

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS
MANAGEMENT POLICY IN FIVE LABOUR CENTRES IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR: FREE STATE
PROVINCE**

by

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I declare that the **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY IN FIVE LABOUR CENTRES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR: FREE STATE PROVINCE** is my own work. Moreover, all sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

Signature: 

Date:MAY 2022.....

DEDICATION

Glory belongs to God the Father, for His faithfulness Endures Forever. Thank you for the Wisdom and the Strength to finish this study. Amen.

I dedicate this dissertation work to my family Bo-Rrra Mogotloane; Batho Baga-Sehuba. This research study was the most challenging phase of my career; however I am assured that with self-discipline and hard work you can achieve everything you wish for in your life.

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*“ I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength” Philipians 4
vs. 13.*

ABSTRACT

The South African public service continues to struggle with problems such as increasingly poor service delivery, a growing lack of accountability and transparency, poor communication and ineffective leadership in its direct dealings with citizens. Customer complaints management within the public service sphere should be viewed as an opportunity for policy makers and implementers to review service delivery strategies and promote accountability and transparency. Research in customer complaints management suggests that inadequate customer complaints resolution within the public service can be attributed to factors such as poor leadership, insufficient information, incompetent personnel who handle complaints and poorly formulated policies governing customer complaints management.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the complaints management policy in the Department of Employment and Labour's five labour centres in the Free State province. The research was premised on the 7-Cs protocol for policy implementation. A descriptive qualitative research design was followed, in terms of which semi-structured e-mail interviews were used to collect data from purposively selected participants. The major findings of the study indicate limited training of frontline staff on policy, inadequate communication and coordination of activities, and lack of consequence management in instances of poor performance. Furthermore, it was found that lack of capacity led to underreporting, which negatively affects the speed with which and manner in which customer complaints are handled and managed. It is recommended that the Department of Employment and Labour should consider increasing the capacity of staff in handling customer complaints, developing suitable customer complaints management training manuals, and establishing a business unit or directorate to deal with customer complaints.

Key concepts: Customer complaints, Complaints management, Consequence management, Public service, Policy implementation, Service delivery, Accountability, Transparency, Redress, 7-Cs protocol

TSHOBOKANYO

Tirelosetšhaba ya Aforikaborwa e tswela go nna le mathata a a jaaka tlanelo e e bokoa ya ditirelo e e oketsegang, tlhalelo e e golang ya tlhoka go rwala maikarabelo le go se direle dilo mo pontsheng, go tlhoka tlhaleletsano le boeteledipele jo bo seng bokgoni mo tirisano ya yona le baagi. Tsamaiso ya dingongorego tsa badirisi mo tirelongsetšhaba e tshwanetse go tsewa e le tšhono ya gore badiradipholisi le batsenyatirisong ba dipholisi ba sekaseke ditogamaano tsa tlanelo ya ditirelo le go tswela go rwala maikarabelo le go direla dilo mo pontsheng. Dipatlisiso tsa tsamaiso ya dingongorego tsa badirisi di supa gore go se rarabolole dingongorego tsa badirisi ka tshwanelo mo tirelongsetšhaba go ka ne go bakwa ke dintlha di tshwana le boeteledipele jo bo bokoa, tshedimosetso e e tlhalelang, badiri ba ba se nang bokgoni ba ba samaganang le dingongorego le dipholisi tse di sa rulaganngwang sentle tse di laolang tsamaiso ya dingongorego tsa badirisi.

Maikemisetso a thutopatlisiso e ne e le go thotlhomisa bokgoni le nonofo ya tsenyotirisong ya pholisi ya tsamaiso ya dingongorego mo ditikwatikweng tse tlhano tsa badiri tsa Lefapha la go Thapa le Badiri kwa porofenseng ya Foreisetata. Thutopatlisiso e theilwe mo phorotokholong ya di7-C ya tsenyotirisong ya pholisi. Go latetswe thadiso ya patlisiso e e lebelelang mabaka, mme go ya ka yona, go dirisitswe dipotsolotso tsa emele tse di batlileng di rulagane go kokoanya *data* go tswa mo banningleseabe ba ba tlhophilweng go ya ka boithophelo jwa mmatlisisi. Diphitlhelodikgolo tsa thutopatlisiso di supile katso e e sa lekanang ya badiri ba ba kwa pele malebana le pholisi, bokoa mo tlhaletsanong le kgokaganyo ya ditiragatso, le go se nne teng ga taolo ya ditlamorago mo mabakeng a go diragadiwang bokoa mo go ona. Mo godimo ga moo, go fitlhetswe gore go tlhoka bokgoni go lebisitse kwa goreng go se ke ga dirwa dipegelo ka tshwanelo, e leng se se amang bonako le tsela e go samaganwang le dingongorego tsa badirisi ka yona. Go atlenegisiwa gore Lefapha la go Thapa le Badiri le akanye ka go oketsa bokgoni jwa badiri jwa go samagana le dingongorego tsa badirisi, go dira dimanyuane tsa katso ya tsamaiso ya dingongorego tsa badirisi, le go tlhama yunitikgwebo gongwe lephata la bokaedi go samagana le dingongorego tsa badirisi.

Megopolo ya botlhokwa: Dingongorego tsa badirisi, Tsamaiso ya dingongorego, Tsamaiso ya ditlamorago, Tirelosetšhaba, Tsenyotirisong ya pholisi, Tlamelo ya ditirelo, Go rwala maikarabelo, Go direla mo pontsheng, Go baakanya, Phorotokholo ya di7-C

KGUTSUFATSO

Tshebeletso ya setjhaba ya Aforika Borwa e tswela pele ho lwantshana le mathata a kang phano e mpe ya ditshebeletso e ntseng e eketseha, kgaello e ntseng e hola ya boikarabelo le ponaletso, dikgokahano tse fokolang le boetapele bo sa sebetseng hantle ditshebedisanong tsa bona tse tobileng le baahi. Tsamaiso ya ditletlebo tsa bareki ka hara lekala la ditshebeletso tsa setjhaba e lokela ho nkwa e le monyetla wa hore baetsi ba melawana le ba phethahatsang ba hlahlobe maano a phano ya ditshebeletso le ho kgothaletsa boikarabelo le ponaletso. Dipatlisiso tsa tsamaiso ya ditletlebo tsa bareki di fana ka maikutlo a hore tharollo e sa lekaneng ya ditletlebo tsa bareki ka hara bosebeletsi ba setjhaba e ka bakwa ke dintlha tse kang boetapele bo bobo, boitsebiso bo sa lekaneng, basebetsi ba sa tsebeng ho sebetsana le ditletlebo le maano a sa hlophiswang hantle a laolang tsamaiso ya ditletlebo tsa bareki.

Sepheo sa thuto bona e ne e le ho batlisisa katleho le bokgabane ba ho kengwa tshebetsong leano la tsamaiso ya ditletlebo ditsing tse hlano tsa Lefapha la Khiri le tsa Basebetsi profinseng ya Free State. Dipatlisiso tsena di ne di thehilwe ho prothokholo ya 7-Cs bakeng sa tshebetso ya maano. Moralo o hlahosang wa boleng ba dipatlisiso o ile wa latelwa, moo dipuisano tsa e-mail tse hlophisitsweng di sebedisitsweng ho bokella dintlha ho tswa ho bankakarolo ba kgethilweng ka sepheo. Diphetho tse kgolo tsa thuto di bontsha kwetliso e fokolang ya basebetsi ba ka pele mabapi le leano, puisano e sa lekaneng le kgokahanyo ya mesebetsi, le kgaello ya taolo ya ditlamorao maemong a tshebetso e mpe. Ho feta moo, ho ile ha fumanwa hore kgaello ya bokgoni e lebisitse ho ho tlaleha ho tlase, e leng se amang lebelo le mokgwa oo ditletlebo tsa bareki di sebetswang le ho laolwa ka ona.

Ho kgothaletswa hore Lefapha la Khiri le Mesebetsi le nahane ka ho eketsa bokgoni ba basebetsi mabapi le ho sebetsana le ditletlebo tsa bareki, ho hlahisa dibukana tse loketseng tsa thupelo ya tsamaiso ya ditletlebo tsa bareki, le ho theha lekala la kgwebo ho sebetsana le ditletlebo tsa bareki.

Likhopolo tsa bohlokoa: Ditletlebo tsa bareki, Tsamaiso ya ditletlebo, Tsamaiso ya sephetho, Tshebeletso ya setjhaba, Tshebetsong ya maano, Phano ya ditshebeletso, Boikarabelo, Ponaletso, Ho lokisa, 7C prothokholo

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AU	African Union
CCCMF	Citizen Complaint and Compliments Management Framework
CF	Compensation Fund
CSO	Client Service Officer
DG	Director General
DD LCO	Deputy Director: Labour Centre Operations
DCO	Designated Complaints Officer
DEL	Department of Employment and Labour
DPME	Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
FS	Free State province
EU	European Union
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
PAIA	Promotion of Access to Information Act
PAJA	Promotion of Administrative Justice Act
OPP	Office of the Public Protector
PSC	Public Service Commission
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund
NPM	New Public Management
WPTPS	White Paper of Transforming of the Public Service Delivery

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CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The South African public service is characterised by poor service delivery, lack of accountability and transparency, poor communication, and ineffective leadership when dealing directly with citizens. This has resulted in an increase in citizens' complaints which are often poorly handled, characterised by slow response and lack of feedback to the customers. According to Zamil (in Hadiyati 2014:104) "the government, as a large organisation, has customers and the customers are the citizens, businesses sector, public and private employees. Government through agencies, departments, and ministries provides information and services for each customer group and as a result, the customers give their assessment to the performance delivered".

Public service institutions in South Africa are expected to promote high professional ethics and adequately address service delivery complaints received from the citizens. Of equal importance is the existence of mechanisms that promote accessibility, speed, fairness, visibility, confidentiality, and accountability in the complaints management process.

Ha and Lee (2010:1164) maintain that departments are required to conduct surveys as per the legislation and use the analysis to learn about their customers and use the information to formulate appropriate strategies for service quality improvement. Public service institutions in South Africa, including the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL), have a responsibility to ensure that where service standards have not been met, mechanisms such as customer complaints management policies are put in place to enhance effective and efficient public administration. Informed by section 195(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (the Constitution) which outlines the basic values and principles that governs the public administration such as high standard of professional ethics, effective, economic, and efficient use of resources, impartial provision of services fairly, equitably and an accountable public administration, the DEL introduced the Complaints, Suggestions and Compliment Management Policy (DEL 2017).

This study was set out to investigate the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the DEL's five labour centres in the Free State province. The customer complaints management policy affords the DEL an opportunity to correct its weaknesses; and the policy demands that the department should provide adequate resources, capacitate policy implementers and collaborate with other stakeholders to promote effective and efficient implementation.

Section 1.2 presents the background of the problem to be researched, while section 1.3 outlines the main research problem of this study which is followed by the research questions in section 1.4. The purpose and the objectives of the study are highlighted in section 1.5. The study is envisaged to contribute new knowledge in the field of Public Administration, especially in the area of policy implementation. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations of this study would assist the DEL and other public service departments in improving and/or formulating sound complaints management policies that facilitate effective and efficient policy implementation (section 1.6).

The research design and methodology as well as limitations are considered in sections 1.7 and 1.8 respectively. Section 1.9 addresses the ethical considerations of the study. The chapter is then concluded by section 1.10 in which concepts related to the study are clarified. Therefore, the next section outlines the general background of the study.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

According to Petelin (in Colnar and Dimovski 2017:146), "the aim of any reform of the public administration is to build an effective and efficient public administration, which provides quality services to its customers and also enables a better working environment for its employees". Furthermore, Gafar (2017:29) argues that the relationship between citizens and governments should be guided by customers/service-providers principles, and among these principles is the recognition by government as a service provider, that citizens have the right to demand for better service delivery in a quicker and accessible way. The quality of services should be of high standard, in a cost effective way and the quality of service should be packaged in a friendly manner.

DEL has developed the service standards and the service charter that outlines what services the public can expect, and the policy on complaints management introduced in 2017 is seen as another mechanism through which citizens are afforded an opportunity to express their dissatisfaction when the set standards are not met.

The Justice theory as mentioned by Smith *et al.* (in Ang and Buttle 2012:1026) states that the “complainants seek justice when they complain”. This theory highlights three kinds of justice, namely, distributive, procedural and interactional. Firstly, the distributive justice entails the fairness of the outcome of the complaint, and secondly the procedural justice deals with the perception of the fairness of the complaints handling process. Thirdly, the interactional justice looks at the actions of the officials during the complaints-handling episode (Ang and Buttle 2012: 1026).

Hadiyati (2014:108) is of the view that any attempt to cover-up the real problem that exists through defensive mechanisms will results in all parties moving away from the solution and the remedial action, hence honesty towards the problems will guide the organisation into the right solution. Loyalty is the most important outcome of satisfaction in the private sector and is regarded as a critical driver of business success, while in the public sector trust is regarded as the most important outcome and it tends to deteriorate when citizens satisfaction lessens (Ellis 2015: 36).

The researcher observed an increase in the number of complaints received within DEL due to the following:

- late payment of Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) benefits;
- late payment of Compensation Fund (CF) pension benefits; and,
- lack of feedback on complaints and enquiries registered at Inspection, Enforcement Services (IES) directorate.

Gauri (2013: 109) states that when mistakes occur as a condition of basic fairness and reciprocity, it is important to facilitate the expression of complaints. “Public grievance redress mechanism rating model requires a sound grievance redress system operating in a manner that leaves the citizen more satisfied with how organisations respond to citizens dissatisfaction” (Kariuki and Tshandu 2014:805).

Equally important is the view by Hadiyati (2014:108) that “we must believe that the sole purpose or motivation to submit a complaint is for the sake of service improvement, and there are no other motives”. The study by Moynihan and Thomas (2013:789) suggests the following five guidelines for working with the public as customers:

- a) Customer guideline 1: Consider developing centralised contact points, including a call centre, a prominent, easily navigable Web presence for receiving and responding to questions, requests, and complaints from the public.
- b) Customer guideline 2: Explore the adoption of mobile device technologies for receiving and responding to questions, requests, and complaints from members of the public.
- c) Customer guideline 3: Endeavour to provide high-quality customer service when interacting with members of the public.
- d) Customer guideline 4: Consider the adoption of a customer relations management system when a centralised citizen contacting system is in place, adequate resources are available, and leadership is committed to effectively implementing the customer or citizen relations management (CRM) systems.
- e) Customer guideline 5: After adopting CRM systems, governments should plan for staff training on analysing CRM data and for regular meetings to discuss the data.

Public service employees must be inspired to think differently about customer care by asking customers what they want instead of predicting their demands, that customers are reasons for the existence of their it is important not interruptions of work and to be aware that employees can experience job satisfaction. Moreover, employees should always display professionalism. Managers are encouraged to think about citizens as people not as customers and not to tell them about institutional problems but rather focus on resolving theirs (Crous 2004:587).

Fountain (2001:56) argues that without political change, the poor and the politically weak will continue to be poorly served. There should be no doubt about the importance of efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness in government, but rather the increase in efficiency and responsiveness should strengthen democracy, rather than weakening it.

Section 195(1) of the Constitution outlines the basic values and principles that govern the public administration which includes the promotion and maintenance of a high standard of professional ethics, effective, economic, and efficient use of resources, impartial provision of services fairly, equitably and without bias, and an accountable public administration. The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service Delivery, 1997 (WPTPS), also known as *Batho Pele Principles* (Sect.1.1.1) set out clear guidelines on how the public service is to meet its obligation and provide better services to all South African citizens through policies and strategies that can be tested to check their effectiveness and whether services rendered are being met according to the set standards. The ability to act is critical when things go wrong and especially when the service deliverers have failed to deliver according to the promised standard (WPTPS 1997, 4.7).

The policy on managing complaints, suggestions and compliments is fairly new in DEL, it was only approved on the 20th June 2017, and it has the following six principles that guide redress:

- a) "All mistakes should be admitted and corrected.
- b) A sincere and meaningful apology should be offered.
- c) Arrangements for considering redress should be done in a transparent manner.
- d) Redress should be fair and reasonable to both the complainant and DEL.
- e) As far as possible, redress should endeavour to achieve restoration.
- f) Redress should be procedurally sound, and the rules of natural justice must be followed" (DEL 2017:12).

To determine if similar study has been conducted in relation to customer complaints management in the South African public service, the researcher carried electronic searches on the NRF Nexus database system which have collection of the current and completed South African theses and dissertations. Furthermore, the Unisa Institutional Repository was also searched to determine if there was similar studies completed.

The researcher used the following key terms to search for similar study: 'customer complaints management', 'customer complaints public service', 'department of labour complaints', 'effective complaints management'. The search results found that no doctoral thesis or master's dissertation has researched the implementation of the customer complaint management policy in the department of Employment and Labour or the public sector in particular. It should be noted that the literature on complaints management exists but the main focus has always been on organisations in the private sector.

A dissertation by Alcock (2008), titled "Evaluating service quality at George Municipality : a complaints management systems approach" investigated the link between an effective complaints management system and improvement in service quality. According to the study on the principle of redress conducted by Ngidi and Dorasamy (2014:19) at the Department of Home Affairs in South Africa it was found that "57% of the respondents were uncertain about the effectiveness and efficiency of complaints and mechanisms, policies and procedures". Ngidi and Dorasamy (2014) observe that this was because of lack of information, and recommended that staff members should be orientated about the complaints policy.

This study seeks to investigate whether DEL experiences similar challenges like those of the Department of Home Affairs as it is expected that during policy implementation all employees must be informed about the objectives, processes, and procedures for effective policy implementation. It is the researcher's view that good communication is important in ensuring effective policy implementation.

On the one hand, a study by Crous (2004:583) on Statistics South Africa's implementation of the *Batho Pele* principles, especially on the principles of remedying mistakes and failures found that 48.1% of the employees believe that the institution is able to measure customer satisfaction and that fifty-five point five percent (55.5%) confirmed that Statistics South Africa has a system in place to handle and register complaints. However, this study could not provide evidence on how effective the system was.

On the other hand, a study on the implementation of the *Batho Pele* principles in a public hospital from the patients experience conducted by Khoza, Du Toit and Roos (2010: 66), indicated that ninety percent (90%) of respondents who were not happy or dissatisfied with the services they received and did not file official complaints could be because of a lack of awareness about their rights as customers, or perhaps ineffective implementation of the complaints management system. The study could not establish the root cause for lack of awareness. It is for this reason that this research was set out to investigate whether accessibility to mechanisms to file complaint is available and how effective those mechanisms are. It is the researcher's opinion that equal access to processes and procedures to lodge complaints by citizens can improve the level of service delivery offered to them by public institutions. Furthermore, the researcher is of the view that stakeholder engagement and communication are key in ensuring policy success, in fact, the policy on managing complaints within DEL is likely to succeed if policy objectives are communicated to all stakeholders. It is the responsibility of management to classify and analyse what goes wrong, when, and why. Data on customer dissatisfaction must be fed back to policy makers (Stone 2011: 110).

It can be deduced from the literature reviewed that citizen's satisfaction, trust, service excellence, fairness, accountability, and effective redress procedures are important in establishing an effective public service. Furthermore, any mechanism put in place to handle citizens' complaints must strive for fairness, accessibility, and speed in resolving the complaints as stipulated in the WPTPS. It is against this background that the researcher was motivated to conduct this research to investigate the effectiveness of the implementation of the complaints management policy in five labour centres in DEL Free State province. The next section outlines the research problem.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The DEL acknowledges in its report on customer complaints management policy that, “one of the critical principles yet to be developed and implemented for the entire department and its entities is that which deals with issues of redress” (DEL 2017: 3). The policy on managing complaints within DEL was developed to allow citizens to be heard in any event where the service standard has not been met, and to allow the department to learn from its shortcomings and improve service delivery.

The complaints, suggestion, and compliments management policy (DEL 2017: 10) rests upon the following principles of redress:

- a. Accessibility;
- b. Responsiveness;
- c. Speed;
- d. Fairness;
- e. Visibility;
- f. Confidentiality
- g. Feedback;
- h. Cost effectiveness;
- i. Review;
- j. Responsibility and Accountability;
- k. Training; and,
- l. Eliminating conflict of interest.

The policy on managing customer complaints ought to be accessible to the public and enable the staff members to respond to complaints speedily and more effectively. In addition, confidentiality, fairness, and the cost-effective ways on the implementation of the policy should be observed. For the above principles to be realised, skilful and committed policy implementers are required to ensure that the policy is implemented successfully.

Managerial and political support also play an important role in ensuring successful policy implementation. It is for this reason that the Minister of Employment and Labour during the Annual Review Workshop (DEL 2017: 13) raised concerns on the turnaround times for resolving complaints within the department and urged for a speedy resolution of complaints. The Minister highlighted a strange occurrence that when complaints are raised directly with the Ministry they are resolved with speed, while those handled by the Departmental structures are being handled at a slow pace (DEL 2017: 13). “Problem handling is the key driver of people’s perceptions of excellent or poor service” (Stone 2011:110).

Speedy resolution of customer complaints is important in all public service institutions and the implementation of the customer complaints management policy within DEL is an opportunity for the department to effectively manage complaints thus improving service delivery. In order to handle complaints with the speed they deserve, adequate resources, better communication channels and leadership are required to ensure successful policy implementation.

