for evidence-based decision-making in the public sector. The merging of the planning, monitoring and evaluation functions into one institution resulted in the reorganisation of the DPME to accommodate the changes, as reflected in the 2015–2020 strategic plan (DPME 2015:11). Table 3 summarises the revised role of the DPME with the inclusion of the planning component as one of the strategic objectives.

Table 3: Summary of the revised role of the DPME with the merger of the NPC

Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Institutionalisation of planning ▪ Long-term planning charting the country’s developmental trajectory ▪ Coordination of the planning system for coherence, alignment and quality of plans
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitoring the implementation of the NDP by developing robust monitoring systems backed by evidence ▪ Coordinate the implementation of the MTSF and report on the progress
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluating critical government programmes with the intention to inform planning, monitoring and interventions as well as budget prioritisation
Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interventions on behalf of the President and Cabinet through Inter-Ministerial Committees (eg, SASSA and the North West intervention)

Source: (Adapted from the DPME Annual Performance Plan 2017 and Annual Report 2018)

This further included the National Development Agency as an entity to support youth empowerment through the implementation of youth development policies

and Statistics SA “to advance the planning, production, analysis, documentation, storage, dissemination and use of official and other statistics” (DPME 2018:19). These entities report to the Minister of the DPME. A notable change from the above Table is the distinction between planning, monitoring and evaluation as separate functions. This became a major milestone, as the cry has always been about recognising monitoring and evaluation and complementary and interrelated functions but different disciplines requiring the requisite technical skills.

RESPONSES TO THE GWME FRAMEWORK: SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

Notably, the South African GWMES and its wide-ranging frameworks is in progress, with some milestones achieved. Since the establishment of the DPME in 2010 and the introduction of the system, progress has been made in entrenching long-term planning and institutionalising the outcomes approach of the government in line with the NDP vision supported by the relevant leading role-players. Drawing from the case study of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED 2019 in Masombuka 2023), political buy-in and support for resources remain key in developing vigorous national monitoring and evaluation systems. Within four years of establishing the DPME guided by the international experiences, Cabinet adopted the NDP:2030 as an overarching country plan. The 14 government priority outcomes aligned to the NDP were adopted and pursued as strategic focus areas that facilitated interdepartmental and intergovernmental coordination (Plangemann 2016:75). While the National Evaluation forms part of the key components of the GWMES, the main focus has been on building institutional capacity for monitoring, with the gradual introduction of evaluation at a later stage.

According to Goldman *et al.* (2012), the following milestones are worth noting:

- Delivery agreements were signed by the President, Ministers and Provincial Premiers by the end of 2010.
- The Presidential Hotline, which was set up in 2009, was transferred to the DPME in 2011 to continue with the function of managing citizens’ complaints and enquiries related to service delivery.
- The tool for the assessment of management performance (MPAT) for national and provincial departments was developed and rolled out in 2011.
- A new system of monitoring front-line services was developed and rolled out to selected national departments and all provinces in 2012 to collect evidence at the coal-face of service delivery through unannounced monitoring visits.
- A national evaluation policy framework was developed and adopted by the Cabinet towards the end of 2011 and the subsequent National Evaluation Plan, which is linked to the national planning process.

- The citizen-based monitoring framework was approved by the Cabinet in 2013.
- The MTSF linked to the electoral mandate was launched in 2014 and has been informed by actions and targets from monitoring and evaluation results since 2010 as the POA.
- The annual publication on South Africa's Development Indicators on quantitative markers that track the progress being made towards achieving key policy goals.
- Monitoring and evaluation champions have been created across the government for a seamless link and coordination of the national planning and monitoring results with the evaluations feeding into policy decision-making.
- The continuous building of capacity and skills development initiatives through various networks and forums for monitoring and evaluation and the professionalisation thereof.
- DPME guidelines, standard operating procedures and tools have been developed for functions, roles and responsibilities for national departments and provinces for monitoring and evaluation. Data forums have been established linked to the priority outcomes to enable sharing and technical support for planning, monitoring and evaluation (DPME 2017 Terms of reference).
- A form of a balance between monitoring and evaluation as two distinct but interrelated fields has been created. This has seen an increase in the number of evaluations commissioned thus far supported by the DPME guidelines.

