

Setting A Policy Design Evaluation Framework

Indigent Policy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to propose a policy design evaluation framework. The methodology is based on a conceptual analysis and is supported by a qualitative research design in which Indigent Policy design serves as the unit of analysis. An Indigent Policy design framework, should comprise the following critical phases: agenda setting; policy formulation and adoption; policy implementation; and policy evaluation, feedback and review.

The study revealed that policy design is the process of finding some form of intervention to confront a problem. Municipalities need to develop and adopt indigent policies to ensure that the indigent population can have access to the package of services included in the government's free basic services programme. It was also found that without sufficient capacity, implementers of the Indigent Policy will not be able to render quality service delivery. Moreover, fundamental human values must be sought through the policy design processes, particularly when targeting the benefits of the policy. A municipality's Indigent Policy must further be integrated with the political and economic environment and other relevant policies of the municipality. Strong stakeholder and role-player involvement and regular monitoring and evaluation of results are critical elements for effective Indigent Policy design.

The main weakness of the proposed framework is that it only focused on policy design and content evaluation while neglecting policy implementation and impact evaluation. This shortcoming can be mitigated through empirical research. Suggestions for further research are therefore included.

INTRODUCTION

Municipalities are responsible for the implementation of free basic services and to develop their own indigent policies. Municipalities are also responsible to monitor and track the effective implementation of free basic services and their indigent policies. The problem that arises is that indigent policies are in most of the municipalities unclear because municipalities must identify indigent households, decide autonomously on the targeting methods, formulate essential household services packages, set benchmarking criteria for basic services and select key role-players involved in the Indigent Policy design process. In addition, the circumstances of municipalities vary, and a lack of resource and instruments hampers the standardisation of indigent policies across municipalities in South Africa. As a result, evaluating the contents of indigent policies becomes complex and thought-provoking. A policy design evaluation framework for indigent policies will streamline the evaluation of Indigent Policy design and content evaluation. The question arises: 'Which questions must be asked to evaluate the worth and utility of an Indigent Policy?' This study aims to answer this question by identifying the critical aspects needed to be included in Indigent Policy design evaluation. A policy design evaluation framework is created by means of a list of questions and critical aspects to be used during Indigent Policy design.

The article commences with a description of the meanings of policy design and policy evaluation. Evaluating policy design and content is highlighted as the preferred evaluation method for this study. The study then turns to the unit of analysis, Indigent Policy, by focusing on a definition for 'indigent'. The responsibilities of municipalities towards the indigent population are then elaborated on with reference to different circumstances of municipalities. Discussions on the parts of an Indigent Policy and available targeting methods then follow. The importance of interaction of multiple role-players in Indigent Policy design is highlighted before policy evaluation and impact assessment is briefly attended to. The article is concluded by the key findings and recommendations of this study as well as suggestions for further research.

POLICY DESIGN

The government's commitment to objectives is reflected in statutory documents, such as official notices, annual reports and development plans, and published in Acts, Regulations and official policies. An official policy stipulates the course of action to be taken to reach an objective and is the result of interaction between a variety of actors, for example, governmental bodies, politicians, administrators, public officials as well as members of the public, working together (Henry 2013:305).

Most definitions of public policy include the notion of purposive action directed towards problems, actions taken by government, rules that specify who is to do what, when, why and how, and the tools that provide incentives and motivations for individuals to undertake the policy-preferred behaviour. Understanding of the cause of a problem is thus the first step in formulating a policy (Peters 2018:4&5). Cloete and De Coning (2011:7) suggested that public policy is government's statement of intent, including a detailed programme of action to give effect to normative and empirical goals to improve or resolve perceived problems and needs in society. Public policy is thus based on law and perceived as authoritative. According to Tosi (2009:134), public policy also imposes some form of control as it prescribes general rules of behaviour, directs actions and often states prohibited actions.