According to a DEL 2014/2015 Client Satisfaction Survey, seventy-eight percent (78%) of clients indicated that they were not aware who to contact when they are dissatisfied or disappointed with service delivery. DEL and its entities (Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) and Compensation Fund (CF) acknowledges that whilst efforts were made to develop programmes and policies in adherence to the *Batho Pele* principles, not all of the principles have been fully complied with and implemented effectively (DEL 2017: 3).

The Client Satisfaction Survey conducted by the DEL Free State Province (2016/2017: 19) revealed that seventy-five percent (75%) were not aware that they can lodge a complaint if they were not pleased with DEL services compared to only twenty-five percent (25%) who know how to lodge complaints when not satisfied with the service offered. It is the opinion of the researcher that, the low levels of policy awareness could hamper policy success. Clear communication channels play an important role in improving service delivery and in ensuring that policies are implemented effectively.

The DEL in the Free State Province delivers services through 11 Labour Centres, 3 Satellite Offices and 68 visiting points with 511 staff compliment (DEL 2017). The results of Client Satisfaction Survey conducted in 2017 demonstrate the importance of DEL to have a policy that deals with managing customer complaints. Moreover, policy processes and procedures should be accessible to both internal and external stakeholders.

Stone (2011:116) asserts that a good complaint management system should consist of the following factors: clear procedures, provision of a speedy and reliable response, a single point of contact for complaints, ease of access and the use of the complaints process, keeping the complainant informed, staff should understand the complaint processes whilst employees must be empowered to deal with the situation, have follow-up procedures to check with customers after resolution by using data to engineer-out the problems and using measures based on cause reduction rather than complaint reduction.

“Citizen dissatisfaction with public services has been a constant concern in public sector reform initiatives. Many administrative reform initiatives have explicitly made a connection between the need to reform public services, improving citizen satisfaction with public services, and maintaining or restore the public trust in government”(Walle 2018:2).

This study seeks to investigate the processes and procedures necessary for the effective implementation of the policy on management of complaints, compliments, and suggestions in five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions that this study endeavoured to answer in line with the research problem are:

- To what extent do officials in the five Labour Centres of the DEL Free State province have knowledge about the implementation of the customer complaints, compliments, and suggestion policy?

- What challenges are facing the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province in their endeavour to implement the customer complaints management policy?
- What are the benefits for effective implementation of customer complaints management?
- What systems and procedures can be put in place for effective implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province?

1.5 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to investigate the processes and procedures necessary for the effective implementation of the policy on management of complaints, compliments and suggestions in five labour centres within DEL in the Free State Province.

The following objectives were used to guide the study:

- To explore the knowledge of officials in the five labour centres in the Free State Province on the implementation of the customer complaints management policy.
- To identify challenges that labour centres within DEL Free State face in their endeavour to implement the complaint management policy.
- To determine the benefits associated with an effective implementation of customer complaints management.
- To determine the processes and procedures for effective implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the labour centres of the Free State Province.

1.6 EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION OF STUDY

- It is hoped that the findings and recommendations derived from this study might assist the DEL in the Free State province to establish how the labour centres are complying with this policy and thus opening an opportunity for improvement. “Many countries are seeking to determine levels of citizen satisfaction in order to improve their services or create new ones. However, literature review shows that to date little research has been conducted in this respect” (Alemán, Gutiérrez-Sánchez, and Liébana-Cabanillas 2018:108). It is the researcher’s view that effective implementation of the customer complaints policy can improve service delivery in the DEL.
- The recommendations of this study could assist the South African public sector institutions or government departments which might not have developed mechanisms to deal with citizens’ complaints when developing policies of this nature.
- The study also envisages to generate new information on how to address shortcomings that might arise in the implementation of the complaints management policy.
- This study might also contribute knowledge to the public policy implementation field of the domain of Public Administration. This will be done by assessing the customer complaints management policy of DEL with the 7-C protocol variables to determine if the success or the failure to implement the customer complaints policy can be attributed to any of the variables from the 7-C protocol.

The following section details the research design and the research method adopted for this study.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Webb and Auriacombe (2006:589), “research design consists of a clear statement of the research problem, plans for collecting, processing and interpreting the observations intended to provide answers to the research questions”. In other words, the research design is descriptive in nature. Van Zyl (2013:197) states that “descriptive research describes the current state of affairs at the time of study and it helps the researcher to understand the events that are occurring presently and how they relate to other factors”.

Furthermore, Van den Berg (2010:129) states that descriptive writing aims to give information and describe something, it concentrates on facts rather than conveying an opinion. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:201) state that case study research “studies a limited number of unit of analysis intensively and this unit of analysis includes individuals, groups and institutions”.

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research paradigm was deployed. “Instead of seeking generalised results, qualitative research endeavours to seek understanding of how things work in a particular contexts allowing for the building of new theory as well as conceptual advancement of knowledge” (Kopf 2006: 470). “Qualitative methods should not just provide access to the “meaning” of individual events, texts and so on, rather the qualitative method provides a basis for a “thick” description of discovery” (Park and Park 2016: 6).

A qualitative design was chosen for this study with the aim of collecting data from officials in five labour centres in the DEL in Free State relating to the processes and procedures in the implementation of the customer complaints management policy.

1.7.1 Research method

The research methods used to collect data for this study was semi-structured interviews and document study. Due to the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, email interviews were the most relevant method to mitigate the spread of the virus.

“The main sources for identifying literature are books, journals, conference papers and the Internet” (Kumar 2014:60). Scholarly books, journals, internet, reports, acts and policies will be consulted to provide information for the purpose of the study. Literature review was the most appropriate method of gathering information. Scholarly books, legislations, acts, governmental documents, research articles, reports and policies which focus on complaints management in the public service were consulted to provide information for the purpose of this study.

For the purpose of this study, data was collected from 17 officials in five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province by using semi-structured interviews. According to Van Zyl (2014: 199), interviews are helpful in obtaining information that might otherwise be difficult to come by including people’s feelings and perceptions.

The policy on the management of complaints, suggestions and compliments (DEL 2017: 10) rests upon twelve basic elements, namely; accessibility, responsiveness, speed, impartiality, visibility, confidentiality, feedback, cost effectiveness, review, responsibility and accountability, training and the elimination of conflict of interest; all these elements were investigated by adopting the 7-C’s protocol for policy implementation studies in the interview guide. The 7-C’s protocol variables investigated are: content, context, commitment, capacity, client/coalitions, communication and coordination, and the data from interviews was analysed in order to determine how effective are the processes and procedures for successful implementation of the complaints management policy in five labour centres within DEL Free State province. The next section presents the limitations of this study.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The study was limited to five labour centres in the Free State province and the findings may not be a true reflection of the current status in all provinces. Furthermore, the policy on managing customer complaints has not been evaluated by the DEL since it was introduced in 2017, this has limited this study to further evaluate the policy in terms of gaining knowledge about the citizen’s experience of the policy and the impact it has on service delivery.

Furthermore, the study was limited to only 17 officials in five labour centres in the Free State province who shared their experience and knowledge on the customer complaints management policy.

1.9 ETHICS

According to Kumar (2014:285), “it is unethical to collect information without knowledge, expressed willingness and informed consent of participants. Subjects to the study must be made aware of the information needed, reasons why information is needed, the expectations from the study and how they will be directly or indirectly affected”. The researcher was granted permission from the Director-General (hereafter referred as DG) of the DEL to conduct this study. Upon receipt of approval from DEL, the information was presented to the Free State province management and the participants were sent interview schedule, and those who were willing to participate signed the consent forms and returned the interview schedules to the researcher.

Confidentiality and anonymity was promoted and protected during the study. The researcher collected authentic data by using multiple sources of data which include semi-structured interviews and document study. Only the researcher and the supervisor have access to the interview schedules from participants and the reports have been safeguarded by the researcher and the supervisor in accordance with the ethical clearance obtained from the University of South Africa (Unisa).

Information from literature review and data collected from individual interviews was used to draw conclusions and recommendations of this study. The information from participants was voluntary and the researcher did not coerce participants to provide particular information. The next section clarifies concepts used in this study.

1.10 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

1.10.1 Policy

According to Kent and McAllister in Cloete and de Coning (2011: 171), a policy is a formulation of concepts and ideas for action which gives guidelines within which programmes are formulated and projects designed. Cloete and de Coning (2011: 171)

further states that a policy is “a detailed statement of government objectives in a sector and a general statement of the methods to be used in achieving those objectives. Additionally, Khan and Khandaker (2016:538) describe a policy as a broad statement of future goals and actions, and the expression of the means to attain them.

1.10.2 Implementation

Khan and Khandaker (2016:539) define the concept of implementation as a “process, output, outcome, and involves some actors, organisations and techniques for control”. Furthermore, Raj Paudel (2009:36) describes implementation as carrying out, accomplishing, fulfilling, producing or the completion of a given task. In the *Public Administration Dictionary*, Fox and Meyer (1995: 61) describe implementation as an “action to put into operation policy or programmes which results in the creation of links in the contingent chain to obtain the objectives envisaged”. Bevir (2009:103) refers to implementation as “a set of actions and interaction involved in the execution of public policy”.

1.10.3 Complaint

“A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the council, affecting an individual customer or group of customer” (Brennon and Douglas 2002: 220). According to the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) as documented in the Citizen Complaints and Compliment Management Framework 2013 (CCCMF), in the context of public service a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by a citizen or a group of citizens about the level of service, including issues if accessibility or lack of, by a department or departments which in the view of a complainant requires resolution or redress (DPSA 2013:10).

1.10.4 Management

According to Fox and Meyer (1995:77), “management is the act or art of managing, the conducting of something as a business, especially the executive function of planning, organising, coordinating, directing, controlling and supervising any industrial or business project or activity with responsibility for results”.

1.10.5 Public Management

“The process of ensuring that the allocation and use of resources available to the government are directed toward the achievement of lawful public policy goals” Hill and Lynn (2009:10). Hill and Lynn (2009:79) further describe public management in three dimensions, the first one is the vertical dimension of public management; here the public management needs to pay attention to personnel issues and align public managers and front-line workers in program administration and policy implementation. The second dimension suggests a horizontal approach whereby public management needs to take a strategic perspective to align stakeholders within and beyond government boundaries in the policy cycle. The third dimension proposes a holistic approach to public management, that is, public management needs a system to aggregate resources necessary to the achievement of desired policy goals.

1.10.6 Public administration

Fox and Meyer in Louw (2012:90) define public administration as the executive branch of government; civil service; bureaucracy which is responsible to formulate, implement, evaluate and modify government policies. Waldo (in Khan 2008:3) defines public administration “as the organisational and management of men and materials to achieve the purposes of the government”.

1.10.6 Performance

Performance is “ the way in which planned action takes place or objectives are reached (Fox and Meyer 1995: 94). Smither and London (2009:586) describe performance as what organisations employs one to do and do it well. Furthermore, they describe performance as not the result of action but the action itself (Smither and London, 2009: 586). For the purpose of this study, performance is the way in which objectives are reached by those employed within an organisation.

1.10.7 Service delivery

Lovelock and Wright (in Martins and Ledimo 2015: 575) refer to service delivery as “the actual delivery of a service and product to customers or clients, moreover, it is concerned with where, when and how that service or product will be delivered to the customer”.

1.10.8 Client centred approach

Jansen *et al.* (2009:294) state that “client centredness is to put a target group at the central stage and to take into account their characteristics, situation and perceptions in order to pinpoint service delivery, enforcement and communication activities”.

1.11 DIVISION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The chapter provided introduction and the background of the study. The researcher further outlined the research questions, the purpose of the research and the objectives of the study. Furthermore, a short focus on the research design and methodology applied together with the ethical considerations of the study were addressed.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW-POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The chapter provided a theoretical overview of public policy implementation. Several theories related to policy implementation studies were discussed, In addition, the characteristics of the public policy and the mechanisms to effect policy implementation were deliberated.

Chapter 3: LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, the researcher focused on the South African legislative frameworks that guide customer complaints management in the public service. Furthermore, the South African institutions responsible for managing customer complaints management policies were discussed. The focal point of this chapter was to outline international best practices on customer complaints management.

Chapter 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The chapter outlined the research design and methodology used to collect data for this study. In addition, the chapter outlined that data analysis method and the ethical considerations followed.

Chapter 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter 5 presents the data that was collected from the participants, explains how responses were analysed and the findings were drawn.

Chapter 6: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter concludes the study by summarising the findings and discussions. The recommendations and possible future research are also addressed.

1.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the general overview of the study, the research questions and the purpose of the study. Furthermore, the objectives, expected contributions of the study and the limitations were discussed. The research design and methodology were briefly highlighted, ethical considerations discussed and the structure of the dissertation was outlined.

It should be noted that in order to understand how effective and efficient the current policy to manage customer complaints within DEL is, one must first understand the process of policy implementation. It is for this reason that literature on policy implementation was consulted to draw a comprehensive picture of what could hamper policy implementation. The next chapter presents literature review on policy implementation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW - POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the processes and procedures necessary for the effective implementation of the policy on management of complaints, compliments and suggestions in five labour centres within the DEL in the Free State Province. It is therefore the opinion of the researcher that the South African public service is characterised by sound policies; however, the implementation phase remains the biggest challenge. For the researcher, clear organisational structure, two-way communication channels, policy objectives and goals, motivated and knowledgeable policy implementers, effective utilisation of resources and strong leadership are crucial variables in determining the success or the failure of public policy implementation. It is for this reason that the review of literature on policy implementation is pursued.

This chapter begins with the theoretical overview on policy implementation which will highlight three historical evolutions of implementation theory research. These historical developments will be analysed from the first, second and third generations or stages. It is envisaged that these three generations of research theories will help in the understanding of how policy implementation has evolved and highlight failures and successes of each stage which will help this study in investigating the processes and procedures necessary for the effective implementation of the policy on management of complaints, compliments and suggestions in five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province. At the centre of this review is the development of the two schools of thoughts on policy implementation which are top-down and bottom-up policy approaches.

These two schools of thoughts are important for this study to determine the role of both top-level management and lower level frontline implementers in ensuring effective policy implementation. Furthermore, both the top-down and bottom-up models for policy implementation are discussed, followed by the 7-C protocol which highlights the seven variables of context, content, commitment, capacity, client/coalitions, communication and coordination as critical variables that can influence the effectiveness of policy implementation. Programmes and projects are

discussed in section 2.7 as mechanisms for policy implementation. This section will start by explaining what policy implementation is.

2.2 WHAT IS POLICY IMPLEMENTATION?

According to Brynard (2005:654), “policy implementation is regarded as an accomplishment of policy objectives through the planning and programming of operations and projects so that agreed upon outcomes and desired impacts are achieved”. Cloete and de Coning (2011: 137) define implementation as the conversion of both physical and financial resources into service delivery outputs in a form of facilities and services to achieve policy objectives. In addition, Moore (in Cloete and De Coning 2011: 137) states that “policy implementation is not only about operational feasibility and technical capacity but is also the substantive value of policy”. O’Toole (in Raj Paudel 2009: 37), defines policy implementation as the development of intention by government to do something or to stop doing something and the actual results. Implementation is a process, output and outcome, moreover, a series of decisions and actions to put the authoritative decisions into effect.

Anderson (2015:225) highlights that at the centre of policy implementation studies are the agencies and officials that are involved, procedures that are followed, tools that they employ as well as the political support and opposition that they encounter. Therefore it is the opinion of the researcher that policy implementation involves government taking action in delivering a particular service to its citizens and further concurs with Anderson (2015:225) when he defines implementation as “what happens after the bill becomes law” and the day to day operations of government.

In his analysis on the implementation phase, Bevir (2009) argues that implementation was generally viewed as a top-down administrative and hierarchical process whereby policy actors will operate at different levels each with a clearly distinct role in the implementation of a policy. Furthermore, at the lower level of the hierarchy public officials are expected to implement policies according to the desires of those above them and ultimately their political masters (Bevir 2009:104). However, “the second-wave studies of policy implementation focused on bargaining and transformation

among diverse actors”, and this requires multiple actors to regularly interact, constantly communicate and bargain for effective implementation (Bevir 2009:104).

For the researcher policy implementation is process orientated and thus concurs with both Raj Paudel (2009: 38) and Bevir (2009:104) that it is output and outcome driven, that policy actors operate at different levels, and this actors with their own separate roles should continually interact and communicate constantly for effective policy implementation. The next section discusses theories of implementation.

2.3 THEORIES ON POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

2.3.1 Generation One Theory

According to Cloete *et al.* (2018: 199), the generation one policy implementation approach is regarded as an automatic mechanics process whereby “a small group of decision makers at the top create a policy and subordinates at the bottom dutifully carry it out”. This classical model of policy implementation by scholars Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) is of the view that it is expected that once those in authority have announced a particular policy, the implementation phase will then happen automatically (Cloete and de Coning 2011: 138). Moreover, the model is believed to be an ideal bureaucracy that is highly rationalised, legalistic, authoritarian and hierarchical in structure whereby the decision makers are at the top, they create a policy and the duty of the subordinates at the bottom is just to carry it out (Cloete and de Coning 2011: 138).

In addition, Pulzi and Treib (in Fischer, Miller and Sidney, 2007: 90) argue that “top-down models put their main emphasis on the ability of decision makers to produce unequivocal policy objectives and on controlling the implementation phase”. According to McLaughlin’s assertion (Raj Paudel 2009 :38), the first generation implementation research focused more on how local factors such as size, intra-organisational relationships, commitment, capacity and the complexities within the organisation shape responses to policy.

In Rwanda, the study by Kamuzinzi and Rubyutsa (2019: 639) paints a similar picture of this top-down approach in their policy implementation whereby political appointees in the central government considered themselves as principals who design policies and also set guidelines to be followed by agents at the local level. Additionally, this top-down approach resulted in citizens being regarded as a third party of government initiatives and “the system was characterised by a paternalistic posture of principals toward agents and citizens” (Kamuzinzi and Rubyutsa 2019: 639).

According to Cairney, Nilsen, Ståhl and Roback (2013: 3), “common top-down advice was to make policy goals clear and consistent, minimise the number of actors, limit the extent of change necessary, and place implementation responsibility with an agency sympathetic with the policy’s goals”.

Pulzl and Treib (in Fischer, Miller and Sidney, 2007: 89) highlight the following six criteria for effective policy implementation:

- a) clear and consistent policy objectives;
- b) program that is based on a valid casual theory;
- c) the implementation process is structured adequately,
- d) implementing officials to be committed to the program’s goals;
- e) interest groups, the executive and the legislative authorities that are supportive;
and,
- f) that there should be no changes in the socioeconomic framework conditions.

The top-down approach to policy implementation highlights the importance of involving the people on the ground, those who are involved in the daily functions of the organisation in order to implement policies. According to Cairney *et al.*(2013: 12), implementers are frontline staff or street-level bureaucrats who carry out the delivery of services. Furthermore, this consideration influenced the development of the second-generation theory as discussed below.

2.3.2 Generation Two Theory

After the World War II it became clear that policy implementation was too complex to manage systematically, as a matter of fact, implementation occurs much more chaotically, non-linearly and by default rather than an automatic process that delivers as programmed (Cloete *et al.* 2018 :199). The second generation model reveals that implementation and administration are more complex and political than it was thought before (Cloete *et al.* 2011: 138). “Effective implementation becomes increasingly difficult, if a program has to pass through a multitude of clearance points” Pulzl and Treib (in Fischer *et al.* 2007: 91). Through the second generation research, two perspectives of policy implementation, that is, the top-down and bottom-up approach were further analysed by researchers as presented in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1. Differences between Top-down and Bottom-up Implementation Perspectives

Variable	Top-down perspective	Bottom-up perspective
Policy decision-maker	Policymakers	Street-level bureaucrats
Starting point	Statutory language	Social problems
Structure	Formal	Both formal and informal
Process	Purely administrative	Networking, including administrative
Authority	Centralisation	Decentralisation
Output/Outcomes	Prescriptive	Descriptive
Discretion	Top-level bureaucrats	Bottom-level bureaucrats

Source: Raj Paudel (2009: 40)

2.3.2.1 Top-down perspective

Table 2.1 above suggests that the top-down perspective is policy centred and it represents the views of the policy makers. Furthermore, it restricts its attention to actors who are involved in the implementation of a specific program. Some of the criticisms associated with this perspective includes consideration that the

implementation phase is purely an administrative process and it ignores or eliminates the political aspects (Raj Paudel 2009: 40).

Mctigue, Rye and Monios (2018 :323) in their analysis of the top-down theoretical approaches identified six critical variables policy makers should avoid as they are viewed as barriers to effective policy development and they are mentioned and described below.

- a) Policy standards and objectives: Successful implementation requires statutory goals and objectives, policy background, definition of key terms.
- b) Policy resources: Resources must be made available, and this should include appropriate funding.
- c) Inter-organisational communication and enforcement activities: This variable encourages seamless communication and coordination between participants.
- d) Characteristics of implementing agencies: The process of policy implementation needs to be legally structured in order to enhance compliance. The leaders and the implementing agencies require managerial and political skills and commitment to the policy goals.
- e) Economic, social, and political condition: There should be consideration of factors such as prevailing societal ideologies, public opinion and media attention and political support or rejection.
- f) Disposition of implementers: Skilful and committed implementing officials are required for successful implementation.

Equally important, within the top-down perspective, three implementation models emerged, that is, Von Meter and Von Horn's variable cluster approach, Edward's interacting factor approach and the Mazmanian and Sabatier's goal attainment approach (Cloete *et al.* 2018 :199).