The successes of the GWMES noted thus far assume that environmental scanning and readiness assessment was done, according to Kuzek and Rist (2004:23), as a solid foundation for rolling out the system. A favourable and enabling environment can indeed be attributed to political commitment and best practices of other countries. With the DPME as the apex institution driving monitoring and evaluation; institutional arrangements, to some extent, were set up across the government (Goldman & Pabari 2021:7). To that end, tools and initiatives contributed to an increase in evidence for policy- and decision-making, although gaps still exist at the departmental level. The 2014–2019 MTSF provided an opportunity for linking performance monitoring to departmental plans that were already aligned to the NDP and the resultant priority outcomes. This included the introduction of the MPAT, which assisted in identifying departments that were rated as poor performers for the attention of the Presidency (Philips *et al.* 2014:399). Measuring and tracking performance was enabled through the quarterly progress reports on the respective outcomes. The DPME, in existence to support the Presidency in achieving the country's developmental objectives, also provides regular briefings to the President through the Minister on sector-specific issues.

Key to these milestones is that not only do they mark a progression by implementing the GWMES and its framework, but they also respond to some of the improvement gaps that were advanced by Cloete (2009:308) as part of improving the structure and operation of the system. The annual publication of the development indicators was an attempt to respond to the call for the sectoral integration of policy indicators and a distinction of output, outcome and impact indicators. This is specifically about the integrated national vision and the holistic approach, seen through the proclamation of the DPME and the merging of planning, monitoring and evaluation to guide the implementation of the monitoring and evaluation activities. This proclamation was further supported by human and financial capacity to adequately carry out the monitoring and evaluation coordination mandate at the centre of government.

Emerging issues and persistent challenges of the GWME framework

Despite these positive advances, there are several persistent challenges in safeguarding investments made towards the reform initiatives by the DPME and government departments. This relates to improving administrative data quality and coherence and establishing monitoring and evaluation as a core function of management, as suggested by the literature review. The IIED (2019 in Masombuka 2023) posits that the quality and credibility of data collection depends on the capacity of the responsible institutions to feed into the reporting process and justify the value for money. This has been noted in the culture of compliance created with poor reflection on performance improvement (evaluation). Reporting has not been adequately synergised and remains duplicated across departments.

Linking monitoring and evaluation with the budget process is a politically sensitive reform that requires an interface between administrative practices and political support for a joint effort to ensure that the supply and demand of monitoring and evaluation are accounted for within the existing budgetary framework (Lopez-Acevedo *et al.* 2012:85). This is evident in the current use of monitoring and evaluation where findings and results are not used to inform planning and budgeting, departmental plans are still fragmented, and instability is apparent in the administrative leadership within the public service (DPME 2014:24–32), hence, the institutionalisation of long-term planning.

Studies by Mtshali (2014), Malesela (2016) and Phetla (2017) focusing on different departments make a fair analysis of the practice and use of monitoring and evaluation systems in their respective research areas. The advances made in the internalisation of the GWMES, are acknowledged with opportunities for improvement. The studies further assert that more focus and resources are directed to monitoring and neglecting evaluation. Capacity deficits and monitoring and evaluation results

are areas of concern that still require attention. Equally concerning (Naidoo 2011 in Masombuka 2023) is the senior posts created and filled by officials without competent skills and capacity in monitoring and evaluation and the relatively low number of affiliates in the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) as a professional body for monitoring and evaluation. Finally, there is the patronage network of corruption and growing inequalities that were further exposed by the Covid-19 pandemic with an unbecoming influence on trust levels in government.

CONCLUSION

The article focused on the development trajectory of monitoring and how it has evolved in relation to the reforms that were undertaken in the country in general and the GWMES in particular, which has been adopted as the overarching coordinating system for monitoring and evaluation across government in South Africa. The literature suggests that there has been a growing interest and overwhelming information on monitoring and evaluation across various fields, especially after 1994, as part of improving governance, accountability and, most importantly, the capacity of the state to improve its quality of service delivery. The article highlighted milestones and lessons for further enhancing the monitoring and evaluation systems with more focus on coordination, creating the demand and use of evidence to inform policy decisions.

South Africa emerges as a country where an enabling environment for government performance monitoring has been created backed by political will and championing. The establishment of the DPME has been the hallmark of the GWMES enabled by the institutional reforms introduced. While government performance review reports also suggest progress and milestones in the institutional set-up for the coherence of monitoring and evaluation functions, the focus is still more on monitoring with less emphasis on evaluations; thus, the results are not adequately informing planning and budgeting. Some of the challenges relate to data quality and the coherence of the monitoring and evaluation function. Notably, capacity deficits and corruption are imminent and continue to pose a threat to the sustainability of these reforms.

NOTE

- * This article is partly based on the Master of Administration of SSN Masombuka, completed under the supervision of Dr X C Thani in 2023 at the University of South Africa, titled: *Institutionalisation of the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in the Presidency.*

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