In this article, the focus is on public policy design, also known as policy formulation, at the local government sphere. Operational policies at municipalities are specific and often narrowly scoped to fit a specific working environment. Public policy is thus used as a vehicle to transform the needs of the public into government objectives. Most policy models generally include the following stages: (1) agenda setting; (2) policy design/formulation; (3) policy enactment; (4) policy implementation; and (5) policy evaluation (Reddy & Govender 2014:159 & 160). In reality, the policymaking process is not typically so linear. However, these five stages provide a framework to better understand the context of policy design in the public policy formation processes.

Policy design is a concept that is used increasingly to describe the process of creating a policy response to a policy problem. This could be identifying a new problem to be solved or fixing an existing policy or service. The design of policies can be viewed as a dynamic and fluid process or product. Design involves attempts to integrate understandings of the problems being addressed with some ideas of the instruments used for intervention, and the values that are being sought through the policy (Peters 2018:5). Howlett, Mukherjee and Woo (2015:292) also stated that policy design is the deliberate and conscious attempt to define policy goals and to connect them to instruments or tools expected to realise those objectives. According to Pal, Auld and Mallett (2020:12–14), the design phase is thus about determining the problem, the goals and the most appropriate instruments for a solution. A policy's design may be seen as the blueprint for that policy while policy implementation is its execution.

Designing policies is about choosing forms of intervention. Policy design increasingly involves the engagement of social actors and citizens. As such, policy design is concerned with fundamental human values (Mintrom & Luetjens 2017:19). For example, the inequality in many societies requires an increased emphasis on equity in policymaking (Corak 2016:32). According to Peters (2018:2),

policy designs are essential for making democracies work in an effective and inclusive manner, and for the capacity of citizens to be genuine participants.

POLICY EVALUATION

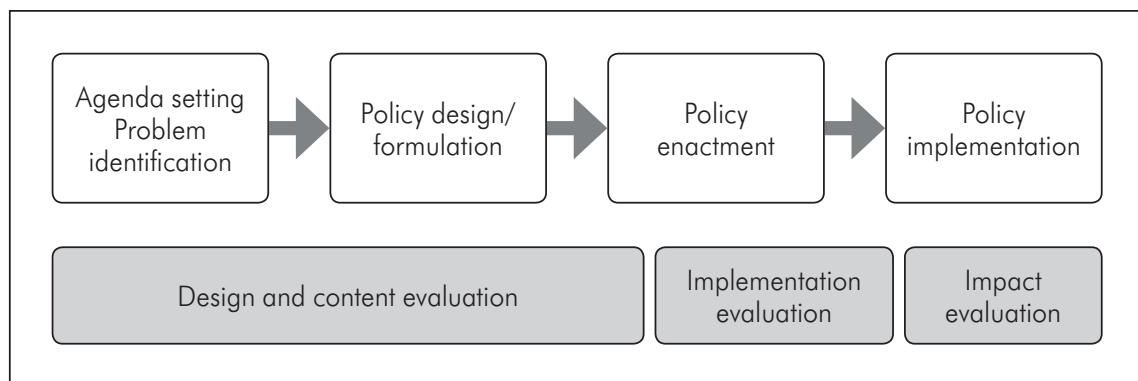
Evaluation is an integral part of each step in the policy process. Policy evaluation applies evaluation principles and methods to examine a particular policy as response to an identified policy problem. The discipline of Public Administration accepts three main types of evaluation, namely evaluating policy design and content, evaluating policy implementation and evaluating policy impact (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Program Performance and Evaluation Office (CDC) 2021):

- Evaluating policy design and content: Evaluating the development of a policy helps to understand the context and content of the policy.
- Evaluating policy implementation: Evaluation of policy implementation can provide important information about the barriers to and facilitators of effective implementation.
- Evaluating policy impact: Evaluation of policy impact focuses on whether the policy produces the intended outcomes. It is important to evaluate short-term and long-term outcomes.