2.3.2.1.1 Von Meter and Von Horn's variable cluster approach

This model is relevant for the purpose of this study as we investigate the implementation of the customer complaint management policy in five labour centres within the DEL in Free State province, the Von Meter and Von Horn's variable cluster

approach identified three reasons why non-implementation occurs and they include; subordinates who do not understand what to do, for some reasons subordinates cannot do it, or they simply do not want to do it (Cloete *et al.* 2018 : 201). It is the researcher's observation that frontline staff plays a critical role in the implementation of the policy to manage complaints within the DEL and their understanding and attitude towards the policy will have an influence in the failure or success of the policy. In addition, the Von Meter and Von Horn's variable cluster approach suggest a model with six clusters of variables that would shape policy performance and they are as follows:

- The relevance of policy standards and objectives;
- Policy resources;
- Inter-organisational communication and enforcement activities;
- Characteristics of the implementing agencies;
- The economic, social, and political environment affecting the implementing jurisdiction or organisation; and,
- The disposition of implementers to carry out policy (Cloete *et al.* 2018 :199).

2.3.2.1.2 Edward's interacting factor approach

The Edward's interacting factor approach seeks to answer the question of what are the preconditions for a successful implementation. Furthermore, it seeks to give an answer to what the primary obstacles to policy implementation success are, and in conclusion, communication, resources, dispositions and bureaucratic structure were identified as four forces that can influence policy failure or contribute to its success (Cloete *et al.* 2018 :201). The purpose of this study was to investigate the processes and procedures that are necessary for effective implementation of the complaints management policy within the DEL in Free State province, the Edward's interacting factor approach model was relevant to the study as we also needed to find answers as to which preconditions exist and what obstacles are there in those five labour centres identified that will have a bearing on the success or the failure of the policy to manage customer complaints.

2.3.2.1.3 Mazmanian and Sabatier's goal attainment approach

This approach identified three main actors to the policy implementation process and they include policy planners or designers, policy implementers or field operatives and the policy beneficiaries or the target audience. Furthermore, Mazmanian and Sabatier's goal attainment approach identified a range of variables to maximise implementation success as listed below:

- Clear and consistent objectives;
- Adequate casual theory;
- legal structure to enhance compliance by implementing officials and target groups;
- Committed and skilful implementing officials;
- Support of interest groups and sovereigns; and,
- Changes in socioeconomic conditions which do not substantially undermine political support or casual theory (Cloete *et al.* 2018 :202).

For the purpose of this study, the models identified key variables such as communication, resources, clear policy objectives and committed policy implementers as important to the successful implementation of any public policy, and the researcher is of the view that they are relevant to the DEL in its quest to successfully implement the policy to manage customer complaints. When officials who are entrusted to implement public policies are committed, have required skills, actions are guided by legal and constitutional mandate, then the chance for effective implementation is increased. In the next section we discuss the bottom-up approach to the policy implementation.

2.3.2.2 Bottom-up perspective

The bottom-up perspective as demonstrated in table 2.1 earlier on has its attention on both formal and informal relationships and at the centre of the implementation process is the street-level bureaucrats who have a better understanding of what the clients' need because they have a direct contact with the public (Raj Paudel 2009: 41).

According to Bachrach and Baratz (2003), Weimer and Vining (2011) and Steward *et al.* (2008) (in Khan 2016: 6), the bottom-up approach is best studied by starting at the lowest level of the implementation chain and move upward to see its success.

Moreover, the street level bureaucrats or frontline implementers implement almost all policies and this approach should start by identifying the network of actors in service delivery and ask them about their goals, strategies, activities and contract (Khan 2016:6). It is the opinion of the researcher that in the context of this study, the bottom-up implementation approach was important, particularly in its focus on the frontline implementers, in this case Client Service Officers (CSOs). The implementation of the policy to manage customer complaints affects frontline staff; firstly, as the first contact with clients to render services, secondly, as the agents to implement the policy to manage customer complaints, therefore, their role should not be underestimated. In addition, Cloete *et al.* (2018 :202) distinguished two implementation models within the bottom-up perspective. These models are Smith's tension-generating change approach and the "Network" approach to implementation.

2.3.2.2.1 Smith's tension-generating change approach

According to this bottom-up implementation model, the implementation process is characterised by the interaction between the following four components:

- The idealised policy and the pattern of interaction that the policy wants to induce;
- The target group that is called upon to change its behaviour;
- The implementing organisation's structure, leadership, and capacity; and,
- Environmental factors which the implementation of policy must be forced (Cloete *et al.* 2018 :202).

The Smith's tension-generating change approach provides for a better understanding of the importance of leadership and capacity in an organisation, the changing behaviour of the target group and the structure of the organisation in ensuring policy success. This approach is relevant for this study as the structure, leadership and capacity within the DEL in Free State province will be investigated in order to establish

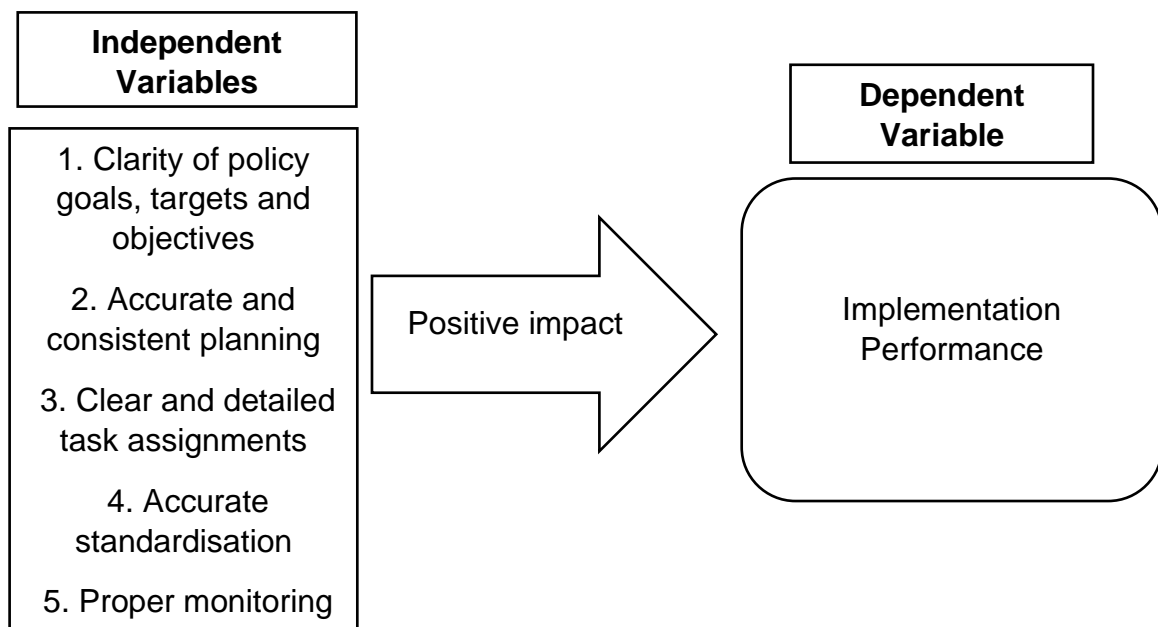
the extent to which the organisation is effective in implementing the customer complaint management policy.

2.3.2.2.2 The “Network” approach to implementation

This model of policy implementation is characterised by the horizontal cooperation rather than the vertical enforcement. Moreover, this approach proposes that those who are responsible to implement the policy at the ground level should also be afforded the responsibility to develop those policies (Cloete *et al.* (2018 :202). “Working within large rule-driven organisations interact with the citizens daily while the street-level bureaucrats act as innovative strategists and determine how a policy is implemented in practice. In fact, although the decision is handed down by the decision-makers, the street-level bureaucrats interpret, amend or even ignore the decision when the situation demands” (Dogaru 2017:51). In addition, Khan and Khandaker (2016) suggest the following implementation models that can be relevant in the study of policy implementation:

2.3.2.2.2.1 Rational Model

Figure 2.1: Rational Model



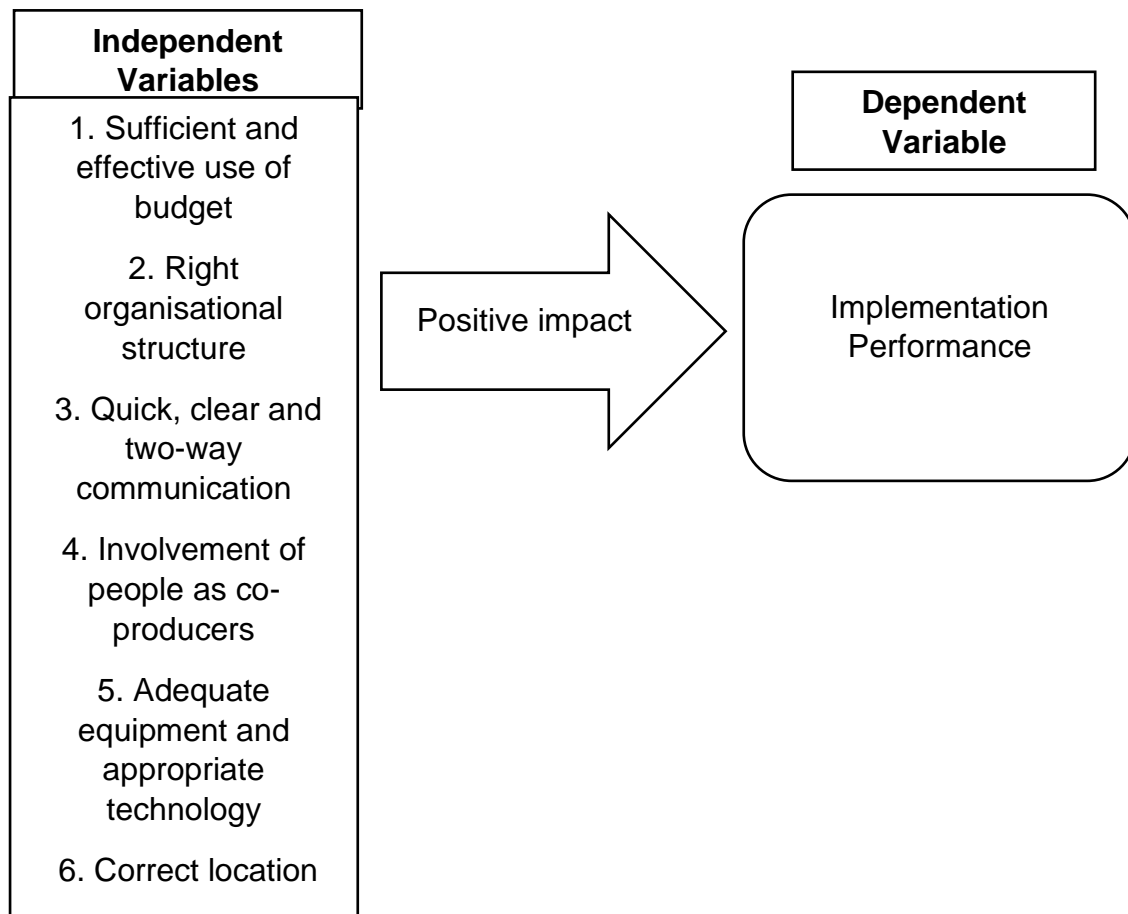
Source: Khan and Khandaker (2016: 542)

The primary assumption of this model is that policy implementation requires that there be clarification of goals as this will give the policy a chance to be implemented

successfully. Furthermore, accurate and consistent planning, efficient operating procedures and effective monitoring and evaluation will give a policy a greater chance of successful implementation (Khan and Khandaker 2016:543).

2.3.2.2.2 Management Model

Figure 2.2: Management Model

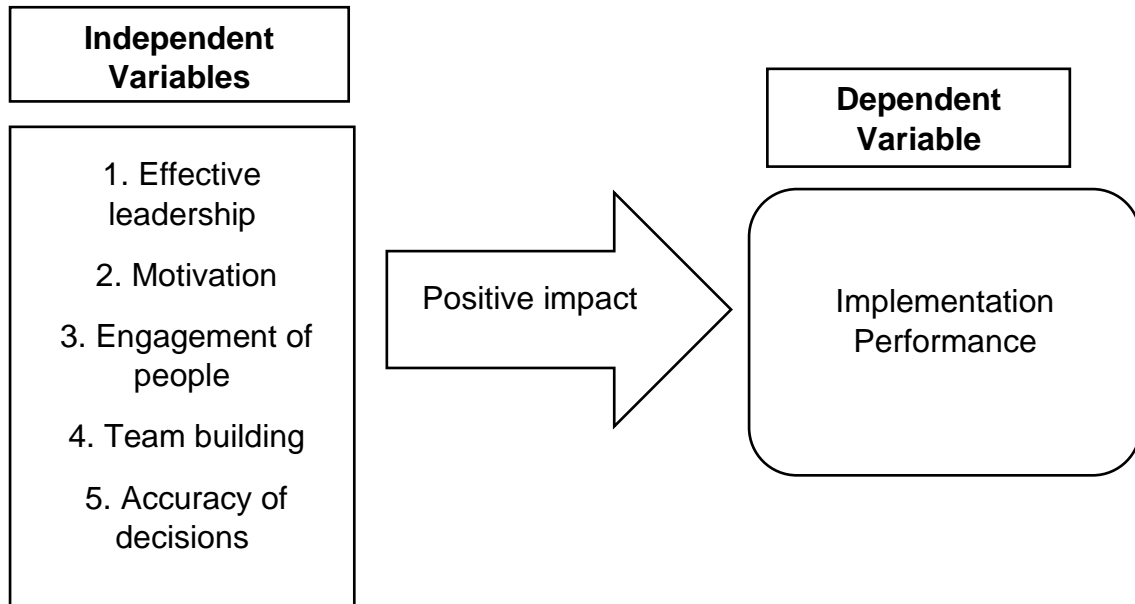


Source: Khan and Khandaker (2016: 543)

This model holds a view that the right organisational structure, efficient utilisation of the budget, clear two-way communication channel, stakeholder cooperation, adequate equipment and appropriate technology will enhance the performance of the policy implementation (Khan and Khandaker 2016:543).

2.3.2.2.3 Organisational Development Model

Figure 2.3: Organisational Development Model

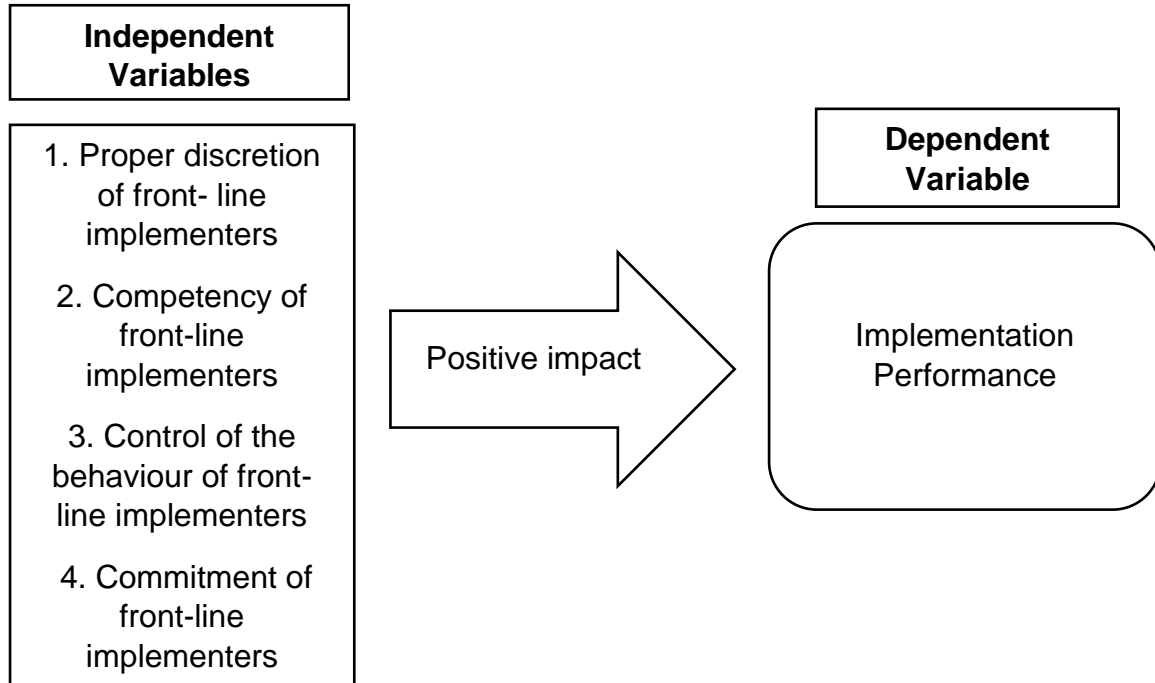


Source: Khan and Khandaker (2016: 544)

This model asserts that effective leadership, team building, motivated staff and accurate decision making by the leader will aid in the implementation and performance (Khan and Khandaker 2016:544). According to Smit, Cronje, Brevis and Vrba (in Mfene 2008:213), from the management perspective, leadership is regarded as effective if the leader increases the performance of the organisation. Furthermore, it is desirable for all managers to be leaders (Mfene 2008:213). According to Pillay, Ramasamy-gurayah and Naude (2018:35), “the process of Organisational Development is an important enabler that helps an organisation improve its overall capabilities and all-round efficiency through its ability to influence and change the culture, policies, practices and procedures within an organisation”.

2.3.2.2.4 Bureaucratic Model

Figure 2.4: Bureaucratic Model

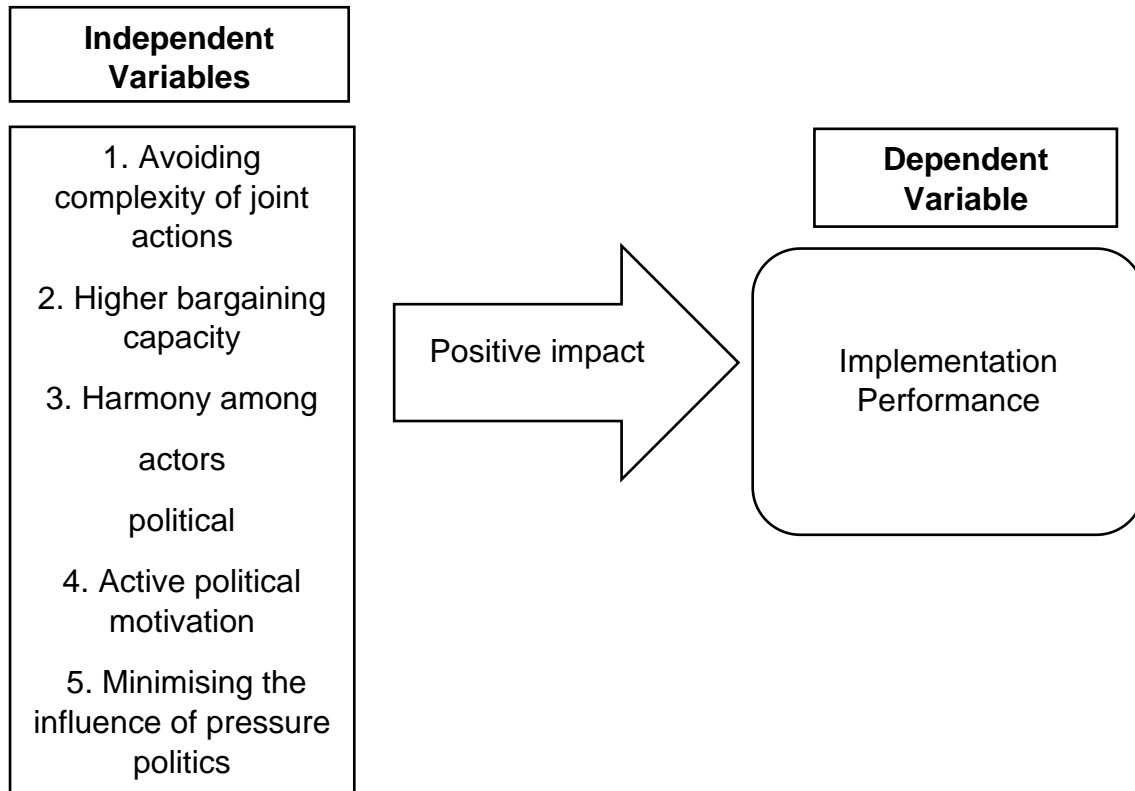


Source: Khan and Khandaker (2016: 545)

“The bureaucratic structure is critical in the sense that it presents the political and bureaucratic leadership, coordination, collaboration and the degree of cooperation among implementers which in turn affects the efficiency in scarce resources mobilisation and utilisation, and minimisation of duplication of activities” (Hussein 2018:354). According to Khan and Khandaker (2016:545), this model considers the important role frontline staff plays during the implementation phase of the policy. Moreover, the competency level, unintentional non-compliance and voluntary compliance have an impact on the delay or failure of a policy (Khan and Khandaker 2016:545). “The street-level bureaucracy perspective asserts that it is the street-level workers within public organisations that ultimately decide what kind of services and benefits policy targets receive instead of formal policy” (Dogaru 2017:53). For the purpose of the study, it was important to investigate whether the frontline staff in five labour centres were competent and committed in ensuring the successful implementation of the customer complaints management policy.

2.3.2.2.5 Political Model

Figure 2.5: Political Model



Source: Khan and Khandaker (2016: 546)

This model of implementation suggests that there should be greater bargaining power, harmony among political actors and positive political motivation as this will lead to the success of the policy implementation (Khan and Khandaker 2016:546). “Decision-makers must evaluate political resources while public managers attend to bureaucratic resources” (Raj Paudel 2009:44). “A policy intervention may simply be poorly managed or be compromised by political interference” (Khan 2016:9).

In their analysis of the bottom-up theoretical approaches, Mctigue *et al.* (2018:324) identified the following four critical variables:

- a) Individuals at the subordinate level play an active part in implementation: The analysis here is that the success of the programme depends in large part on the skill of individuals who will be able to adapt the policy to the local conditions.

- b) Policy implementation is an interactive process: All public policies are implemented by large public organisations and the management and responsibility is allocated to specialised units.
- c) Policy may change during implementation: The analysis is that when the policy is unclear and incompatible, each stage in the implementation process provides an opportunity for further clarification.
- d) Frontline workers are faced with conflict and ambiguities: Street-level bureaucrats develop coping mechanisms in order to deal with challenges brought about by lack of resources, few controls and discouraging circumstances.

The skills and knowledge of frontline workers is important in order to ensure effective implementation of the public policy, therefore, the theories and models on the top-down and bottom-up approaches to policy implementation highlighted above will have an influence on the purpose of this study as we explore the knowledge of officials responsible to implement the policy on managing customer complaints, and determine the challenges that the five labour centres might be facing in implementing the policy.

2.3.3 Generation Three Theory

Najam in (Cloete *et al.* 2018:200) posits that “the third generation of thinking on implementation was ushered by the realisation that there is an absence or a need for casual understanding, organising framework, conceptual models, analytic approach and explanatory and predictive theories”. Moreover, Goggin *et al.* (1990) as quoted in Paudel (2009:45) maintain that “the unique trait of the third generation research is its research design and explicit theoretical model; operational definitions of concepts; exhaustive search for reliable indicators of implementation and predictor variable; with analysis of data using appropriate qualitative and statistical procedures as well as case studies for testing them”. Mctigue *et al.* (2018:321) explain the third generation implementation research theory as the Hybrid theory that tries to overcome the division between top-down and bottom-up approaches by incorporating their elements to produce a new approach. Furthermore, these scholars identified the following ten variables to develop the hybrid theory:

- a) Policy standards and objectives: Effective implementation depends on the nature of the policy to be carried out and the specific factors contributing to the realisation or non-realisation of policy objectives, which vary across the policy types.
- b) Policy resources: Funds are needed for implementation, but the ones available are usually not adequate, which makes reaching policy objectives difficult.
- c) Inter-organisational communication and enforcement activities: technical advice and assistance should be provided, and superiors should rely on both positive and negative sanctions.
- d) Characteristics of implementing agencies: both formal structural features of organisation and informal attributes of their personnel are important. These include, the competency and size of the agency's staff, degree of hierarchy control of processes within implementing agencies.
- e) Economic, social and political conditions: general economic, social and political conditions are important for the relationship between objectives and results.
- f) Disposition of implementers: This concerns the motivation and attitudes of those responsible for implementing the reform.
- g) Individuals at subordinate levels are likely to play an active part in the implementation and may have some discretion to reshape objectives of the policy and change the way it is implemented.
- h) Policy implementation is an active process involving policy makers, implementers from various levels of government, and other actors.
- i) Policy may change during implementation.
- j) When implementing policies at a local level, frontline workers are faced with conflict and ambiguities (Mctigue *et al.* 2018:323).

For the purpose of this study, the three theories of implementation are helpful as we investigate the processes and procedures for effective policy implementation in the DEL. From the theories discussed, it can be deduced that adequate funding, motivation and attitude of officials and the conflict and uncertainties affecting frontline staff, economic, social, and political environment should be taken into consideration

to ensure effective policy implementation. It is from this perspective that this study focused on the knowledge of officials, challenges that they face in implementing the policy and investigate how effective current processes and procedures are in implementing the customer complaints management policy in the DEL in the Free State province. The approach of these theories is relevant in the context of this study as the implementation of the complaints management policy within DEL affects the street-level bureaucrats and CSOs who must ensure that the policy is implemented in line with its objectives. The next section focuses on the variables necessary for successful implementation of public policies.

2.4 VARIABLES FOR SUCCESSFUL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

2.4.1 The 7-C protocol for policy implementation

The 7-C protocol is the extension of the original “5-C Protocol” which is a framework of critical variables affecting implementation developed by Najam (1995) which provides an explanation and understanding of the difficulties of implementation as well as to expose potential sources implementation gap (Bayrakal 2006:132). Scholars of policy implementation research such as Cloete *et al.* (2018) have added two more variables to Najam’s “5-C Protocol”. This study will adapt the 7-C protocol as outlined by Cloete (2018). The seven key clusters of explanatory variables might allow for a better understanding of implementation (Cloete, De Coning and Rabie 2018:206).

2.4.1.1 Content

Brynard (2005: 659) posits that “content of policy is important not only in the means it employs to achieve its ends, but also in its determination of the ends themselves and how it chooses the specific means to reach those ends.” The policy content reflects the vision, mission and goals that should be attained and the greater part of the content should be about activities and projects to achieve those goals (Cloete and de Coning 2011:146). For the purpose of this study, the knowledge of officials about on policy to manage customer complaints will be explored. In addition, this study will determine the processes and procedures for effective policy implementation. “A policy must have clear, specific, measurable, attainable, rational and time-bound goals and objectives, there must be consensus on the set goals and objectives as it is a critical feature of the policy” (Khan 2016: 9).

2.4.1.2 Context

Institutional context is shaped by larger context of social, economic, political and legal realities of the system (Cloete and de Coning 2011:146). According to Evans in (Badmus 2017:28), “the nature of country bureaucratic settings, dominant societal values and interests and prevailing organizations within the state to a greater extent usually determine the outcomes of developmental programmes within a given country. Evans further stressed that we can also talk of development when the bureaucracy cannot be unilaterally influenced by powerful individuals within or outside the country without losing close interaction with prevailing interests within the society to be able to negotiate and seek needed assistance necessary for transformation process”.

2.4.1.3 Commitment

The importance of commitment is emphasised by Brynard (2005: 660) in that, commitment should be at all levels, not only street-level; but even at regime-level, the state-level, and at all levels in between. According to Bayrakal (2006:135), “commitment is the variable cluster concerned with the discretion and support for policy. A fundamental issue in the commitment variable cluster is how discretion and commitment combine to impact implementation”. The starting point for successful policy change is the existence of political, managerial and financial commitment to achieve efficient and effective results” (Cloete *et al.* 2018:208). Commitment is important at all levels at which policy passes (Cloete and de Coning 2011:146).

2.4.1.4 Capacity

The capacity of the public sector is the structural, functional and cultural ability to implement policy objectives of government (Cloete and de Coning 2011:148). It is also their opinion that capacity refers to the availability of human, financial, material, technological and logistical resources, additionally, other attributes needed to endure rhetoric is transformed to action includes leadership, motivation, commitment, willingness, guts and endurance (Cloete and de Coning 2011:146). “The lack of expertise and skilled personnel translate into reduced capabilities by the public bureaucracy to effectively implement policies and projects. The non-responsive human resource policies towards training and development have resulted in serious leadership and management gaps in the public bureaucracy” (Hussein 2018:356).

For the DEL to implement the policy on complaints management it is important that attributes such as leadership, motivation and resources are made available to ensure policy success. It is the researcher's view that a lack of appropriate training of staff who are responsible for handling complaints could cause dissatisfaction among the public. According to Van der Waldt (2004:156), failure to do something when promised, delays, rudeness, inefficiency, failure to inform customers of any changes are some of the reasons that causes customers to complain. Blem (1995:145) argues that all staff despite their function should be made aware of the complaints policy together with the procedures during induction period. Additionally, frontline staff who have regular customer contact must be knowledgeable of complaints handling procedures in detail and they should be trained on how to cope with the psychological pressures of handling complaints face-to-face (Blem 1995:145).

2.4.1.5 Client/Coalitions

"Clients and coalitions are those individuals and groups whose interests are aligned with policy or conflict with it and, as a result, take strategic action to contribute to, or detract from, its implementation" (Bayrakal 2006:138). The support of clients and outside coalitions is critical during the policy implementation phase (Cloete and de Coning 2011:151). It is the opinion of the researcher that the implementation of the complaints management policy in the DEL ought to receive support from citizens who are impacted by the services that the DEL offers and other stakeholders to ensure successful implementation.

Filip (2013:272) argues that strategies on complaint management should cover both internal and external objectives of the organisation. Firstly, the internal objectives should deal with employees who work directly with customers facing difficulties and the following goals should be attained:

- a) "Employees should be informed about complaint management procedures, ensuring that policies and rules for handling complaints are accepted by employees;
- b) training and motivating employees to manage conflicts and to create positive experiences in customer interactions; and,
- c) developing an internal marketing approach" (Filip 2013:272).

Secondly, the external objectives focus on customers on regaining their satisfaction, securing customer portfolio, the collection and utilisation of customer complaint information to improve products or services and other internal processes (Filip 2013:272). Filip's internal and external objectives discussed above are relevant for the purpose of this study as the study is set out to examine the knowledge of officials on the processes and procedures related the implementation of the customer complaints management policy within the DEL.

2.4.1.6 Communication

According to Hussein (2018:354), communication refers to “a process of a process of transferring information, feelings, emotions, thoughts and ideas from one person to another; the exchange of ideas, among two or more people so as to share a common understanding is a major determinant of effective implementation of development policy and projects. As argued by Edwards III's (1980), communication provides channels through which public bureaucracy transmits instructions and orders to the appropriate personnel for implementation. Therefore, adequate, clear, accurate and consistent information of policy goals and objectives are important as they affect how development policies and projects are implemented”. Brynard (2005:662) argues that another variable for implementation is communication; this because it is an integral part of other variables such as content, context, commitment, capacity, and coalitions, especially in a country like South Africa which has eleven official languages. “Better public policy communication contributes to transparency and good governance in terms of increased stakeholder engagement, which could directly enhance organisational legitimacy” (Cloete *et al.* 2018:211).

“Complaint management is a process of dissemination of information aimed at identifying and correcting various causes of customer dissatisfaction”, and this customer complaints provide an opportunity for an organisation to solve operational malfunctions, to learn from negative situations and re-establish their satisfaction and trust (Filip 2013:272). The importance of communication cannot be underestimated if the implementation of a policy should succeed and from the studies discussed above, at all levels, from policy makers, implementers, and all other stakeholders there must always be an open two-way communication.

2.4.1.7 Coordination

This variable relates to assessing intra-inter organisational coordination and cooperation in policy implementation; the intra-organisational coordination is referring to working relationship among departments and agencies within the same organisation, whereas inter-organisational coordination refers to working relationship among various organisations (Cloete *et al.* 2018:212). “A major challenge in policy and project implementation by the public bureaucracy is ineffective leadership, communication, coordination and collaboration in policy and project design and implementation” (Hussein 2018:355).

It is the view of the researcher that coordination of activities, clear policy objectives, clear communication, resources, and the commitment of staff play an important role in ensuring policy implementation success and, if the DEL could follow and implement this policy based on the cluster variables discussed, it is highly likely that implementation will be effective. The following section will throw a light on the characteristics of the public policy.

2.5 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PUBLIC POLICY

The intention of all public policies is to influence or control human behaviour and also to encourage people to act in accordance with government-prescribed rules or goals (Anderson 2015:273). In addition, when compliance with the policy is not achieved, when people continue to act in undesired ways, or fail to take desired actions, or when they stop doing what is desired, then policy becomes ineffective (Anderson 2015:273). According to (Brynard 1992:198), public policies are authoritative, enforceable, flexible, feasible, clear and public in their character as outlined below.

- **Authoritative:** A policy is determined by an authorised government institution or representative such as the head of the department. Moreover, the policy must be defined explicitly, and all interested parties must be informed in writing.
- **Enforceable:** A policy declaration, even if it has not been embodied in legislation, if contained in an official letter, circular letter, departmental directive

or official mandate may be regarded as enforceable and if anyone does not conform to the policy directive, he may be accused of misconduct.

- **Flexible and adaptable:** The policy must still allow for change as circumstances vary.
- **Feasible:** Policymakers must take the realities of the environment into consideration when they formulate a policy.
- **Clear:** Policy must be interpreted correctly; it must be semantically and syntactically well set out.
- **Public:** When the policy concerns the public, it must be publicised as clearly as possible. Most government departments function through a network of district offices situated throughout the country, which ensures that policy be made known as widely as possible (Brynard 1992:198).

One of the objectives of this study is to explore the knowledge of officials responsible for effective implementation of the policy to manage customer complaints, thus the next section is dedicated to identifying who the policy implementers are.

2.6 WHO ARE THE POLICY IMPLEMENTERS?

“Although administrative agencies are primary implementers of public policy, many other players are also involved and contribute in various ways to the execution of policies” (Anderson 2015:233). Some of the actors who contribute to policy implementation are discussed below.

2.6.1 The President

According to Anderson (2015:234), “presidents now rarely participate in the details of policy implementation; on the contrary, a president as a means to exercise control and give direction over the executive branch is able to make appointments and remove officials”.

2.6.2 The Legislature

The use of Committee hearings and investigations is another technique employed to influence and hold agencies accountable and this is done by gathering information, review implementation of policies, publicise agency action, put pressure on officials and also to enhance political reputation of the members of the committee (Anderson 2015:235).

2.6.3 The Courts

The most important influence of the courts on administration is their ability to interpret the statutes and administrative rules and regulations and their review of administrative decisions in cases brought before them. Moreover, “they can facilitate, hinder, or largely nullify implementation of a policy through their decisions (Anderson 2015:237).

2.6.4 Pressure Groups

“Groups directly participate in administration through advisory bodies, or committees, or by providing advice to agencies and their officials” (Anderson 2015:237). On the one hand, according to Bevir (2009:104), when legislators, judges and civil servants communicate, bargain and cooperate, implementation is likely to be a smooth and successful process. On the other hand, “if there is conflict between actors, implementation is likely to be delayed and messy” (Bevir 2009:104).

Having discussed and explained what implementation is and identified actors and their roles in the policy implementation phase, the following section is intended to throw a light on mechanisms that can be applied for effective policy implementation.

2.7 MECHANISMS TO EFFECT POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

“Policy and project management are now widely recognized by organisations as being essential to achieving their strategic objectives. Achieving the strategic objectives often involves change, and that change needs managing in a different way from managing the routine work of the organisation. The change can take several forms: it may be an engineering construct, a new building, new infrastructure or a new product

or production machinery, it may be an information system, involving new information and communication technology (ICT), or it may be a social construct, new processes, a new organizations structure, or new skills in the work force” (Turner 2014:1). Policies are implemented through programmes and these programmes consist of formally coordinated activities and projects. Furthermore, “programmes and projects plans give detailed methods to be used to carry out the policy” (Cloete and de Coning 2011:171).

2.7.1 Benefits of programme management

Cloete and de Coning (2011:173) define programme management as “a purposeful management and coordination of a portfolio of projects targeting a geographical area, sectoral and functional mix and nature of assistance”. They elaborate that in addition, programme management is defined as “the facilitation or management of the relationship between projects or a portfolio of related projects on the basis of sectoral mix, functional focus and geographical targeting in order to achieve programme objectives and outcomes”. There are also several benefits that can be derived from programme management; such benefits include the following:

- a) “Greater visibility of projects to senior management and more comprehensive reporting of progress and more focus on strategic performance;
- b) Better prioritisation of projects, better management, and allocation of resources;
- c) Efficient and appropriate use of resources in a cost-effective way;
- d) Projects are driven by political, organisational, and social needs, personal agendas are kept in check;
- e) Better planning and coordination will result in the reduction of work backlog and duplication; and,
- f) Explicit recognition and understanding of dependencies” (Cloete and de Coning 2011:176).

The project management body of knowledge (PMBOK) has identified scope, time, cost, and quality as core elements that will determines the delivery of a project’s objectives. Furthermore, other management areas that have been identified to assist in the achievement of objectives include the following:

- “Project integration: All three main project management processes from planning, execution and control should be integrated.
- Project scope management: This process allows that only the work required is included and this is done through authorisation, scope planning and change management, and scope definition and verification scope.
- Project time management: It entails the sequence of activities, estimated duration of the project, calendar establishment and time control.
- Project cost management: This process allows that the project is completed within the approved budget, and this can be done through resource planning, cost estimating, cost budgeting, cash flow and cost control.
- Project quality management: This process ensures that the project will be able to fulfil the needs which it was intended to achieve. It determines the required conditions, quality conditions, quality planning, quality assurance and quality control.
- Human resources management: This process makes the most effective utilisation of the people who are involved in the project. It consists of organisation planning, staff acquisition and team development.
- Communication management: This process allows for proper collection of project information, communication planning, information distribution, project meetings, progress reporting and administrative closure.
- Project risk management: Risk is identified, analysed, responded to and risk control measures are put in place during this process.
- Project procurement management: This process acquires goods and services from outside the project team. It consists procurement planning, source selection, contract administration and contract close-out” (Cloete and de Coning 2011:180).

It is the researcher's view that the implementation of the complaints management policy within the DEL could be effective if the human resources, communication, risk assessment and the integration of processes are managed effectively by all participants. Obstacles that can hinder effective policy implementation are discussed in the next section.

2.8 BARRIERS IN EFFECTIVE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Policy output and outcome, impact of the policy and the assessment of whether the policy leads to the development of the society or not have been identified as areas that can be used to measure the performance of policy implementation (Khan and Khandaker 2016:541).” According to Serrat (2017:2), customer service is “the way the organisation handles the interactions between itself and its customers” in order to meet their expectations.

Successful policy outcomes depend not only on designing effective systems, but also on managing their implementation” (Khan and Khandaker 2016:541). The 1973 study by Pressman and Wildavsky (in Khan and Khandaker 2016:541) highlights several primary factors that lead to unsuccessful implementation of the programme on the Economic Development Administration in California in the United State of America. The factors are identified as follows:

- a) “faulty theory for the programme;
- b) unclear goals and objectives;
- c) a lack of coordinated planning;
- d) a lack of standardisation;
- e) intra-agencies oppositions; and,
- f) the complexities of joint actions” (Khan and Khandaker 2016:541).

The outcomes of Pressman and Wildavsky's study highlight the importance of managing the implementation phase of any public policy, and are thus relevant to study on the implementation of the complaints management policy in the DEL. Burall and Neligan in Brewer (2007:552) argue that “effective complaints and redress processes support the public accountability principles that underpin the efforts made

in many jurisdictions to promote good governance”. Other factors that can contribute to policy failure includes methodological defect, bad management and badly designed policies (Cloete and de Coning 2011:171).“A major challenge in policy and project implementation by the public bureaucracy is ineffective leadership, communication, coordination and collaboration in policy and project design and implementation” (Hussein 2018:355).

The study by Bardach (in Khan and Khandaker 2016:541) outlines four factors that cause delays or failures in implementation which include the diversion of resources, the deflection of policy goals, administration dilemmas and the dissipation of energies. Moreover, policies are not implemented due to poor management, political interference and unavailability of personnel or resources or lack of motivation or expertise for frontline implementers (Khan and Khandaker 2016:541).

According to a study on the challenges facing development policy and project implementation in Malawi conducted by Hussein (2018:355), it established that there are two major factors that lead to policy fragmentation which undermine the ability of the public bureaucracy to effectively implement and achieve desired policy objectives; those factors are political and bureaucratic leadership and weak institutional and individual capabilities. Firstly, under political and bureaucratic leadership, four reasons that undermine effective policy implementation were identified as:

- a) ineffective leadership, communication, coordination, and collaboration;
- b) politicisation of the bureaucracy;
- c) discontinuing policies of the previous regime; and,
- d) rampant corruption.

Secondly, on the lack of institutional capacity, the following three reasons were cited:

- a) inadequate material and skilled human resources;
- b) limited availability of finances; and,
- c) adverse disposition by bureaucrats.

Therefore, it is the opinion of the researcher that any public institution should carefully consider factors such as officials’ skills and their commitment, availability of financial

resources, institutional and political leadership as they have a potential to delay or hamper effective policy implementation. In pursuit of the objective of this study to determine challenges that five labour centres with the DEL in Free State province might be facing in implementing the policy to manage customer complaints, the factors identified by the study by Hussein (2018) will be adopted. "To track progress of a program, monitoring involves a continuous inspection of the performance of each program phase. As a result, any recommendations made regarding corrective and precautionary actions are based on the variance between the measured performance and the planned performance" (Matsiliza 2018:27). The next section discusses monitoring and evaluation in policy analysis.

2.9 MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN POLICY ANALYSIS

According to DeLeon and DeLeon (2002:475), "most implementation scholars agree on the importance of programme evaluation as a key to good implementation (Mazmanian and Sabatier 1983; Browne and Wildavsky 1984), viewing evaluation as a way to assess the implemented programme and make suggestions as to how it can be improved". Wholey (in Mbithi and Kiruja 2015:13) states that "evaluation is used in government to increase transparency, strengthen accountability, and improve performance, whereas performance management systems establish outcome oriented goals and performance targets, monitor progress, stimulate performance improvements, and communicate results to higher policy levels and the public".