Each type of evaluation can provide valuable information for the planning and interpretation of the other types of evaluation. It is important that each evaluation uses an approved set of criteria and the most appropriate design and methodology. Notably, this article focuses on policy design and content evaluation.

The three main types of evaluation are shown in the bottom row of Figure 1. Each type of evaluation focuses on a different phase of the policy process. Although these steps are laid out in a row, they are circular in nature.

Figure 1: Relationship between policy formation phases and types of evaluation



Source: (CDC 2021)

Evaluation is the activity through which the worth and utility of a policy can be assessed by asking the following questions:

- Is the policy dealing with the identified problem?
- Were available resources and instruments, and existing constraints considered?
- Are fundamental human values protected in the policy design?
- Were the best suitable strategies selected to reach the designed targets?
- Does the policy take cognisance of other relevant policies, rules and guidelines?
- Were all key role-players and stakeholders consulted to enhance collaborative problem-solving?
- Is the anticipated effect of the policy evaluated against the aim, objectives and expected actions?

Conducting policy design evaluation by answering the above-listed questions, will minimise risking policy implementation failures. Policy failure, fundamentally, is a problem of poor policy design. It is therefore important to think about what would constitute good policy. Designing a new policy or making small changes to policies without adequate forethought or design is a recipe for failure. When all the questions have been answered and the policy design is ready to be translated into an implementation plan, the policy implementation cycle can start. So, a clear design will facilitate the evaluation of a policy. If there is a clear design, it is easier to assess what may or might go wrong during policy implementation. The policy can then be improved in another iteration of policymaking (Peters 2018:2&3).

The contribution of the study to the discipline of Public Administration is found in the very basic framework for policy design evaluation. This study thus joined the mounting interest in the discipline of Public Administration to utilise frameworks in which public policy formation is more likely to succeed and produce a guideline for the general design of public policy. The following critical aspects need to be attended to as part of policy design (Anderson 2015:7–9; Peters 2018:18–29):

- Policy design is a response to a problem.
- Suitable resources must be identified.
- Policy design needs to consider fundamental human values, such as equity and equality.
- Policies need to hit their designed targets.
- Policies do not work on their own: they must be integrated with the political and economic environment and other relevant policies.
- Policy design involves the interaction of multiple actors.
- The effect of a policy must be evaluated against the anticipated objectives.

The envisaged framework does not necessarily provide explanations for each of these criteria. The framework for Indigent Policy design should comprise of the

following critical phases: (1) agenda setting; (2) policy formulation and adoption; (3) policy implementation; and (4) policy evaluation, feedback and review. A policy design framework will thus provide a means of understanding a problem. The definition of the problem will then evoke instruments or resources that can be used in response, and input from various role-players will be sought to address the perceived problem while upholding values such as equity and equality. If policies are to work, they need to hit their designed targets while considering the municipal Integrated Development Plan (IDP), other policies and the bigger political picture.

When planning the policy evaluation, it is important to have clarity and consensus on the contents of the policy being evaluated, what it is supposed to accomplish, and its underlying logic. For this reason, the basic requirements for an Indigent Policy are described in the following sections.

INDIGENT POLICY

Although free basic service delivery improves the quality of life of poor communities, it alone will not lead to a substantial reduction of poverty. Poverty will continue unless employment opportunities are created to help citizens find jobs and steady incomes, to advance their own lives. Crucial to securing the country's democracy is ensuring a reduction in poverty and inequality (Meyer 2014:82).

As part of the broader social agenda and anti-poverty strategy of South Africa, the former Department of Provincial Local Government (DPLG) (now the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA)) developed the National Framework for Municipal Indigent Policies in 2005. The implementation of indigent policies is thus made by municipalities through the provision of subsidised services often referred to as free basic services.