Monitoring and evaluation are management activities that are necessary in ensuring policy goals are achieved in a form of concrete goals. Moreover, the systematic planning, design and implementation with sole purpose of improving policy outputs and outcomes will be of no benefit if it cannot be assessed whether the intended target has been met or missed and to what extent and what could have been the root cause (Cloete, Rabie and Coning 2014:3). Mushori (2015:12) reports that monitoring is a management tool that is used to spot inconsistency between what has been planned and reality, and to take corrective measures; this is to ensure that activities are implemented as planned. According to Cloete *et al.* (2014:3), "evaluation involves the systematic assessment of the envisaged or implemented response of a decision maker to improve a perceived problem". Furthermore, evaluation could focus on the policy area itself by looking at what has been decided in order to bring change, how

the intervention is implemented, and the processes involved. In addition, evaluation can also focus on a coordinated series of projects or activities in a form of programmes (Cloete *et al.* 2014).

Helmut (in (Waithera 2015:376) argues that monitoring and evaluation helps in assessing progress in line with expectations, therefore it is the opinion of the researcher that monitoring should be done continuously throughout the policy implementation stage. The researcher concurs with Helmut's (2002) view that, monitoring and evaluation should be on-going in collecting and analysing of data so that project managers are informed if progress toward established goals is being achieved.

"Monitoring and evaluation is conducted for several purposes, namely; to learn what works and does not; to make informed decisions regarding programme operations and service delivery based on objective data; to ensure effective and efficient use of resources; to track progress of programmes; to assess the extent to which the programme is having its desired impact; to create transparency and foster public trust; to understand support and meet donor needs; and, to create institutional memory" (Mbithi and Kiruja 2015:12). Given (2008:683) reports that to evaluate is to determine the value, merit, worth, or significance of something. Therefore, programme evaluation is the systematic application of research by collecting empirical information about activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programmes in order to make decision about its merit, improve programme effectiveness, and to provide information about future programming.

Ramothamo (2013), in (Mushori 2015:15) presents that monitoring and evaluation as a management has the following advantages:

- a) "It improves on project management and decision-making;
- b) Allows for accountability;
- c) It aids in determining which resources and activities will be required in the future;
- d) Data derived from monitoring and evaluation is useful for policy making and advocacy; and,

- e) Gives an indication on the project's progress and where obstacles are identified it provides for which corrective measures should be taken”.

For the purpose of this study, monitoring and evaluation is regarded an important management tool as we determine the processes and procedures for effective implementation of the customer complaints management policy in five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province. Therefore, this study will help in understanding how processes and procedures in monitoring and evaluation of this policy are complied with and, if it is not, what impact will it have in ensuring policy implementation success. The next section focuses on the cost-benefit analysis.

2.10 COST–BENEFIT ANALYSIS

“Cost-Benefit Analysis is most useful when you are analysing a single programme or policy to determine whether the programme's total benefit to society exceeds the costs or when you are comparing alternative programmes to see which one achieves the greatest benefit to society” (Cellini and Kee 2015:496). Cloete and de Coning (2011: 112) indicate that government funding is limited due to the increasing demands from society and governments cannot afford to spend millions of rand on services or programmes which do not have desired outcomes. Additionally, when designing or choosing other options, the cost-benefits and cost-effective value of a particular policy should be considered (Cloete *et al.* 2014: 112). Cost-benefit analysis “is a formal, quantitative evaluation technique that requires identifying the costs and benefits of either a proposed or actual policy and translating them into monetary value for purposes of comparison” (Anderson 2003:292).

According to Borges (2020:563), “the traditional cost-benefit analysis involves the following three assumptions:

- (a) Government projects and policies entail costs and benefits;
- (b) Costs and benefits can be quantified and compared; and,
- (c) As resources in society are limited and choices must be made to achieve results that improve the aggregate welfare and maximize net benefits, public policy or project benefits should overcome or justify their costs”.

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, financial accountability and transparency plays an important role in ensuring public policies are effectively implemented and the researcher concurs with Trenovski (2015:5) that the “process is not an easy one considering factors such as the political context, the administrative capacity, the level of transparency in determining the outputs and results or performance of each activity, an independent audit of the performance and results, or the integration of the performances in the political decisions”. Key lessons derived from the analysis suggest that the financial costs attached to the implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the DEL ought to be explored because monitoring and evaluation of public policies is important particularly the financial costs attached to its implementation. The next section summarises chapter two of this study.

2.11 CONCLUSION

In answering the question what systems and procedures can be put in place for effective implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province, we connected the literature of policy implementation to insights on the theoretical approaches and models on policy implementation. The aim of this chapter was to describe what policy implementation is by elaborating on the theories of policy implementation. Three generations of policy implementation were discussed, namely the first, second and third generation research and within the second generation research key lessons from literature research analysis is that greater emphasis should be directed at the role which “street-level bureaucrats” play in ensuring policy implementation success. The top-down and bottom-up perspective on policy implementation, models and the 7-C protocol on policy implementation were discussed.

The highlight of the chapter is how the content, context, commitment, capacity, client and communication play a vital role in ensuring that public policies are effectively implemented. Furthermore, this chapter dedicated a section on the benefits of managing projects and programmes together with the identification of factors that hinder effective policy implementation such as limited funding and lack of capacity of policy implementers. Monitoring and evaluation as well as cost-benefit analysis were discussed. In the next chapter the focus is on legislative framework pertaining to South African public service customer complaints management.

CHAPTER 3: LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to answer the question on what are the benefits for effective implementation of the customer complaints management policy within the DEL in the Free State province, this chapter will discuss the legislative mandates provided to enforce and manage customer complaints management in the South African public service. The Covid19 epidemic resulted and contributed to the rise in unemployment rate, high number of complaints of unfair labour practise by employers, non-compliance by employers to adherence to labour laws and injuries sustained by employee during the course of employment; all these stakeholders go to the DEL for assistance and they therefore expect to be treated with dignity, fairness, and with respect. In line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 (the Constitution) and the *Batho Pele* principles, The DEL should ensure that mechanisms are put in place in a case where services have not been rendered to the satisfaction of the citizens.

In an attempt to respond to the objectives of determining the benefits associated with effective implementation of customer complaints policy and determining the processes and procedures for effective implementation of the customer complaints policy, this chapter commences by outlining the constitutional mandate on human dignity, equality and freedom as contemplated in chapter 2 of the Constitution. Furthermore, the ethical, professional, transparent, and public-centred principles in public administration as enshrined in chapter 10 of the Constitution, as well as relevant institutions responsible to manage customer complaints will also be discussed. The aim of this chapter is to highlight that any public policy should conform to certain standards for effective implementation, particularly on the management of public complaints.

The discussion in this chapter will present the relevant legislations and acts, such as, the Public Service Regulation of 2001, Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 and the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000 which are relevant to the discussion on effective management of customer complaints in the South African public service. Furthermore, institutions mandated to promote complaints management in the South African public service such as the Human Rights

Commission, the Public Service Commission and the Office of the Public Protector are outlined. The discussion on the Office of the Public Protector will further give two practical case studies which affected the DEL. In addition, the *Batho Pele* principles are discussed, followed by the customer complaints management policy, the benefits associated with an effective complaint's management in the public service, and the methods used to lodge complaints. To conclude the chapter, the international benchmarking of the best practices of complaints management are discussed. This chapter starts with relevant sections from the Constitution that deal with complaints management in the South African public service.

3.2 THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA OF 1996

“Public policies are supposed to bring political, economic, social and institutional change in the current state of affairs” (Cloete and de Coning 2011:170). South Africa is a constitutional state and all government departments have a constitutional mandate to fulfil, and in the fulfilment of those mandates they must adhere to the principles set out in the constitution. Therefore, any policy to be implemented ought to agree with the constitution and the outcomes ought to be an improved public service delivery. Within the Constitution, there are two chapters that are relevant to this study that outline why citizens' rights should be protected.

3.2.1 Chapter 2: Bill of Rights

The Bill of Rights is regarded as the cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. The Bill of Rights outlines the rights of all people in the country and affirms democratic values of human dignity, equality, and freedom. Section 7 (2) of the Constitution provides for the state to respect, protect, promote, and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights. For the purpose of the study, this section emphasises the importance of treating every citizen with dignity and not to discriminate them when they seek access to public services.

3.2 2 Chapter 10: Public Administration

Section 195(1) of the Constitution affords public administration to be governed by the democratic values and principles including the following:

- (a) A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained;
- (b) Efficient, economic, and effective use of resources must be promoted;
- (c) Public administration must be development-oriented;
- (d) Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias;
- (e) People's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making;
- (f) Public administration must be accountable;
- (g) Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information;
- (h) Good human-resource management and career-development practices, to maximise human potential, must be cultivated; and,
- (i) Public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation (South Africa, 1996).

Public institutions should remember that customer expectations do not stand still and there should be continuous endeavours to improve service delivery as there is no such a thing as “arriving” when it comes to service delivery (Crous 2004: 587). According to Hague (2001:65), “the public service has undergone a business-like transformation, especially under the influence of the current global context characterised by the triumph of market forces and the reorientation of state policies toward deregulation, privatisation and liberalisation”. Through these business-like reforms in the public service a new genre of administrative reform emerged which is often generalised as New Public Management (NPM).

Accordingly, O'Flynn (in Kariuki and Tshandu 2014: 797) states that a frequently noted feature of NPM is the application of ideas from the private sector to the public sector such as individual accountability, emphasis on citizens to be treated as "clients" or "customers" and the need to provide them with efficient services. In addition, citizens' needs and rights should be determining factors on how services will be delivered and that their "voice" should influence how services should be provided (Kariuki and Tshandu 2014:797). Public servants should continue to discharge their responsibilities professionally and ethically thus this section of the Constitution was considered relevant to the study to emphasise that when citizens complain about service delivery staff should act in an ethical manner and professionally.

3.3 PUBLIC SERVICE REGULATIONS, 2001

All public services employees must have, according to Section C.2 of the Public Service Regulations 2001(South Africa, 2001 as amended), a relationship with the public and serve them in an unbiased and impartial manner in order to create confidence in the public service, be polite, helpful, and reasonably accessible in his or her dealings and treating members of the public as customers who are entitled to receive high standard of service.

Section C.1 of the Public Service Regulations 2001, further states that the executive authority must establish and sustain service delivery improvement programme and must be able to:

- (1) Specify the main services to be provided, by a department;
- (2) Contain consultation arrangement to the different types of actual and potential customers by a department;
- (3) With due regard to customers' means of access to services and barriers to increased access thereto, specify the mechanisms or strategies to be utilised progressively to remove the barriers so that access to services is increased;
- (4) Indicate standards for the main services to be provided;
- (5) Contain arrangements as to how information about a department's services are to be provided; and,
- (6) Stipulate a system of mechanisms for complaints (South Africa, 2001).

3.4 PROMOTION OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT 2 OF 2000

Section 32(1)(a) and (b) of the Constitution make provision that every person be afforded the right to access any information held by the state and access any information that is held by other person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights. “The purpose of the Promotion of Access to Information Act of 2000 (PAIA) is to promote the right of access to information, to foster a culture of transparency and accountability in South Africa. Furthermore, PAIA is aimed at encouraging an open democracy where individuals from all walks of life are empowered to engage with government and participate in decisions which affect their lives (South Africa, 2000).

The right of access to information is a unique right as it enables the realisation of other human rights; this is one of the most important ways in which PAIA can be used” (South Africa 2000:10). According to Marais, Quayle and Burns (2017:39), “there are of course grounds for public officials to refuse requests for information; PAIA outlines a number of such conditions, including protection of privacy of a third party (private person), protection of certain records of the South African Revenue Service, protection of the safety of individuals or property, and defence, security and international relations of the Republic”. In addition, PAIA clearly states that, “regardless of the reasons for refusal of a request for information, this must be communicated to the applicant” (South Africa, 2000).

3.5 PROMOTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE ACT 3 OF 2000

Section 33(3) of the Constitution states that “everyone whose rights have been adversely affected by administrative action has the right to be given written reasons”. Section 1 of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act of 2000 (PAJA) defines administrative action as "any decision taken, or any failure to take a decision by an organ of state when exercising a power in terms of the Constitution or a provincial constitution; or "exercising a public power or performing a public function in terms of any legislation” (South Africa 2000:2).

It is the researcher’s view that PAJA has an important role to play to protect the rights of citizens, this Act is relevant to the study as among the principles of effective customer management is that citizens have the right to be given written reasons of the

decision taken or where there is a failure to act by those in authority. “Citizens need a functional public system, accessible, equitable, efficient, and responsive and tailored to their needs” (Timofte 2016:180).

3.6 WHITE PAPER ON TRANSFORMING PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY (*Batho Pele Principles*), 1997

Shammot (in Hadiyati 2014:105) states that “society is the customer and they must be satisfied”. According to Louw (2012:93), through the *Batho Pele* framework, South Africa aligned itself with global trends of adopting the NPM philosophy which caused the private sector ideas to be incorporated into the public service which resulted in citizens being referred to as customers or clients. The WPTPS has the following eight transformation priorities:

3.6.1 Consultation: Citizens should be consulted about the level and the quality of the public services they receive and, wherever possible, they should be given a choice about the service about services that are offered.

3.6.2 Service standards: Citizens should be informed about what level and quality of service they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect.

3.6.3 Access: All citizens should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled.

3.6.4 Courtesy: Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration.

3.6.5 Information: Citizens should be given full and accurate information about the services they are eligible to receive.

3.6.6 Openness and transparency: Citizens should be told how national and provincial departments are run, how much they cost and who is in charge.

3.6.7 Redress: If the standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation, and a speedy and effective remedy; when complaints are made, citizens should receive, sympathetic and positive response.

3.6.8 Value for money: Public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money (South Africa, 1997).

Furthermore, Bevir (2009: 141) argues that NPM introduced the private sector management techniques in the public sector and the following reforms and ideas emerged:

- “A hands-on professional management in the public sector in which efficiency and accountability is promoted;
- The introduction of qualitative, standards and measures of performance in which clear statement of goals and objectives are encouraged and promoted;
- Increased output controls by linking resources allocated and rewards to measurements of performance;
- The introduction of private sector management practises with the intention of promoting and developing better tools of management; and,
- An emphasis on discipline and frugality in the use of resources. Managers in the public sector were to cut costs, raise labour discipline, resist union demands, thereby lowering costs and increasing efficiency” (Bevir 2009:141).

The next section presents the relevant South African institutions that are mandated to promote customer complaints management in the South African public service.

3.7 INSTITUTIONS RESPONSIBLE IN GOVERNING CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE

3.7.1 The Office of the Public Protector

The Office of the Public Protector (OPP) is established in terms of sections 181 to 183 of the Constitution, in order to strengthen the constitutional democracy through investigating and redressing improper conduct in state affairs. The OPP has the power to investigate any conduct in the public administration in any sphere of government that is alleged or suspected to be improper or have resulted in any impropriety or prejudice; to report on that conduct and to take appropriate remedial action to support constitutional democracy in the republic. The study provides two case studies on customer complaints management cases referred to the OPP by citizens who were

not happy with the DEL's service, this as to reaffirm the importance of this office in ensuring proper customer complaints management within the public service.

3.7.1.1 The Office of the Public Protector versus DEL

The OPP investigates on its own initiative or on receipt of a complaint of any alleged maladministration in connection with government affairs, abuse or unjustifiable exercise of power or improper conduct or undue delay by a person performing a public function and improper or dishonest act, or omission or offences referred. The report (Public Protector 2017) by the OPP against the DEL investigated maladministration by the Western Cape DEL for alleged failure to follow due process when it conducted an inspection of Commercial Cold Storage (LTD) in respect of the violation of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993. The OPP found that the DEL unduly failed to follow due process when it investigated the violations of the employee health and safety standards at Commercial Cold Storage (LTD), this resulted in the department failing to provide evidence that it conducted a follow-up inspection as it is compulsory to do so (Public Protector 2017:5). It was confirmed that the union representative and the complainant were never involved during the alleged follow-up inspection and the DEL could not produce the inspection file of Commercial Cold Storage (LTD).

The remedial action required the Director-General (DG) to act against the conduct of officials responsible for not providing feedback to the complainant regarding the inspection, consider arranging workshops for staff on the *Batho Pele* principles and PAJA as part of the induction on an annual basis, and it was recommended that a letter of apology be furnished to the complainant (Public Protector 2017/2018: 8).

Similarly, Report No.15 of 2017/2018 by the OPP investigated the allegation of undue delay and maladministration by the Compensation Fund (CF) to finalise the objection of hearing of Mrs Gertruida Magdalena Robertson. The OPP found that the CF in terms of service delivery fell short of the requirement of the Constitution and fell short of the required service delivery standards required by the *Batho Pele* principles (Public Protector 2017: 5).

3.7.2 The Public Service Commission

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is established in terms of section 196 of the Constitution as an independent and impartial institution and must exercise its powers and perform its functions without fear, favour or prejudice in the interest of the maintenance of effective and efficient public administration and a high standard of professional ethics in the public service. Other organs of state, through legislative and other measures, must assist and protect the PSC to ensure its independence, impartiality, dignity and effectiveness. No person or organ of state may interfere with the functioning of the PSC. The powers and functions of the PSC are:

- (a) To promote the values and principles set out in section 195, throughout the public service;
- (b) To investigate, monitor and evaluate the organisation and administration, and the personnel practices, of the public service;
- (c) To propose measures to ensure effective and efficient performance within the public service;
- (d) To give directions aimed at ensuring that personnel procedures relating to recruitment, transfers, promotions, and dismissals comply with the values and principles set out in section 195;
- (e) To report in respect of its activities and the performance of its functions, including any finding it may make and directions and advice it may give, and to provide an evaluation of the extent to which the values and principles set out in section 195 are complied with;
- (f) Either of its own accord or on receipt of any complaint-to investigate and evaluate the application of personnel and public administration practices, and to report to the relevant executive authority and legislature;
- (g) To investigate grievances of employees in the public service concerning official acts or omissions and recommend appropriate remedies;
- (h) To monitor and investigate adherence to applicable procedures in the public service;

- (l) To advise national and provincial organs of state regarding personnel practices in the public service, including those relating to the recruitment, appointment, transfer, discharge, and other aspects of the careers of employees in the public service; and,
- (j) To exercise or perform the additional powers or functions prescribed by an Act of Parliament (South Africa 1996).

3.7.3 South African Human Rights Commission

The Bill of Rights serves to stop the government from abusing the rights of the people. In terms of section 184 of the Constitution, the Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) must promote transparency by monitoring and assessing the observance of human rights in South Africa. The SAHRC has the power to require relevant organs of the state to provide it with information on the measures that they have taken towards the realisation of the rights contained in the Bill of Rights (Cheminais and Toit 1998:160).

3.8 CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE

Former president Jacob Zuma during his office period as head of the South African government established the Presidential Hotline in 2009 with the purpose to receive a wide range of complaints and queries from citizens about the service they were receiving from government departments and agencies (Presidency 2013). The Presidential Hotline recorded 154 549 cases as of 31 January 2013, with the overall case resolution rate, starting from resolution rate of 39% in November 2009, increasing from 80% to 89% between January 2012 and January 2013.

Of the 40 428 cases referred to national departments, the Departments of Home Affairs, Human Settlements, Labour, Justice, South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and Social Development were singled out as departments that received high volumes of queries but have consistently been performing well in terms of responsiveness. Departments dealing with high numbers of cases and have shown significant improvements in the period 31 January 2012 to 31 January 2013 are: Rural Development (from 57% to 83%), South African Police Service (SAPS) (47% to 80%),

Correctional Services (41% to 98%), and Public Enterprises (from 65% to 99%) (Presidency 2013:2).

According to the Presidency (2013:9), several lessons learnt from the presidential hotline include the following:

- “Complaints management should be treated as a strategic issue requiring high-level oversight and monitoring by the management of the department;
- An effective, efficient, and responsive complaints management system is often an indicator of a department that is functioning well overall;
- The quality of resolving complaints (speed, communication and relevance) is as important as the number of complaints received;
- The weakness within government complaint management system often lies in poor communication during the investigation; and,
- Complaint’s information should be used as a source evidence in planning and budgeting for service delivery improvement”.

According to Zairi (2000:333), “most organisations that face big challenges in customer complaints handling:

- suffer from a lack of systematic approach to complaints handling;
- do not recognise the importance of customer complaints at a strategic level;
- are ill-equipped in terms of systems and processes for logging in complaints, processing them, etc.;
- are not proficient with measurement and in non-financial areas such as customer satisfaction and complaints;
- have adverse cultures and too much of “blame and reprimand” practices; and,
- have not embraced the concept of quality management and its related concepts”.

Filip (2013:272) asserts that “complaint management is a process of dissemination of information aimed at identifying and correcting various causes of customer dissatisfaction”, and these customer complaints provide an opportunity for an organisation to solve operational malfunctions, learn from negative situations and re-establish their satisfaction and trust. Burall and Neligan (in Brewer 2007:552) argues that “effective complaints and redress processes support the public accountability principles that underpin the efforts made in many jurisdictions to promote good governance”.

The implementation of the complaints management policy in the Free State province within the DEL has an impact on both internal and external clients. Filip (2013:272) argues that strategies on complaint management should cover both internal and external objectives. In the internal objectives the focus should be on employees that deal directly with customers facing difficulties, this goal should include: informing the employees about complaint management procedures; ensuring that policies and rules for handling complaints are accepted by employees; training and motivating employees to manage conflicts and to create positive experiences in customer interactions; and, developing an internal marketing approach, while the external objectives focus on customers on regaining their satisfaction, securing customer portfolio, collection and utilisation of customer complaint information to improve products or services and other internal processes (Filip 2013:272).

Complaint’s information should be regularly analysed by departments, provinces and municipalities and the data should be utilised to influence planning and implementation (South Africa, 2013). The researcher holds a view that in order to improve the quality of services rendered by the public service, an effective complaints management system is required, and it should be properly managed. There are several benefits that can be derived from an effective customer complaints management system, some are discussed in the next section.

3.9 BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

On the one hand, Dahlgaard-Park (2015:8) reports that “an effective complaint management system encompasses the policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by an organisation for the management of complaints”. On the other hand, Greenberg and Chesbrough (in Ha and Lee 2010:1161) declare

that the benefits for the public sector institution includes improved quality service, improved cooperation building and effective organisational structure, provision of multi-channel access to customers and bench-marking of excellence in the private sector. Equally important, service providers should continually gauge the quality of the service they deliver and should encourage feedback from clients. Furthermore, provision of access to lodge customer complaints when customers are dissatisfied with the quality of service delivered should also be encouraged (Walter and Ezema 2016:16). In contrast, Jerger and Wirtz (2017: 263) maintain that the impact of bad complaint handling affects employees in many ways including: being negative towards service orientation; lower levels of job satisfaction; stress and frustration; emotional exhaustion which result in absenteeism, retaliation, revenge and sabotage.

Policies could be better implemented if there is a buy in of officials and in order to handle complaints effectively, organisations need a complaint management policy which is known to staff and customers alike, the proper structure to carry out the policy, procedures for handling complaints and a well-trained and effective staff (Blem 1995: 144). According Van der Waldt (2004: 157), “there is an important link between complaints and best value”, and in addition, good complaints assist in solving problems, provides information to managers and inspire confidence in service by the users. Furthermore, a complaints management policy affords organisations an opportunity to put matters right as it can be used as a management tool for performance improvement.

3.10 METHODS USED TO LODGE CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE

Pinto and Mansfield (2011:3) maintain that “organisations should be concerned with not only the root problem that caused the customer’s dissatisfaction, but also the manner in which the customer responds, and endeavour to encourage them toward direct voice”. DPSA (2013: 6) outlines the following methods through which complaints can be lodged:

- “verbal expression;
- a complaints/suggestion box;

- a touch-keypad system after the service is rendered;
- a walk-in by the complainant;
- a telephone and fax to a call centre or office;
- a letter or e-mail to a call centre or office;
- a web-based complaint lodging system;
- a Short- Message System;
- a social media system; and,
- any other mechanism that is user-friendly and accessible to people with special needs”.

Furthermore, Van der Wadt (2004: 153) highlights the following mechanisms that public institutions can utilise to listen to the voice of the customer:

- “customer survey;
- customer follow-ups;
- customer councils;
- focus groups;
- customer interviews;
- inspectors;
- ombudsmen;
- complaint tracking system; and
- toll free number”.

Moynihan and Thomas (2013 :789) argue that governments are facing a challenge on how to provide good customer service, and this has resulted in a need for visible, accessible and navigable systems to communicate with their customers. The next section concentrates on the international best practices on customer complaints management. The researcher is of the view that the South African public service can learn a lot from other countries on how to manage customer complaints.

3.11 INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICE ON COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

3.11.1 European Ombudsman

The mission of the European Ombudsman is to “serve European democracy by working with institutions of European Union (EU) to create a more effective, accountable, transparent and ethical administration. Furthermore, the Ombudsman empowers citizens to realise their fundamental rights such as the right to good administration, transparency, participation, promotion of good governance and a culture of good service” (Ombudsman 2019:5).

3.11.2 Commonwealth Ombudsman

In order to address the failure of most Australian government agencies to establish an effective internal complaint handling mechanism, the office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman published the Good Practise Guide for Effective Complaint Handling in 1997. This guide is used by government agencies to develop a complaint handling system or to evaluate or monitor the existing system, and it is based on five elements of culture, principles, people, process and analysis as explained below (Commonwealth Ombudsman 2009).

- **Culture:** “An agency that cares about its clients and its reputation will be committed to good complaint handling” (Commonwealth Ombudsman 2009:5). Moreover, there should be a culture that recognises the value of complaints and commitment by staff in resolving complaints.
- **Principles:** Five fundamental principles to be observed in order to handle complaints include:
 - Fairness: Impartiality, confidentiality and transparency are encouraged.
 - Accessibility: Systems should be accessible and should rest upon two features, which are public awareness of the system and effective access points.
 - Responsiveness: The system should be responsive to the needs of all complainants including clients with special needs (clients with hearing and visual impairment).

- Efficiency: All complaints, simple or complex, should receive continuing attention and be resolved as quickly as possible.
- Integration: A complaint system must be integrated with other activities and the information should be used to identify weakness in the organisation. In addition, a complaint system should be recognised as a separate unit or branch that is shown on the organisational chart, headed by a senior manager, reports on complaints and complaint trends be a regular agenda item for executive management meetings.
- **People:** Responsibility for handling complaints should be allocated to staff who are trained and supervised. Furthermore, “those who handle complaints should be warm and empathetic, non-defensive, analytical, unbiased, astute, creative, decisive, firm, resilient and good communicators both orally and in writing” (Commonwealth Ombudsman 2009:17). Equally important, training of complaint handling staff on telephone manners, good writing skills, sound recording skills and dealing with difficult or unreasonable behaviour, handling of anonymous complaints and protecting the privacy of complaints must be encouraged (Commonwealth Ombudsman 2009:18).
- **Process:** A sound complaint handling process should ensure that the complaints are dealt with effectively and efficiently so that clients will have confidence in the complaint system, and this can be done through the following steps:
 - Acknowledgement: As a sign and to reassure clients that the complaint is receiving attention, a complaint must be acknowledged quickly because acknowledgement is an important tool in managing the complainant’s expectations.
 - Assessment and assigning priority: “ Early assessment of a complaint is essential for effective complaint handling” (Commonwealth Ombudsman 2009:22).
 - Planning: “A common cause of inefficiency and delay in complaint investigation is that responsibility for investigating a complaint is passed

from one officer to another without adequate handover or planning” (Commonwealth Ombudsman 2009:23).

- Investigation: This is to allow for fairness and to provide appropriate remedy to the complaint.
- Response: Complainants should be informed about the particulars of the investigation, including any findings or decisions reached, even interim reports or explanation will be welcomed by the complainant (Commonwealth Ombudsman 2009:25).
- **Analysis:** Complaints are a rich source of information on the performance of an organisation and which areas to improve. It is therefore good practice to produce regular reports on complaints for presentation to senior management. In fact, reports help the organisation to improve services, safeguard their reputation, to be better prepared for the future and for staff management, as the information can be used to identify staff members or teams that are performing well and those who are not.

3.11.3 The Australian and New Zealand Standard

According to Dahlgaard-Park (2015:2), many organisations have developed a complaint handling policy and could collect and record complaints, but they often fail to integrate the essential components of an effective complaint management system, leading to lost opportunities for improvement and continued client satisfaction. Furthermore, the Australian and New Zealand Standard Guidelines for complaints management in organisations outlines five essential components of an effective complaints management system as discussed below:

- a) “Commitment: Organisations should be open to complaints from citizens and develop a culture that values complaints. Response to complaints should be a timely manner and staff that handles complaints should be recognised and rewarded.
- b) Facilitation: The guiding principle here is that the organisation must make it easy for people to make complaints. Furthermore, the complaints system should be assessable, transparent and easy to understand and people who wants to make complaints must be assisted to do so.

- c) Resourcing: Staff handling and managing complaints should be trained, empowered, and should be given adequate resources.
- d) Learning: The guideline here is that complaints should be analysed, and the outcomes should be used to improve systems and processes within the organisation. Moreover, appropriate recordkeeping and monitoring of trends is encouraged.
- e) Guidance: Policies and procedures should be developed to guide staff in the management of complaints. In addition, there should be a guide on how complaints will be received, recorded, managed, and reported. The policies should be made available and communicated clearly to the public and staff” (Dahlgaard-Park 2015:4).

The analysis above clearly demonstrates the importance of complaints management in an organisation. In addition, every organisation must strive to initiate a policy that is clear to understand, that resources should be made available, training of staff and the analysis of complaints received should be prioritised in order to improve services offered to the public. This section is relevant to the study as it outlines the expected processes and procedures that the DEL ought to develop in order to ensure effective implementation of the complaints management policy. The next section focuses on the African perspective in managing customer complaints.

3.11.4 The African Union Charter on Values and Principles of the Public Service Administration

The main objectives of the African Charter on Values and Principles of the Public Service and Administration is to ensure member states of the African Union modernise the public administration, strengthen capacity, encourage public participation in administrative processes and the promotion of moral values by public service agents with the view to ensure transparency in the delivery of service (African Union 2011:4).

Member States of the African Union are required to implement the charter in accordance with the following principles:

- “Impartiality, fairness and due process in the delivery of public service;
- Professionalism and ethics in public service and administration;

- Promotion and protection of rights of users and public service agents; and,
- Institutionalising of the culture of accountability and integrity and transparency (African Union 2011:5).

Article 6 of the African Charter on Values and Principles (2011: 6) stipulates that member states when dealing with access to information should make available to users information on procedures and formalities pertaining to public service delivery, users shall be informed about all decisions concerning them, reasons behind those decisions as well as mechanisms available for appeal. Furthermore, the Charter requires that the Public Service and Administration establish effective communication systems and processes to enhance access to information by users and receive their feedback and inputs, and that administrative procedures and documents are presented in a user-friendly and simplified manner (African Union 2011:6).

What can be deduced from the literature on complaints managements and the international best practises is that a culture should be developed and encouraged that recognise the value of customer complaints, people who are handling complaints should be trained and adhere to the principles of fairness, accessibility, and accountability. Furthermore, customer management could be a means to improve service delivery and help to manage the reputation of the organisation. It is the researcher's view that by benchmarking the South African customer complaints management against other countries will lead to an improved customer management culture and the development of an effective and efficient complaints management processes. In the next section we discuss the advantages of an effective complaints management system.

3.12 ADVANTAGES OF COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

DPSA (2013: 13) through the Citizen Complaints and Compliments Management Framework (CCCMF) considers cost reduction, continuous improvement, citizens' satisfaction, rights protection, provision of resolution, timeous provision of information, and serving as a monitoring system, as some of the benefits or advantages of an effective complaints management system. The CCCMF's purpose is to "provide the parameters within which government departments and agencies should develop their complaints and compliments management systems" (DPSA 2013: 3).

According to Zairi (2000: 331), “complaints must be looked at in a constructive, positive and professional perspective for the following reasons:

- a) They are a way of receiving feedback from customers and therefore necessary means for putting into action improvement plans;
- b) They are a tool for preventing complacency and harnessing internal competencies for optimising products and services;
- c) They are a useful way of measuring performance and allocating resources to deal with the deficient areas of the business;
- d) They are a useful “mirror” for gauging internal performance against competition and best in class organisations; and,
- e) They are a useful exercise for getting nearer the customer and understanding them better”.

“User voice and complaints can serve as important inputs to innovation in public services. User knowledge can be harnessed to provide insights and ideas that prompt more effective service responses and add value to service delivery” (Simmons and Brennan 2017:1085). The researcher is of the view that an effective complaints management system will lead to improved public service delivery. Furthermore, the researcher concurs with Dahlgaard-Park (2015: 4) in that “organisations that promote and encourage complaints and respond to them fairly and promptly are more likely to strengthen relationships, identify problems, improve service delivery and systems, and improve customer service”.

3.13 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to outline the legislative framework that guide the management of customer complaints in the South African public service. In order to address the fourth objective of this study which is “to determine the advantages associated with an effective customer complaints management”, this chapter discussed relevant prescripts of the Constitution, with specific reference to chapter 2 (Bill of Rights) and chapter 10 (Public Administration). These chapters of the constitution are used as a guide by public service institutions to uphold principles of human rights and to develop mechanism for managing customer complaints.

Furthermore, the institutions responsible for governing customer complaints management in the South African public service were discussed. The *Batho Pele* principles and legislation such as the PAJA and PAIA were also discussed, followed by the benefits and advantages associated with an effective complaints management.

In an attempt to answer the question what systems and procedures can be put in place for effective implementation of the customer complaints management in DEL Free State, this section reviewed literature on international benchmarking for complaints management studies. Key concepts derived from the literature reviewed include the importance of training of staff, clear procedures and processes to manage complaints, commitment and the role that organisational culture plays in the effective implementation of the customer complaints management policy. This chapter was meant to lay the foundation for research design and methodology adopted for this study which are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter discussed the legislative frameworks that guide customer complaints management in the South African public service. It has been demonstrated through this study's literature review that in the quest for effective implementation of the customer complaints management system in the public sector, emphasis should be directed toward institutional structure, knowledge and skills of policy implementers and the availability of resources.

As outlined in chapter 1, this study was set out to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent do officials in the five labour centres of the DEL Free State Province have knowledge about the implementation of the customer complaints, compliments, and suggestion policy?
- What challenges do the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province face in their endeavour to implement customer complaints management policy?
- What are the benefits for effective implementation of customer complaints management?
- What systems and procedures can be put in place for effective implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the Labour Centres within DEL Free State Province?

Therefore, this chapter presents the research design and research methodology adopted to answer the above research questions. Moreover, the chapter will explain the sampling, population and criteria used to establish the trustworthiness of study, among others. The chapter also covers data analysis and interpretation techniques used, limitations and delineation associated with the study, and ethical considerations of this study. The departure points of this chapter revolve around describing and explaining the philosophical outlook and associated research paradigms.

4.2 PHILOSOPHICAL OUTLOOK

According to Birks (2017:2), philosophy is defined as “a view of the world that encompasses the questions and instruments that help to find answers that inform that view”. Creswell (2015:15) posits that “in the research design stage, the researcher begins with the philosophical assumptions and brings into their research project their own worldviews, paradigms, or a set of beliefs which then influence and inform their conduct and their writing of the qualitative study”. The ability to answer questions regarding philosophical position guides the position of the researcher on how to work with participants, which approach to take when generating, collecting and analysing data and the way research findings are presented (Birks 2017:10).

For the purpose of this study, it is the researcher’s view that within the South African public service, the main hindrance to quality and reliable public service delivery revolves around poor implementation of the policies by policy implementers as well as failure to apply redress mechanisms as stipulated in the *Batho Pele* principles. It is this worldview and belief that influenced the direction of the study to investigate how effective and efficient is the implementation of the customer complaints management policy within the DEL in the Free State province. The researcher, therefore, agrees with the view of Sefotho (2015:25) who states that “the world can be understood from one’s own experiences and from those of others. The world in this sense refers to a social world and the experiences of people in that social world”.

Salvador (2016:4) affirms that “the researcher employing either qualitative or quantitative research should better understand the different competing research paradigms and its philosophical underpinnings in relation to ontology, epistemology, methodology and even the methods of collecting and analysing data to produce and excellent research”. The ontological, epistemological and the methodological assumptions are thus discussed in the below sub-sections.

4.2.1 Ontological

According to Birks (2017:5), ontology is “the study of being”. Given (2012:3) states that the ontological questions deal with the nature of reality and what is known about it. In the view of Creswell (2015:16), researchers in qualitative studies hold the idea of multiple realities in which the researcher, the individuals that are studied and the

readers of the qualitative study embrace and report on different realities. The author elaborates that evidence of multiple realities includes the use of multiple quotes based on actual words of different individuals and the presentation of different perspectives from individuals.

For the purpose of this study, the ontological position of the researcher is that there are multiple actors in the implementation of the customer complaints management policy within the DEL in the Free State province, and that each actor holds a different view about the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the policy. Moreover, each labour centre has a different approach on how to effectively implement the policy, and they also experience different challenges pertaining to policy implementation. It is these different realities that shaped the approach of this study.

4.2.2 Epistemological

The epistemological questions focus on the nature of the relationship between the inquirer and what can be known (Given 2012:3). Birks (2017:5) defines epistemology as a “the branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge”. Furthermore, the epistemological assumption develops the point that researchers conducting a qualitative study will try to get as close as possible with the participants being studied (Creswell 2015:18). In the same light, Creswell (2015:18) extends that the researcher oversees their studies in the field in which participants live in order to develop a better understanding of what they are saying and to have first-hand information.

The epistemological position of this research lies in the fact that the officials within the DEL in the Free State province possess knowledge on how effective and efficient the implementation of the customer complaints management policy is. The epistemological questions that this study endeavours to answer include:

- To what extent do officials in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province have knowledge about the implementation of the customer complaints, compliments, and suggestion policy?
- What challenges do the five labour centres in the DEL in the Free State province face in implementing the customer complaints management policy?

It was therefore important that the researcher get close to participants at their workplace or in the field through the use of emails, in this case from managers, supervisors, and client service officers in five labour centres, to collect data through interviews so that their knowledge and insight can contribute towards the findings of this study.

4.2.3 Methodology

According to Mills (2017:3), “methodology determines how the researcher thinks about a study, how they make decisions about a study, and how they position themselves”. Guba and Lincoln (1994:108) assert that methodological questions address the question on how can the inquirer go about finding out whatever he/she believes can be known. Muncie, Sobal and DeForge (1989:8) differentiates between methodology and methods and affirm that “methodology is a philosophical foundation of research that intends to pursue or generate new knowledge while methods are the tools and techniques that are used to collect and analyse data”. Hussain, Elyas, and Nasseef (2013:2376) further elaborate that “methodology depends on ontological and epistemological assumptions about the nature of reality and the best way of gaining access to that reality”. The methodology of the current study covered the research paradigms, research design, data collection techniques and the data analysis.

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:26) point that “the term ‘research paradigms’ means the lens through which the researcher sees the world”; meaning the researcher’s abstract beliefs, the principles that shape how he/she sees the world, and how he/she interprets and act within that world. Grix (in Hussain *et al.* 2013:2375) posits that there are three ways in which a paradigm can be used in human science; firstly, it can be used for the institutionalisation of intellectual activity, secondly, for the broad groupings of certain approaches and perspectives to the study of any subject, and lastly, for the description of broad approaches to research. According to Salvador (2016:6), “there are three known competing paradigms in qualitative research, namely;

- a) Scientific paradigm, positivism, and post-positivism, and they are designed to generalize and explain relationships (experimental, non-experimental, and correlational studies).
- b) Interpretive paradigm, social constructivism, which are aimed to understand the different social phenomenon in the lens of the social actors (phenomenology, case study, hermeneutics, and ethnography); and
- c) Critical theoretical paradigms intended to emancipate and challenge conventional social structures (critical disclosure analysis, ideology critique, and action research)".

One factor that prompted this study is the concern about how effective the implementation of complaints management policy within five labour centres within the DEL in the Free State province is, and to establish and investigate the knowledge that officials within the five labour centres in the Free State province have on the implementation of the customer complaints management policy. It is the view of the researcher that customer complaints have a wealth of information that the DEL could use to address current service delivery challenges and to open a door for innovative ideas to solve service delivery-related challenges. This study is firmly positioned within the interpretive research paradigm.

4.3.1 Interpretivism

"Scholars of interpretivism such as Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and Max Weber (1864–1920) assert that human beings are not senseless and helpless, their actions are influenced by their judgement, reasons, and intentions. In addition, interpretivism allows its descriptions and explanations of human beings and their concerns to be subtly and thoughtfully imbued with human values" (Birks 2017:4). Carson *et al.* (2011:5) writes that in interpretivist approach the focus of the research allows for the understanding of what is happening in each context. In addition, there should be consideration of different actors' viewpoints, multiple realities, the researcher's involvement and the contextual understanding and interpretation of data.

According to Cassell *et al.* (2018:3), “interpretive social science takes an insider view that privileges social actors’ knowledge of social contexts and their common-sense meanings. It seeks to understand members’ tacit knowledge, shared meanings and the informal norms everyday actors use to act in the world. Interpretive theory is built from, and refers to, common sense meanings”. The role of the researcher in the interpretivist approach is to attempt the difficult task of accessing other people’s interpretation and clarifying them through their own theoretical view. Again, when interpretive researchers pursue this role, they must recognise their own role, either as outside observer or involved researcher in this complex human process (Walsham 2011:7). The interpretivist approach was undertaken in this study in order to understand the depth of knowledge the officials with DEL Free State possess in their daily routine when dealing customer complaints.

Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004:20) hold a view that in order to attempt for validity, the interpretive researcher should encourage use of a variety of data, different sources and analysis methods. Additionally, the researcher should be able to analyse texts to investigate the way in which people make meaning in their lives and not only that, but also to establish what meaning they make. One factor that led to this study was to investigate the extent to which officials in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province have knowledge about the implementation of the customer complaints management policy.

According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020:42) there are seven qualities that research would adopt through following the interpretivist paradigm and they include:

- Focus on the whole experience rather than seeing certain parts of it,
- Questions and problems identified in the research mainly influenced by the researcher in terms of interest, involvement as well as commitment,
- The researcher will be able to explore further depth of individual experiences through in formal discussions and interviews,
- Investigation of humans’ experiences in depth through adoption of qualitative designs and methodologies,
- Usage of experience as an important aspect and contribution to support scientific research,

- Enabling researchers to further explore in depth throughout individual experiences rather than considering generalised measurements or expectations as given in the positivist paradigm, and,
- Experience is largely integrated within subjects and objects.

Therefore, the interpretivist approach was found to be the most relevant approach for this study as the researcher relied on the experience of participant to draw credible finding for this research study. It was therefore important that the researcher outlined the philosophical perspective of this study in order to pinpoint his own worldview and to outline what has influenced his approach regarding research design and methods. The next section presents the research design.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018:238) a research design “is a blueprint to guide the research process by laying out how a study will move from the research purpose/questions to the outcomes. It is a comprehensive planning process used to collect and analyse data in order to increase the understanding of a given topic. At a general level, the research process consists of three primary stages: posing a question for examination, collecting data to answer the question, and presenting an answer to the question”.