DEFINING INDIGENT POPULATION

The problem to attend to by indigent policies is the high number of indigent households in municipal areas. Due to the inequitable economic development policies of the past, centred on apartheid, with the homelands system being the spatial manifestation of this policy, approximately one third of South Africans remain excluded from the mainstream, formal, economy. Also owing to unemployment and poverty in municipal areas, there are households and citizens who are unable to access or pay for basic services. Anyone who does not have access to the necessities of life, such as sufficient water, basic sanitation, refuse removal in denser settlements, environmental health, basic energy, healthcare, housing and food and clothing, is considered indigent. The indigent population thus refers to

the poorest sections of communities. The condition of being indigent is experienced by the lack of basic goods and services and their cost. The characteristics of an indigent household is thus not only its income or consumption levels (DPLG National Framework 2005:8).

A survey from the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) indicated that revenue streams were negatively impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19), with municipalities reporting a significant increase in the number of registered indigents (DPME 2021:4&5). Statistics South Africa's non-financial census of municipalities in 2018 provides insight into the number of households that struggle to afford access to basic services by indicating that 22% of households are classified as indigent. Half of South Africa's 3,51 million indigent households were located in just six municipalities. The eThekweni Municipality was home to about 627 000 indigent households, comprising 18% of the national tally, while the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality had the second highest number (474 035 households), followed by the City of Cape Town (213 424 households) and the City of Johannesburg (178 599 households) (Statistics South Africa 2018). In 2019, the Eastern Cape province registered the highest number of indigent households at 32.3%, followed by KwaZulu-Natal at 27.6% and the Northern Cape at 20.5% (SALGA 2022:52).

The number of people without adequate water supply is considered to be a good indicator for being indigent. Using this as a basis, the indication is that indigence is concentrated in municipalities which are mainly rural with one or two small towns in their area. Indigent status is not for life as the economic status of a family might improve over time. To ensure that only the poorest families are catered for, municipalities require registered households to reapply for indigent status on a regular basis, often once a year (DPLG National Framework 2005:19).

In 2001, South Africa adopted a policy intended for the provision of free basic services to poorer households. Under this policy, municipalities were tasked to identify indigent households that would receive services, such as water and electricity, for free or at substantially subsidised rates and to develop indigent policies. In essence, a municipality must provide essential household services packages to the indigent population within its borders. In terms of public policy, agenda setting needs to take place and solutions must be put forward by interested parties to assist the indigent.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MUNICIPALITIES TOWARDS THE INDIGENT POPULATION

The *Constitution of South Africa* of 1996 highlights the right of all citizens to have access to a basic level of services. The responsibility for dealing with indigents is

considerably fragmented among the three spheres of government. Providing sufficient water and basic sanitation services is, for example, a local government responsibility. Refuse removal is also a local government responsibility and becomes increasingly important as settlement densities increase. Yet, food and clothing are dealt with through welfare grants distributed at national scale. Housing is a provincial responsibility. However, local government has a role to play in planning, land development and implementing housing projects. From an indigent point of view, access to land for housing, with secure tenure, is a critically important matter. Further, essential services such as water supply and sanitation are often delivered as part of a housing package. Then, the Constitution of 1996 does not deal with energy explicitly, but electricity reticulation is identified as a municipal function. Based on the definition of indigent, and the extent to which this translates to local government, local government is responsible for indigents with respect to the following essential household services: water supply, sanitation, refuse removal, basic energy and assisting in the housing process. The fact that housing is not a municipal function creates considerable difficulties for municipalities in urban areas as water supply and sanitation services are delivered as part of a housing package. Further, the exclusion of primary health from municipal health has meant that health-related services, like water, sanitation, refuse removal, environmental health and primary healthcare, are no longer integrated (Constitution 1996:Schedule 4b).

With the considerable reduction in local government responsibility for health, and the emphasis of environmental health as a regulatory function, the role of local government in providing for indigents can be distilled to water supply, sanitation, refuse removal, supply of basic energy and assisting in the housing process. This can be referred to as the essential household services package (DPLG 2006:4&5). Although municipalities may provide a much greater range of services than those identified as essential services, resource constraints prevent many municipalities from delivering a fuller range of services free to the indigent (DPLG National Framework 2005:7).