Labaree (2016) cited by McGregor (2019:3) adds that “research design is the overall strategy chosen by the researcher to integrate different components of the study in clear and logical way, this to ensure that that research questions are addressed by the new knowledge derived from the study”. Almeida *et al.* (2017:370) mention that scientific research can be either qualitative or quantitative. They further argue that qualitative research is not concerned with numerical representativity but focuses on the deep understanding of a given problem. Again, in qualitative research the researcher is both the subject and object of his research, and the methodological objective of this research approach is to produce an in-depth information in order to understand different dimensions of the problem under analysis. In contrast, quantitative research adopts structured procedures and formal instruments for data collection and the data can be quantified.

Additionally, Creswell & Creswell, J. D. (2017:92) mentions that research design “refers to the process by which data gathering efforts are structured and defined. That is, the research design defines what is to be studied and how, which includes what variables are to be included in the study, how they are measured in relation to one another, and how those data are gathered”. Gray (2004:32) adds that research studies can also be classified according to their purpose and present three possible forms of study which includes exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. The exploratory research seeks to explore what is happening by asking questions and it is useful when little is known about a phenomenon, while descriptive research provides a picture of a phenomenon in its natural settings, and the explanatory studies discovers causal relationship between variables.

According to Welman *et al.* (2005:9), qualitative research deals with subjective data that is produced by respondents. The research tries to understand the importance which the respondents attach to their environment. Moreover, L. Haven and Van Grootel (2019:233) asserts that “the use of data in qualitative research—in order to decide which way the interpretation should move forward, or using the data to generate hypotheses and new research questions—is precisely the strong asset of qualitative research”. The objective of this study was to explore the knowledge that the officials possess concerning the implementation of the customer complaints management policy of the DEL in the Free State province and to determine what challenges labour centres experience in implementing the policy, thus the adoption of qualitative research design for this study.

Dawson (2002:15) asserts that qualitative research explores attitudes, behaviour, and experiences of participants. “Qualitative research properly seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. Qualitative researchers are most interested in how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, and so forth” (Berg 2001:7). Atmowardoyo (2018:199) expounds that case studies can be considered as descriptive research in their nature because they describe the existing conditions of particular cases. For the purpose of this study the case study research method was followed.

4.4.1 Case study design

Berg (2001:225) states that “case study methods involve systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how it operates or functions”. Furthermore, Atmowardoyo (2018:199) elaborates that a case study examines an individual, a unit of organisation, or a particular event with special characteristics. According to Van Zyl (2014:217), case studies take long to complete, however, they generate a great deal of detail and insight. Moreover, this method is used to study an individual or an institution in a unique setting and provides detailed information. Given (2008:68) declares that “case studies focus on one or a few instances, phenomena, or units of analysis, but they are not restricted to one observation”.

Almeida *et al.* (2017:376) elucidates that case study research can be difficult to establish a cause-effect connection to reach conclusions and it can be hard to generalize, particularly when a small number of case studies are considered. Alpi and Evans (2019:2) add that case studies seek to explain, describe, or explore a phenomenon. Sources of evidence for case studies include interviews, documentation, archival records, direct observation and physical artefacts”. In this study the DEL is selected as a case under study to investigate the processes and procedures for effective and efficient implementation of the customer complaints management policy in five labour centres in the Free State province. The next section will focus on the research methodology of this study.

4.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Payne and Payne (2011:2), “methodology is a set of conceptual and philosophical assumptions that justifies the use of a particular method. Basically, it means a study of methods”. Almeida *et al.* (2017:370) concurs when stating that “scientific methodology includes the study of the methods or the instruments necessary for the elaboration of a scientific work. The objective of the qualitative methodology is to produce in-depth and illustrative information in order to understand the various dimensions of the problem under analysis”.

Dawson (2002:24) states that “research methodology is the general principle or philosophy that guides the research”. McGregor (2019:9) elaborates that “methodology is focused on what is involved in creating new knowledge and refers to the branch of philosophy that analyses the principles and axioms of research. The word ‘method’ refers to a system of strategies used to obtain information for a study”. Methodology regulates the way the researchers think about the study, the decision they make about the study, and how they position themselves when they engage with participants and also with the data collected (Mills 2017:3). The next section will explore qualitative methods employed for the purpose of this study.

4.5.1 Research methods

Payne and Payne (2011:2) define research methods as technical practices that a researcher uses to identify research questions, collect and analyse data and the presentation of findings. Dawson (2002:24) asserts that “research methods are the tools you use to gather your data”. Flick (in Stuart, Maynard and Rouncefield 2017:3) argues that qualitative research methods allow participants to share their ideas, thoughts and feelings freely, this allows the examination of life worlds from the inside out. Mills (2017:2) suggests that “methods include choice and recruitment of participants or sampling, data generation or collection, fieldwork, data recording, data analysis and the reporting of a study”. The following section will deal with data collection techniques that were considered appropriate for this study.

4.5.1.1 Data Collection Techniques

According Blevins (2018:2), in order to build theory, researchers in qualitative studies gather their data through interviews, focus groups, material culture analysis and participant observation. Methods of gathering data for the purpose of this study include literature study on implementation of customer complaints management processes and procedures, interviews and document study.

4.5.1.1.1 Semi-structured email Interviews

Interview is described as a structured conversation where participants are asked same series of questions in order to capture their experiences, practices, beliefs and perceptions in their own words. In addition, because of their face-to-face interaction,

interviews allow for the assessment of body language (Stuart *et al.* 2017:13). The greatest interest during the qualitative interview is the interviewee's point of view and the insight of what they see as relevant and important. In addition, in qualitative interview the research looks for rich and detailed answers (Bryman 2012:470).

Interviews contain two general types of questions: structured and unstructured. Structured or closed-ended questions are clear and calls for explicit answers, while, unstructured or open-ended questions allow for an elaborate response from the interviewee (Van Zyl 2014:199). Zahle (2018:147) reports that "the methods of semi and unstructured interviews require the researcher to pose questions to a research participant who is permitted or encouraged to digress to expand on her responses, to exemplify her points, to introduce her own concerns, and the like".

For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews were utilised to collect data. Semi-structured interview should have a schedule which should list a range of potential questions which are flexible in their direction, structure, and focus. The semi-structured interview schedule will enable the researcher to create an order in topic areas, generate questions that will help to get information needed without any restrictions, and help the interviewer to avoid loaded terms, jargon and errors (Stuart *et al.* 2017:14).

In order to adequately response to the research questions of this study, the researcher prepared an interview schedule with a list of questions that the respondents were to respond to. The researcher adapted the 7-Cs protocol on policy implementation in order to elicit responses from participants of the study. As such, the interview schedule has seven themes derived from the 7-Cs protocol through which respondents will provide their insights and experience on in the implementation of the complaints management policy. The 7-Cs protocol variables that were investigated are: content, context, commitment, capacity, client/coalitions, communication and coordination.

This research was guided by the Unisa Covid19 policy guidelines and in order to minimise the risk of coming in contact with an asymptomatic/symptomatic person, handling objects contaminated by the virus or entering a high-risk/hotspot Covid-19 area amongst the participants, data was collected online through email interviews with all participants who were willing to participate in the study. "Email interviews emerged in the late 1990's as one of many online qualitative methods. This data collection

technique differs with face-to-face interviews because of the features of asynchronicity, reduced cues and anonymity” (Given 2012:2). Stuart *et al.* (2017:13) identified time as the downside to interviewing because it takes time to do interviews, to write and analyse the data. Again, interviews are perceived to be open to bias and interpretation as it is believed that the interviewer may ask questions and interpret data based on preconceived ideas.

Furthermore, Hawkins (2018:494) avows that “email interviews can be conducted with participants all over the world without the additional expenses of travel costs and travel time. Although telephone and video interviews offer this same advantage, a distinct feature of the email interview is the ability to conduct asynchronous interviews”. According to Given (2012:2), asynchronous communication allows both the researcher and the participants to respond in their own time, and in the setting of their choice. Furthermore, it allows for more time for reflection and can produce a richer quality of data. Email interviews are economical and time efficient as they reduce travelling costs and transportation time.

After being granted permission to conduct this study by the Director-General of the DEL, the researcher requested the office of Chief Director Provincial Office and Training and Development branch in the Free State province to coordinate the participants by emailing the interview schedule to potential participants together with consent form and the approval letter from Director-General giving permission for the study. Participants were requested to forward their responses directly to the researcher. Three out of twenty potential participants did not participate in the study for various reasons. Some of the potential participants were in bereavement as they lost family member or were affected by the Covid19 pandemic, some were working from home and they did not have resources like internet access and laptops to participate, while other participants did not respond to the invitation.

4.5.1.1.2 Document study

The combination of documents and other data sources enables the researcher to explore their research settings in a comparative way and also enables them to look at their research location from more than one view (Gibson and Brown 2011:6). According to Hedrick *et al.* (2011:6), examples of documentary data include meeting minutes, journals, program reports, and others. Gibson and Brown (2011:2) concurs in that “documents might include letters, diaries, maps, minutes from meetings, social registers, governmental reports, emails, websites, posters, wikis, blogs, and any other record of social practice. Through documents, researchers can gain detailed insights into people's lives and to the workings of organisations”.

In order to investigate the effectiveness and efficiency of implementing the customer complaints management policy in the DEL, the researcher perused and analysed the information from South African government reports such as the DPSA customer complaints management framework, legislative frameworks such as *Batho Pele* principles, academic books and journal articles on customer complaints management and policy implementation. Consequently, Tight (2020:3) states that the availability of official documents that are produced by government departments and other public authorities will depend on their precise nature. Furthermore, with institutional documents, many hangs on your connection to the institution concerned: whether you work there, know someone who does or have negotiated access with someone in authority.

Through document study the researcher was able to gain insight and knowledge about effective implementation of customer complaints management policies in the public service. The researcher gained access to the customer complaints management Policy after the D-G of the DEL granted permission to pursue research in the DEL, Free State province. The CCCMP of 2017 was deemed as a key document for this research in pursuit of answering the research questions, predominantly focusing on its purpose, goals, objectives, and policy outcomes. The next section outline the sampling and population of this study.

4.5.2 Sampling and Population

Sampling is defined by Guest *et al.* (2017:2) as “a process in which subjects of items are selected from a defined population to be included into a study”. These scholars argue that “items as a subset of things in a study may not necessarily refer to people, but sampling units can also be groups, events, places, and points in or period of time”. According to Van Zyl (2014:95), if every person in the population cannot be tested, then the subset of that population can be selected, in other words, it is a sample. Furthermore, Van Zyl (2014) describes a population as a group of potential participants in which the results of the study can be generalised. Weller and Romney (in Daniel 2017:6) asserts that sampling is used by researchers to gather information that will be used to make inferences about the whole population, while saving time and resources.

According to Nishishiba *et al.* (2017:9), there are two basic techniques for sampling, that is, probability sampling and nonprobability sampling. This study deployed nonprobability sampling method. This type of sampling is important because the researchers rely on their experience or previous research findings to obtain a unit of analysis in such a way that the sample obtained would be regarded as being representative of the relevant population (Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell 2005:68). Nonprobability sampling does not use random procedures when elements are selected, therefore, not every item or person in the target group has a chance to be selected (Daniel 2017:9).

Daniel (2012:3) states that it may be wasteful and inconsistent with the purpose of the study to give all elements in the population a chance to be included in the sample, and propose that in purposive sampling, a nonprobability sampling procedure might be appropriate as it allows the researchers to use their personal judgement in selecting elements from the population. This study employed purposive sampling technique, which is deemed suitable because the researcher used his experience and exposure as Designated Complaints Officer (DCO) to identify and select participants who will be able to provide information that will be relevant about the research topic. The study was carried out through a sample of twenty participants in five labour centres in the DEL in the Free State province. The participants were deliberately selected by the

researcher because of their experience and the role they play in the implementation of the customer complaints management policy within their respective labour centres.

In this study, the strength of literature reviewed suggests that more research should be conducted on policy implementers, particularly in relation to the bottom-up and the top-bottom approaches to implementation. Therefore, three layers of policy implementers were selected for this study; the operational staff, in this case, the Client Service Officers (CSO), Frontline Supervisors and the Labour Centre Managers, also known as Deputy-Director Labour Centre Operations (DD:LCO).

Five out of eleven labour centres were identified and selected for the purpose of this study. The labour centres concerned are:

- Harrismith;
- Phuthaditjhaba;
- Kroonstad;
- Sasolburg; and,
- Bloemfontein.

Each labour centre consists of different sections such as Inspection Enforcement Services (IES), Public Employment Services (PES), CF and Beneficiary Services (BS) also referred to as frontline. From the target population, ten were operational staff, which are CSOs, two CSOs per labour centre, five were Registrations Supervisors, one supervisor per labour centre, and five DD:LCOs.

In purposive sampling the “researcher choose study participants based on the purpose of their involvement in the study” (Guest *et al.* 2017:8). It should be noted that participants were strategically and deliberately selected because of their experience in handling customer complaints in the DEL. CSOs, who are on salary level six are considered the face of the DEL, they offer almost all services in the DEL. Among the services they offer are registration of complaints, taking UIF applications, dealing with CF enquiries and registration of work seekers. Labour centres identified have an average of four client service officers each and selecting two officials per labour centre was representative of the relevant population per office. Participants were purposively selected because of their roles, experience and insight of the processes and

procedures on the implementation of the customer complaints management policy. The following are the skills and knowledge that this group ought to possess:

- **Skills:** communication, customer care, administrative, interpersonal, telephone etiquette and Interviewing.
- **Knowledge:** all labour legislations and regulations, private employment, agency regulations and related ILO conventions, Public Service Regulations, Public Service Act, Departmental Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, *Batho Pele* principles.

When clients or customers complain, compliment or come up with suggestions, the CSOs will be the first people they encounter. Their insight and knowledge about the implementation, challenges and benefits of the customer complaints management policy was valuable for the purpose of this study. In addition, the RSs are at salary level eight, and their role and experience in the implementation of the customer complaints management policy were important as they are tasked with the monitoring and overseeing of policy implementation. Their key responsibility is to ensure that when customer complaints are escalated to them, they acknowledge receipt, redress, and record them; therefore, their insight will be valuable.

The role of the DD:LCOs on salary level twelve is to manage and monitor policy implementation at the labour centre level. Their understanding and experience added value to this study. The current developments in terms of compromised service delivery in the South African public sector and an increase in number of customer complaints warrant managers to deal with complaints and analyse them in order to avoid future reoccurrence. Therefore, the labour centre managers' insights and experience were key for this study. In the next section data analysis and interpretation stance of this study are outlined.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Qualitative data exist in a form of text scripts gathered from sources such as interviews, survey questions, journals, recorded observations and existing documents. Words are combined into meanings and the meanings should be sorted,

interpretations considered and conclusion should be reached (Suter 2014:11). The analysis of the response will assist in determining how effective the implementation of the customer complaints management policy is in the five labour centres within in the DEL. Through data collected, the researcher was able to determine the level of knowledge the officials have about the policy and consider what challenges the DEL faces in implementing the customer complaints management policy.

Interpretation is a phase in which empirical evidence that has been collected is assessed, analysed and interpreted and the views of participants are presented in detail and depth in order to test the accuracy of the analysis (Ngulube 2015:18). According to Henning (2004:127), “when using qualitative analysis as a means to explain or make sense of the enquiry, we do not use as evidence the frequencies or quantities with which something occurs, but rather elicit meanings from the data in a systematic, comprehensive and rigorous manner”. Nishishiba *et al.* (2017:8) contend that when results of the qualitative research are presented, each theme should be discussed with enough evidence from the actual data by using direct quotations from the original text so as to capture the essence of the story in the experience of real individuals.

4.6.1 Thematic analysis

According to Vaismoradi *et al.* (2016:101), a fundamental issue in the analysis is that the research participants’ individual meanings and social reality are appropriately carried in the research report. “Thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set. Through focusing on meaning across a data set, thematic analysis allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences” (Braun and Clarke 2012:57).

For the purpose of this study seven themes adapted from the 7-Cs protocol on policy implementation study were presented within the interview schedules and the analysis of data from participants was interpreted to draw findings about how effective and efficient the processes and procedures for effective implementation of customer complaints management within five labour centres in DEL in the Free State province is. Braun and Clarke (2012:60) outline the following six-phase approach to thematic analysis:

- i. “Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the data. This phase involves immersing yourself in the data by reading and rereading textual data.
- ii. Phase 2: Generating initial codes. Codes identify and provide a label for a feature of the data that is potentially relevant to the research question.
- iii. Phase 3: Searching for themes. In this phase, your analysis starts to take shape as you shift from codes to themes.
- iv. Phase 4: Reviewing potential themes. This phase involves a recursive process whereby the developing themes are reviewed in relation to the coded data and entire data set.
- v. Phase 5: Defining and naming themes. A good thematic analysis will have themes that (a) do not try to do too much, as themes should ideally have a singular focus; (b) are related but do not overlap, so they are not repetitive, although they may build on previous themes; and (c) directly address your research question.
- vi. Phase 6: Producing the report. The purpose of your report is to provide a compelling story about your data based on your analysis. The story should be convincing and clear yet complex and embedded in a scholarly field”.

Responses from research participants are recognisable and are written in italics. The next section deals with the steps taken to ensure trustworthiness of the study.

4.7 CRITERIA TO ESTABLISH TRUSTWORTHINESS

Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that there is an agreement among qualitative researchers that data trustworthiness, whether collected from direct observations, focus groups, or interviews, is evidenced by the credibility, dependability, conformability and authenticity (Suter 2014:28). Madondo (2021:123) adds that “trustworthiness can be also defined as the acceptability of research outputs by the consumers of knowledge in the academic market. The research projects that fail to pass the credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability tests will not be acceptable in the academic market”.

4.7.1 Credibility

Credibility as stated by Madondo (2021:121) is “the ability of qualitative instruments to answer the qualitative projects’ objectives and the connection between n the qualitative outputs and the real situation on the ground”. Furthermore, Kyngäs *et al.* (2020:43) argue that “credibility can be improved by making sure that the study participants are appropriate in terms of the research question and that data saturation is reached during data collection, i.e., that the sample size was correct”. The researcher collected authentic data by using multiple sources of data such as information from literature review and data from individual interviews to arrive at conclusions and recommendations. The information from participants was voluntary and the researcher did not coerce participants to provide a particular information.

4.7.2 Dependability

“Dependability is the process of auditing in which others can examine the documentation of data, methods, decisions and the end product” (Braun and Clarke 2012:392). “Dependability is enhanced by common qualitative strategies (audit trails, rich documentation, triangulation, etc.) but also by traditional methods such as intercoder or interobserver agreement (two coders or observers are consistent) and code-recode consistency (the same coding or observation occurs more than once using the same “human instrument”) (Suter 2014:29). The researcher explained in detail the research design, the methodology, sampling strategy, data collection processes and data analysis procedures to ensure that dependability is promoted. “This means if similar procedures and processes can be replicated or repeated in the future similar results could be established and it will be considered reliable and can be generalised only to participants” (Suter 2014;29).

Madondo (2021:131) elaborates that “by adhering to research ethics also promotes dependability of qualitative research projects”. Moreover, participants should not be forced to participate in the study as this may results in the gathering of invalid information that may affect the dependability of the project. Qualitative researchers should follow ethics all the time. Participants were not forced to participate in this study, therefore they provided valid information.

4.7.3 Conformability

According to Madondo (2021:122), conformability “is the control of bias in qualitative projects/have something to do with objectivity”. Conformability as stated by Tobin and Begley (2004:391), “is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer’s imagination, but are clearly derived from the data. Consequently, this part of trustworthiness is concerned with the relationship between the data and the results”. “Furthermore, a researcher should evaluate whether their findings are exclusively shaped by the data collected from respondents, or do the results reflect some of the researcher’s bias, motivation, or other interests” (Kyngäs *et al.* 2020:46).

This study followed acceptable protocols of conducting a scientific study as the research proposal that was approved by the Department of Administration and Management and relevant committees of the University of South Africa (Unisa). The findings of this study were entirely influenced by data collected from participants selected from five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province.

4.7.4 Authenticity

“Authenticity is the level to which a researcher fairly and authentically shows a range of realities, and the research should have sufficient citations from different participants that clearly demonstrate the connection between the results and data” (Kyngäs *et al.* 2020:46). The authenticity of this study relies on its reliability and validity of the data collected from the participants in a voluntary manner. Hard copies of interview answers and signed consent forms are available to maintain an audit trail. Other researchers will be able to follow questions and answers provided and will be able to develop the same construct from the data of this study.

Participants were selected from five different labour offices of the DEL in the Free State province, including key three layers of organisational hierarchy; for instance, the manager, supervisor, and frontline staff in each labour office were interviewed in order to demonstrate a range of realities that exist and to promote authenticity for the study. The next sections deal with the research ethics.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDARATIONS

According to Carpenter (2019:8), research should be undertaken with integrity, there should be an assurance that the most appropriate methods are adopted and honest reporting of data and that data is used to the maximum benefit of the individuals and communities from which they are collected. Moreover, data analysis must be transparent and results should be disseminated in a socially responsible fashion. Researchers must be mindful of the need to properly manage any conflicts of interest and sustain their independence.