Municipal indigent programmes must be accessible for all residents. Any unregulated settlements and those living in backyards must be brought into the municipal system so that residents are not excluded from indigent support. Local government indigent support must also not entrench discriminatory land and housing allocations, for example, in areas of traditional tenure where gender discrimination has been an issue. Municipalities must provide basic services to their indigent in a sustainable manner. It is not possible to apply a sound Indigent Policy without a good system for identifying consumer units, billing those who receive the service above the free basic level and ensuing payments are made through a sound credit control system (DPLG 2006:18&19).

In summary, it is up to municipalities to determine who is indigent. Municipalities determine their own criteria for identifying and registering indigents. To a large

extent, this determination is based on the resources, instruments and partnerships available to the municipality. It is therefore imperative that available resources and instruments, and existing constraints be considered when designing an Indigent Policy.

The concept of a basic service is encapsulated in the following criteria that set a benchmark for targeting mechanisms applicable to current South African conditions:

Table 1: Criteria for basic services

Basic service	Criteria
Basic water supply facility	The infrastructure necessary to supply 25 litres of portable water per person per day supplied within 200 metres of a household and with a minimum flow of 10 litres per minute (in the case of communal water points) or 6 000 litres of portable water supplied per formal connection per month in the case of yard or house connections.
Basic water supply service	The provision of a basic water supply facility, the sustainable operation of the facility and the communication of good water-use, hygiene and related practices.
Basic sanitation facility	The infrastructure necessary to provide a sanitation facility which is safe, reliable, private, protected from the weather and ventilated, keeps smells to the minimum, is easy to keep clean, minimises the risk of the spread of sanitation-related diseases, and enables safe and appropriate treatment and removal of human waste and wastewater in an environmentally sound manner.
Basic sanitation service	The provision of a basic sanitation facility which is easily accessible to a household, the sustainable operation of the facility, including the safe removal of human waste and wastewater from the premises where this is appropriate and necessary.
Basic refuse removal service	The disposal of refuse on a property where housing densities permit this or the removal of refuse from each property located within a municipality and disposal of this waste in an adequate landfill site.
Basic energy service	An amount of 50kWh per household per month has been defined as the basic amount of electricity to be provided free to the indigent. This amount of electricity is suitable to meet the needs for lighting, media access and limited water heating and basic ironing or basic cooking.
Basic housing assistance provided by a municipality	Ensuring that sufficient land is identified within the municipal boundary, in appropriate locations, for all the residents in the municipality and that the necessary planning is undertaken to ensure that this land can be properly developed. Further, to ensure that funding available from the province for housing is properly allocated to assist the indigent with access to serviced plots.

Source: (DPLG National Framework 2005:21&22)

The provision of basic services to the poor remains a top priority for government. With over half of South Africa's population in poverty, and with the economy in recession, the indigent programme continues to be a vital lifeline for at least 22% of households that would otherwise not have had access to basic services.

Varying circumstances of municipalities

In interpreting the concept of a basic service level into technical terms, meaning, what the consumer experiences, the nature of the municipal and informal settlement conditions needs to be taken into consideration. What is appropriate in a deep rural area will not be appropriate in an inner-city situation. Rural municipalities which primarily serve former homeland areas are facing by far the greatest human resource constraints. The lack of resources can be related to the concept of 'institutional poverty'. The lack of capacity in municipalities is a major factor influencing the occurrence of poverty in South Africa. To a large extent this originates from apartheid. Municipalities responsible for former homeland areas require a major increase in support to allow them to improve access to resources if an Indigent Policy is to have substantial impact. The following constraints remain (DPLG National Framework 2005:19&20):

- Lack of capacity to implement projects, particularly in rural areas.
- Lack of capacity of service providers and partnerships to take over the infrastructure and manage it properly.
- Blockages in the housing process in urban areas, leading to long delays in making registered land and associated housing opportunities available to the indigent.
- Constraints applicable to gaining access in inner city locations. Housing in such situations is often unaffordable to the indigent. In not being able to gain access to housing in such locations, people do not gain access to water and sanitation services and therefore remain indigent.

A municipality must have the capacity to overcome constraints and to manage revenue in a sustainable manner. If the services required by the indigent are not properly operating and maintained, and become dysfunctional, the indigent do not have effective access and therefore continue to live without the basic necessities of life.

PARTS OF AN INDIGENT POLICY

There are three parts to a well-functioning Indigent Policy, namely gaining access, maintaining access and targeting the poor. The first part, gaining access, relates to

the need for the indigent to have physical access to the service. In other words, the infrastructure required must be in place. The service provided must be properly functional in the long term to have the desired effect in improving the lives of the indigent. Maintaining access is thus the second part of an Indigent Policy. Third, access to the service must be properly targeted. This is based on the recognition that in all municipalities there is a mix of those who are indigent and those who can afford to pay for the services provided. The municipality must apply subsidies to reduce the charge to those who are indigent and ensure that those who can afford to pay do not get subsidised (DPLG 2006:14). According to Peters (2018:21), if policies are to work, they need to hit their designated targets. If it is social policy then it should attempt to provide benefits for all who are eligible for the programme, and not provide benefits for those who are not. Target groups of public policy may thus be characterised in terms of their fair share of the burdens or benefits of policy initiatives. Issues of justice and fairness may consequently emerge. Identifying target populations for an Indigent Policy thus requires careful targeting.

Targeting options

All indigent citizens can gain access to an essential package of services free of charge through simple targeting mechanisms. Targeting options relate to the way subsidies are allocated to the indigent. There is a range of options for targeting subsidies. The most widely used options are service level targeting, where a specific service level is given free to the poor, and consumption-based targeting where those using a low amount of the service are provided with this free of charge. Consumption-based targeting is only applicable if the amount of the service can be measured. Property value may also be used as an indication of the level of household wealth and income (DPLG National Framework 2005:28). Indigent Policy formulation is a process of addressing possible solutions to poverty and indigent households, to put it another way, exploring the various targeting options or alternatives available for addressing the problem; all alternatives must be weighed. The targeting mechanisms chosen will affect the administration required to implement the Indigent Policy. This is a critical factor of influence since the different targeting methods require different systems to administer them (DPLG 2006:14&15).

An Indigent Policy will only be fully functional once subsidies are targeted in such a way that the indigent benefit and those who are not indigent pay. Targeting the poor requires that services and goods that cost the municipality money, must be made available free to the indigent consumer receiving the service. To gain access to the services which make up the essential services package, capital investment is needed to design and construct the necessary infrastructure. A subsidy is therefore required to ensure that the costs required to provide the service can be funded from a source other than the consumer of the service. The subsidy

framework is a key part of a tariff policy which must be prepared by all municipalities in terms of Section 74 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000. The main sources of subsidy funds include: (1) cross-subsidies from non-residential and high-income consumers using a particular service. High-income consumers are charged more than what the service costs to generate a surplus to be used to cover the cost of services to the indigent; (2) the core administration revenue of the municipality which includes property rates and electricity surpluses; and (3) the national fiscus, through the equitable share.

Every municipality is expected to develop an Indigent Policy in relation to the specific needs and financial standing of the municipality. The policy should outline the approach it will use for the pricing of services. The policy also needs to be developed in compliance with nationally set norms and standards and be enforceable by the municipality. The Indigent Policy must thus take cognisance of the municipality's unique conditions (Municipal Finance Management Act 2003:Section 16). To achieve these requirements in developing an Indigent Policy, municipalities must engage in the following aspects to decide on a particular course of action. Ideally, it is the course that will best address the problem for the most members of the public who qualify to be indigent (DPLG National Framework 2005:27,30&31):

- **Planning activities:** A municipality must have a precise understanding of its own capabilities and resources, as well as the needs of its constituencies. As hinted before, for an Indigent Policy to be effective it is necessary for the financial position of municipalities to be properly understood so that national subsidies can be applied. In rolling out basic infrastructure, access to free basic services must be regulated to ensure that subsidies are well targeted to the indigent while not compromising the financial viability of municipalities.
- **Integration with the political environment and other policies:** The process of policy design is undertaken at multiple levels, by multiple persons, and at multiple points in time. Effective Indigent Policy design must therefore take into account the political, social, cultural, and economic circumstances of the municipality as well as the individuals upon whom policy success depends.
- **Indigent application and verification:** Where a municipality's chosen targeting method requires applications from indigents, a verification process must be put in place. Following on closely to the costs associated with targeting mechanisms, is the cost of ensuring that indigents can access the services they require. This may entail the municipality having to establish additional application points or upgrading existing points of application.
- **Communication activities and community participation:** Public policy development includes public participation, which is individual, group or collective involvement, and effective communication. Thus, an effective communications campaign needs to be considered and implemented. This campaign must be both internally between municipal departments and externally. Municipalities

must leverage the existing communications channels, such as ward committees, to explain the purpose and objectives of its Indigent Policy.

- Institutional arrangements: The municipality needs to have formal structures and processes in place through which the implementation of the Indigent Policy will be administered and managed. A municipality must budget not only on the provision of services but also for the installation and maintenance of the services being provided. The services that need to be delivered in most instances require either the upgrading of existing infrastructure or the development of new infrastructure.

INTERACTION OF MULTIPLE ROLE-PLAYERS

The key role-players in Indigent Policy design and implementation are attended to in this section. It is the responsibility of the DPLG to introduce legislation and standards applicable to the implementation of free basic services. The DPLG needs to guide, coordinate and monitor national programmes. The Department also regulates service provision and intervenes where necessary, particularly where capacity is required. In addition, the DPLG provides the required grants to municipalities to enable the delivery of essential household services packages (DPLG 2006:19).

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry is the sector leader and regulator for water and sanitation. It is the responsibility of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry to define the policy and regulation relevant to support the implementation of free basic water and free basic sanitation (Department of Water Affairs 2013:24). The Department of Mineral Resources and Energy is responsible for the free basic electricity element of the essential household services packages (Department of Mineral Resources and Energy 2021).

National Treasury is responsible for determining the equitable share allocations to municipalities and mobilise funds for free basic services. National Treasury plays a supportive role on financial aspects and advises provinces accordingly (National Treasury 2022).

As an independent regulator, the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA) plays a regulatory role over the electricity industry in South Africa. This includes ensuring that all relevant legislation is adhered to, and that government initiatives are met. One of the functions of NERSA is to monitor and approve the pricing principles and tariffs charged to customers, bearing in mind economic impact and affordability issues. This includes assessing any subsidies inherent in such tariffs, monitoring cost-reflectivity and ensuring that customer groups are not adversely affected by the implementation of initiatives such as the essential household services package to indigent households (NERSA 2022).

The DPLG is responsible for assisting municipalities with their free basic services roll-outs (DPLG 2006:20). The role that the South African Local

Government Association (SALGA) plays is to ensure the creation of an enabling environment for free basic services programmes. SALGA facilitates the implementation of the free basic services policy framework and guidelines. SALGA also plays a role in monitoring the delivery of essential household services packages and compiling reports on the status of implementation (SALGA 2022:49–52).

Ward committees are made up of community representatives and as such can act as information routes between communities and municipalities. These committees are useful barometers of community views and levels of satisfaction and can assist municipalities to determine problem areas and services. Indigent Policy design must motivate individuals to engage in policy-preferred behaviour. Most importantly, ward committees can help to identify indigents within the relevant community and assist with the development and rolling-out of a municipal Indigent Policy. Communities have a role to play as well. It is the responsibility of the community to inform their municipality of faulty systems, provision problems and abuses of the services. Communities should also make sure that facilities are being used appropriately. Members of the community should monitor responsible use and prevent any misuse of free basic services (DPLG 2006:20). By placing the end-users firmly in the centre of policy development, the end result will more likely, efficiently and effectively, meet their needs (Wu, Ramesh, Howlett & Fritzen 2010:34&35; Ashbrook 2014:28).

POLICY EVALUATION AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Evaluating the design of an Indigent Policy helps to understand the context and content of the policy, while evaluation of the implementation of an Indigent Policy can provide important information about the barriers to effective implementation. Impact assessments are an important part of this process to determine the extent to which free basic services are making a real impact on the quality of life. This can lead to further changes and improvements in the policy, as required. The costs associated with refining or establishing and aligning monitoring and evaluation efforts by the municipality, therefore needs to be factored in.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance the effectiveness of Indigent Policy design, the following measures can be explored further by individual municipalities:

- Policy design is mainly the process of finding some form of intervention to confront a policy problem, with the overall aim of providing acceptable solutions

for the problem. In providing free basic services, municipalities should link support to poor communities. Municipalities need to develop and adopt indigent policies to ensure that the indigent can have access to the package of services included in the free basic services programme. An Indigent Policy will allow municipalities to target the delivery of essential services to citizens who experience a lower quality of life.

- Any working policy design requires an understanding of the instruments available to address the problem. Without sufficient capacity, implementers of the Indigent Policy will not be able to render quality service delivery. From the point of view of implementing an Indigent Policy, the financial and human resources available to a municipality in relation to the population within the municipality are critical for success. Yet, it is well recognised that there is a large range in circumstances existing in South African municipalities, with many having severe resource constraints.
- Indigent Policy design involves attempts to integrate understandings of the problems being addressed with some clear ideas of the fundamental human values that are being sought through the policy.
- Effective targeting enables the public sector, and its allies in the private sector, to provide maximum benefits for minimum costs. There is a need for municipalities to develop indigent policies and subsidy frameworks which are based on targeting approaches, so that those who are well-off or within the middle-class in society do not benefit from free basic services, while those who desperately need assistance do receive due services and do not have to pay for them.
- Policies must be integrated with the political and economic environment and other relevant policies. The municipal Indigent Policy is not a stand-alone policy. Municipalities' indigent policies need to be developed in such a way that they integrate with the broader environment and the municipal strategic plans. The municipal Indigent Policy must also be integrated with the municipalities' IDP and other relevant policies.
- Strong stakeholder and role-player involvement is a critical dimension to effective policy design. The Indigent Policy design evaluation framework assumes that policy works through people to achieve results. For indigent policies to have the desired effects, many different people in different circumstances will have to act consistent with the policy purposes. Bringing together different role-players to share knowledge and experiences builds a coherent picture of problems and needs to be resolved by policy. Using a co-design approach to an Indigent Policy captures a wide variety of viewpoints, ensuring determining together the focus of the policy intervention.
- To effectively monitor the results of a policy, regular evaluation is vital. It is essential that the effect of an Indigent Policy be monitored and evaluated to determine if it is achieving the intended goal.

CONCLUSION

The main weakness of the proposed framework is that it only focused on policy design and content evaluation while neglecting policy implementation and impact evaluation. Fortunately, this shortcoming can be mitigated through empirical research. Perhaps, the main area to be investigated further is whether those eligible indeed receive the benefits of the policy. The article aimed to establish whether all elements of the policy are being delivered adequately and consistently, and how much change has occurred since implementation of the Indigent Policy. The level of awareness of the policy among indigent households must also be explored further. Additional research areas also include the involvement of different groups in implementing the policy and determining if resources are being used effectively and efficiently. The factors that influence the effect of the Indigent Policy also deserve being studied. Nonetheless, looking at citizens' experiences of the Indigent Policy remains crucial.

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