Furthermore, Welman *et al.* (2005:181) proclaim that principles that inspire research ethics includes issues such as honesty and respect for the rights of individuals. Furthermore, Thomas and Hodges (2013:2) stress that “research ethics are the standards of professional conduct that researchers are expected to maintain in their dealings with colleagues, research participants, sponsors, funders and the wider community. These include responsibilities to ensure research projects are designed and conducted safely, fairly and with integrity”. The researcher followed all ethical guidelines of Unisa’s Research Ethics Review Committee (URERC) and the Department of Public Administration and Management Research Ethics Review Committee in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and Standard Operating Procedure. The ethical clearance from the University was granted and the researcher made a submission to the D-G of the DEL to grant permission to collect data from five labour centres in the Free State province.

The DEL requested the researcher to sign an undertaking that will confine the research to the DEL in the Free State province and to sample the data as per the ethical clearance certificate. The permission to conduct the study was obtained in writing from the D-G. The researcher further requested the office of the CD:PO and Training and Development section to coordinate by sending email attachments that included consent form, interview questions schedules, ethics clearance, permission letter from DG and participants information sheet to all participants. In order to maintain a high ethical standard of this research the following measure were undertaken by the researcher.

4.8.1 Protection from harm

According to Van Zyl (2014:85), all participants should be prevented from physical and psychological harm. Welman *et al.* (2005:201) elaborates that respondents should be given the assurance that they will be indemnified against any physical and emotional harm. Israel (2015:2) extends that in social science research, harm is likely to involve psychological distress, discomfort, social disadvantage and invasion of privacy or infringement of rights than physical injury. The degree of risk for this research was categorised at level 2 (low risk).

The set of questions that were posed to participants did not cause any discomfort and the participants were not harmed and inconvenienced beyond normal levels of inconvenience. There was no prospect for physical or psychological harm to the participants in this study.

4.8.2 Informed consent

“Informed consent means that the participants in the study have the right to know that they are being studied, be informed about the nature of the research and should be informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time” (Israel 2015:3). Mathison (2011:2) states that informed consent is grounded on the principle of respect and independence. This means, individuals should exercise their right and decide whether to participate in a study and they may discontinue their participation at any time.

According to Van Zyl (2014:86), “every research project that uses human participants should have an informed consent form that is read and signed by each participant or the person granting participation. In essence, a consent form will be made available to participants before the commencement of the data collection”. The researcher concurs with Allen (2018:3) in that before participants decide to take part in the research, the researcher(s) should have fully explained confidentiality to them and assured them of the level of privacy the study upholds. The consent form was made available to all participants and amongst the issues addressed were the following:

- That the participants understand that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

- They were aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that their participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.
- That the copy of the informed consent agreement received was signed.

4.8.3 Confidentiality

“Confidentiality means the assurance that no one other than the researcher knows who participated in a study” (Kaiser 2012:2). Roth and von Unger (2018:8) concur that in confidentiality, researchers know the identity of participants; however, they commit not to disclose the identity of participants. Moreover, “a confidentiality assurance to an individual or an entity entails a promise that, to the extent possible, the information on identifiable individuals or entities will not be disclosed outside the research context in which it is generated and for which it is used” (Boruch 2018:2).

In order to effect confidentiality of this study, the researcher ensured that the participant information sheet contained the following guarantees:

- Everything that was discussed during the research will not be disclosed and will not be used for any other purpose other than this study.
- The researcher and supervisor will have access to the data. Hard copies of participants’ interview answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet. Electronic information will be stored on a password protected laptop computer. The researcher will use the Unisa policy on how to destroy data.

According to Allen (2018:2), “in a confidential study the researcher may be familiar with the name, address, or other identifying personal information of the participants, but it is the researcher’s responsibility to protect the participants from harm by altering any personal, identifying information that may be revealed during the interview”.

4.8.4 Privacy

According to Sieber and Tolich (2015:3), “an understanding of the privacy concerns of potential subjects enables the researcher to communicate an awareness of and respect for those concerns and to protect subjects from invasion of their privacy”.

Bryman *et al.* (2014:127) assert that “where it is possible, research participants should be allowed to respond anonymously or under a pseudonym in order to protect their identity”. Participants were assured that information provided will remain confidential and that their identity will not be revealed in any record or report and the researcher will ensure that there will be no link between data collected and the participants.

The participants were encouraged to take measures to ensure confidentiality by securing email access with a password. The participants were encouraged to delete their responses and empty their trash as soon as they have sent their responses to the researcher. The researcher took steps to cut and paste the text into a word processing programme, save in a password protected computer or laptop to protect names and addresses of participants and also deleted and then emptied the trash. The next section will reflect on the limitations of this study.

4.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Parno, McCune, and Perrig (2018:156) asserts that “limitation of any particular study concern potential weaknesses that are usually out of the researcher’s control, and are closely associated with the chosen research design, statistical model constraints, funding constraints, or other factors. In this respect, a limitation is an ‘imposed’ restriction which is therefore essentially out of the researcher’s control. Still, it may affect the study design, results and ultimately, conclusions and should therefore be acknowledged”. The major shortcoming or limitation of this research study revolves around data collection. The data collected for this study was sourced from only five out of eleven labour centres in the Free State province. The five labour centres are found in Bloemfontein, Harrismith, Phuthaditjhaba, Kroonstad and Sasolburg. The limited number of labour centres resulted in the study having only 20 officials who shared their experience and knowledge of the customer complaints management policy. This limitation might result in the findings of the study not being representative of the current status of the entire Free State province or the DEL nationally.

Among the questions that this study was set out to answer was to what extent do officials in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State Province have knowledge about the implementation of the customer complaints management policy. The DEL has other sections such as IES,CF, UIF and PES and staff from these sections; even though the policy to manage customer complaints affects them, they were excluded from this study as the nature of their work demands them to be out of office conducting inspections or marketing the services of the DEL. Therefore, inviting them to participate in the study would have disrupted their daily routine and the researcher would not have derived appropriate data and answers relevant for this study.

4.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the philosophical outlook, research paradigm, research design and methodology, data collection tools, sampling and population procedures for the purpose of this study. Furthermore, the chapter provided the rationale for the steps followed to establish trustworthiness, data collection, data analysis and interpretation processes, as well as some ethical considerations. Lastly, the researcher outlined the limitations associated with the study.

The method that was considered most appropriate for this study was the qualitative research method because of its ability to allow people to interpret their experiences and the social world and attach meaning to them. The researcher chose two research instruments, that is, documents study and semi-structured email interviews to collect data. The next chapter presents the discussion and findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the processes and procedures necessary for effective and efficient implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province. In the previous chapter the philosophical position, research design and methodology relevant to the study, data collection methods, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study were presented. The aim of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings derived from semi-structured email interviews collected from 20 selected participants.

The chapter will commence with the researcher's reflection of his experience during the data gathering phase of this study by highlighting challenges that he faced and the lessons learnt followed by a comprehensive reporting and analysis of data collected from interview questions. In concluding the chapter, an analysis of document study relating to the South African public service documents relevant to the customer complaints management is presented.

5.2 RESEARCHER'S REFLECTION DURING DATA COLLECTION PHASE

Before embarking on the data collection stage, the researcher applied for permission from the D-G of the DEL on the 8th of April 2021 who then granted the permission on the 28th of May 2021. The researcher further requested the CD:PO in the Free State province and the Human Resources Training and Development branch to coordinate the dissemination of the research questions to the participants.

There were three issues that emerged as stumbling blocks during data collection. The first issue was the impact of the Covid-19 epidemic. During the period of 2020, the researcher was unable to collect data due to the restrictions posed by the Covid-19. The restrictions prohibited research activities and had a great impact on the timeframes of collecting data and the submission of the final report. The second issue was the load-shedding that was experienced in South Africa since 2019. Sometimes it was difficult to communicate with the supervisor as there would be no electricity or

network during the working from home period of Covid-19, this made it difficult to track progress and to receive feedback on time.

The last issue that had an impact on the data collection phase was the community unrests that were experienced in the Free State province during the data collection phase. The Mangaung and Harrismith community shutdown campaigns delayed the collection of data from participants. The two labour centres identified for data collection were impacted and this meant that participants were not available to respond to the research questions. In cases where they were working from home, either they did not have electricity due to load-shedding or they did not have the resources such as internet access or laptops to participate in the study.

Despite the challenges experienced, the researcher received positive feedback from the participants. Most of the participants were gratified by the progress the researcher had made and indicated that they were motivated to resume with their studies, while others wished the researcher good luck in his endeavour to complete his studies. Some of the participants used public holidays, weekends and even evenings to complete the research interview questions; this was highly appreciated considering to challenges imposed by load-shedding, Covid19 and community unrests experienced in the Free State province at the time of data collection.

The response rate was eighty five percent (85%), with eight out of ten CSOs responding (80%) and four registration supervisors out of five responding (90%). Furthermore, all five managers (100%) participated in the study.

The researcher took part in the 2021 RESEARCH & INNOVATION POSTGRADUATE STUDENT SHOWCASE under the theme “Transformative research in the advent of global crises”. In the discipline of Social Science the abstract of this dissertation received the second runner-up in masters category (see <https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Colleges/College-of-Graduate-Studies/Media-&-events/Articles/Intensifying-a-pathway-to-postgraduate-research-success>). The exposure received during the presentation of my abstract will have an everlasting impact in my future research projects. The next section presents the insights, knowledge and understanding of participants regarding the processes and procedures necessary for the effective and efficient implementation of the complaints management policy in five labour centres within the DEL in the Free State province.

5.3 REPORTING AND ANALYSING OF FINDINGS

The findings and analysis of this research study are reported in the following sequence:

- The first step is to outline the themes that originate from 7-Cs variables on implementation study;
- Secondly, the research question that this study endeavours to answer is highlighted (see section 1.4);
- Thirdly, the researcher's analysis of what the data is saying relating to the questions asked is presented;
- Fourthly, responses from managers, supervisors, frontline staff are analysed; and,
- Lastly, commentary by researcher to summarise the responses is outlined.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the processes and procedures necessary for the effective and efficient implementation of the complaints management policy in five labour centres within the DEL in the Free State province. According to Carson *et al.* (2011:5), in the interpretivist approach, the focus of the research allows for the understanding of what is happening in each context. In addition, there should be consideration of different actors' viewpoints, multiple realities, the researcher's involvement and the contextual understanding and interpretation of data (see section 4.3.1). Nishishiba *et al.* (2017:8) reason that "when results of the qualitative research are presented, each theme should be discussed with enough evidence from the actual data by using direct quotations from the original text so as to capture the essence of the story in the experience of real individuals". The seven themes derived from literature study on policy implementation, known as 7-Cs protocol are analysed from actual data in order to establish the knowledge and experience that participants has on the implementation of the complaints management policy.

Theme 1: CONTENT

According to Nakamura and Smallwood (1980:45), Walt and Gilson (1994:361), Hardee *et al.* (2004:18), as cited in Mthethwa (2012:37), the initial point for a policy implementation assessment starts with the policy itself. The policy's content, formulation process and extent of its distribution influence whether the necessary content is in place to support effective implementation. Moreover, policy content should evidently frame the underlying problem area, the policy's goals and objectives, members of society to be benefited, alongside with the broad actions and strategies to address the problem. Driven by the desire to understand and answer research question one, that is, to establish whether the officials in five labour centres within the DEL in the Free State province have knowledge about the content of the policy on customer complaints management, two questions were posed to participants. It should be noted that question 1 in the interview schedule of the DD:LCOs and Supervisor differs with question 1 of the CSOs; however, both questions purposely seek to understand the knowledge that participants have on the customer complaints management policy.

Research question One: To what extent do officials in the five labour centres of within the DEL in the Free State province have knowledge about the implementation of the customer complaints, compliments, and suggestion policy?

Question 1: What is the extent to which your subordinates understand the process of lodging complaints within the DEL? Please substantiate.

Evaluation of responses from participants (DD:LCO):

Evidence from the responses from this group points that officials at the managerial positions (labour centre managers) believe to a large extent that, their subordinates understand the processes that needs to be followed when dealing with customer complaints. Some participants responded that:

“They understand that process to a greater extent. That is shown when they lodge the complaints received into our Case Management System when they receive them and escalate the complaint to where is supposed to go in our Units”. (DD:LCO 4)

“The DEL staff do understand this process fairly well in that they know what to do and when to do it, but the IT challenges are a serious hindrance”. (DD:LCO 5)

“They do understand because every complaint lodged has to go into a complaints register. Performance agreement entered into between the department and the official talks to how complaints must be handled”. (DD:LCO 1)

“There is an SOP on how customer complaints are taken and handled in the Dept. and such is available to employees and trainings provided also emphasise the process of lodging a complaint”. (DD:LCO 3)

Evaluation of responses from participants (Supervisors):

The general attitude of supervisors towards their understanding of the knowledge that their subordinates have toward the processes that customers should follow when they are dissatisfied with DEL services, indicate a mixed perceptions as some indicate very limited knowledge, some argue that they do not know, while others say they have thorough knowledge. This is highlighted by the following responses from participants:

“I think they don’t know, because I also don’t know. They never attend any training. Even when they go for orientation as new appointees, they don’t take them through the policy”. (SUP 4)

“There is a little understanding, this is due to lack of training and availability of resources”. (SUP 2)

“I believe that they have a thorough knowledge pertaining to the process of lodging a complaint with DEL. Usage of Batho Pele Principles as it applies on both internal and external clients”. (SUP 1)

The next section deals with remarks from CSOs in trying to evaluate their understanding of what steps should a client follow when they are not satisfied with the DEL services.

Question 1: What steps should a client follow if they are dissatisfied with the DEL services?

Evaluation of responses from participants (CSOs):

Data analysis from the replies signals that the CSOs seem to be familiar with the necessary steps that dissatisfied customers need to follow when they want to lodge a complaint. They have highlighted that among the steps to be taken by the client is that they should complete a complaint form, use the complaint box and rate the service rendered on the Queue Management System (Qmatic system), and if their matter is not resolved they can escalate to managers or use other platforms such as the media and institutions such as the Office of the Public Protector. Participants retorted that:

“Client can follow internal complaint procedure:

- 1. Request to be referred to supervisor of the day.*
- 2. If the matter still not resolved, request the intervention of the DD:LCO.*
- 3. Or can also refer the complaint to the office of the Public Protector as the Independent organ or the Watchdog of the State”. (CSO 1)*

“Client should request to speak to supervisor of the day and inform about dissatisfaction of DEL Services. Client can complete complain form. Client can rate service on Qmatic system”. (CSO 2)

“The only form of step that is available at labour centre for a dissatisfied client is a complain box where a client will write what caused the dissatisfaction with DEL service which will be submitted for further investigation by centre manager and will be referred to provincial office for further investigation or the client will call the departmental hotline to lay a complaint and await response”. (CSO 3)

“They should use the complaint box which are situated at the labour centre helpdesks”. (CSO 5)

“They should write a formal complain to the manager or request to see the manager”. (CSO 6)

“Complain to supervisor if not satisfied can escalate the complaint to the manager”. (CSO 7)

“Clients are different according to their knowledge there are those who knows how to raise their concerns and those who are clueless where to start but is very important for the client to ask for an immediate Supervisor if they are dissatisfied with DEL Services, because in most cases floor managers are the one with expertise to solve any internal complain related to production processes within the department”. (CSO 8)

Commentary: Responses from the participants demonstrate that they all understand what steps should be followed when customers are dissatisfied with the DEL services. A conclusion can be drawn that the perception of managers and supervisors that their subordinates know what steps should be followed is true; this is based on the majority of responses by frontline staff indicating steps that must be followed when citizens are not happy with public service. Furthermore, there is a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in place that guides what should be done when complaints are received. The evidence presented from the responses helps the course of this research to answer research question one, that seeks to determine the knowledge that officials have on the complaints management policy and focuses on the content of the policy in line with themes derived from 7-Cs protocol on policy implementation. What can also be deduced from the responses is that frontline staff possess expertise to handle customer complaints, therefore, their involvement and participation in the implementation of the policy should not be undermined.

The next section focusses on the second question posed to participants in order to obtain responses to establish the participant’s understanding of their role and responsibilities in the implementation of the customer complain management policy in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province.

Question 2: To what extent do you understand your role and responsibility when you receive a complaint? Please explain.

Evaluation of responses from participants: Evidence derived from the responses points that officials at the managerial and supervisory positions are fully aware of their role in dealing with customer complaints. They both understand the time frames within which complaints must be resolved. Moreover, they are aware that they need to acknowledge receipt of complaints, investigate, resolve, or escalate to the next level if not resolved. Furthermore, participants displayed an understanding of linking

customer complaints and the application of the *Batho Pele* principles such as providing feedback to clients timeously, treating them with respect and dignity. Several participants commented that:

“I need to acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 7 days and commit on a resolution depending on the nature of the complaint. Some require investigation while some can be resolved on the spot”. (DD:LCO 2)

“I understand to the fullest. When I receive the complaint, I understand that I have 7 days before I can solve the complaint and that is happening. Sometimes, the complaint would be solved before the 7 days. The understanding is that if the complaint is not resolved it would greatly affect service delivery”. (DD:LCO 4)

“My role is clearly stipulated in the SDIP SOP & my performance agreement. The time frames and reporting thereof is also indicated. My understanding is at a level of being able to respond to customer complaints”. (DD:LCO 3)

“It is to ensure that such a complaint is attended to within stipulated timeframe and to establish what led to the complaint in order to ensure that a similar situation does not repeat itself”. (DD:LCO 1)

“The complainant must be treated with respect and courtesy. The complaint must be dealt with within a prescribed period. The complainant should be given feedback on all process and the outcome”. (SUP 1)

“Is to investigate the matter and follow the proper procedure guided by the policy or Act. Then give the client the substantive answer which is fair and valid”. (SUP 3)

“Firstly, I will set an appointment with the individual concerned. Explain to him/her the reasons for the meeting. I will ask what the problem is or what had happened. I will listen to the story and explain the process. I will engage with the engage with the individual concerned and come up with an amicable solution. If the individual is not happy with the suggested solution, I will escalate the problem to the next level which is the DEPUTY DIRECTOR- CENTRE OPERATIONS”. (SUP 4)

“I try to resolve the complaint before escalating it to the Supervisor of the day/DD: LCO. 2. If the matter is still not resolved I escalate the matter to my supervisor”. (CSO 1)

“Role is to issue out form to client, assist client with rating procedure on Qmatic machines”. (CSO 2)

“I know my role entails applying the Batho Pele principles which involves trying to find what the problem is and apologize for any inconveniences and try to come up with a solution, or if problem is still unresolved refer the dissatisfied client to my immediate supervisor”. (CSO 3)

“You have to find what really the client complains about, then find the solution for the complaint and resolve it effectively”. (CSO 4)

“My role is to attend to the complaint within 7 days of receipt. I also need to give the client feedback to the client. If I cannot solve the complaint, it is my responsibility to take the complaint to the next level of management”. (CSO 5)

“My role is to try resolve the complaint and if the complaint is not resolved escalate it to the supervisor or manager”. (CSO 7)

“The role and responsibility toward a complain to each employee/official lies largely on the application of the act, knowledge of the act in conjunction with internal production processes and, the ability to read the system gives a greater extent and responsibility on how to solve a complaint from the client. Some of the complaints are minor and can be solved with an ease”. (CSO 8)

Commentary: This study notes that while there is a general agreement that officials in the five labour centres within the DEL in the Free State understand their roles and responsibilities, either as a perception or in reality, there is also some element of confusion of the term “complaint”. Few participants seem to confuse the customer complaints procedure with the labour relations matters that deal with internal processes within the DEL when an employee is not happy or is dissatisfied with the conduct of the employer. One participant commented:

“Not All Employees are fully aware of the process to be followed when lodging a complaint”. (DD:LCO 2)

In order to address this gap in the understanding of the difference between customer complaint process and an internal labour relations complaint process, the directorate Human Resources Management (HRM) should conduct information sharing sessions to inform employees of the processes to be followed when they are dissatisfied with the employer. The other notable gap is with the complaints received from clients pertaining to non-adherence by employers to labour legislation. The officials seem to confuse this process with customer complaints, some participants stated:

“As a supervisor I have to check the complaint and make sure that relevant information is there on the complaint, that the relevant documents are attached and contact the employer in trying to resolve the complaint”. (SUP 2)

“Interview the client to understand what has happened to a point that brought his/her to the Department to lodge a complaint. Then start to complete the IES 1 form then call the employer to get his side of the matter after submit the complaint form to the frontline supervisor”. (CSO 6)

“I understand my roles fully and I execute them to the best of my ability. The only challenge is when the case is to be or needs to be referred to another province; the process is not very clear here”. (DD:LCO 4)

It is imperative to have a clear distinction between complaints directed to Employer Relations (ER) internally by officials of the DEL in relations to the Labour Relations Act (LRA), and the complaints from clients in relation to Inspection, Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement and the customer complaints where the DEL would have failed to honour their service standards level agreement with the public. It can be deduced from the comments that the ability to resolve customer complaints depends on the official's ability to read and understand the processes and the systems they use on a daily basis. The experience that officials have about the procedures and knowledge about the system are key factors identified that can accelerate the speedy resolution of customer complaints.

The next analysis focuses on the third and fourth questions posed to participants of the study. Furthermore, the section links with the second theme of this study on the context relating to policy implementation.

Theme 2: CONTEXT

Khan and Khandaker (2016:541) assert that some of the reasons that cause policies not to be implemented include poor management, political interference, and unavailability of personnel, or resources, or lack of motivation, or lack of expertise of frontline implementers. The purpose of question three to participants was to gather their views about the role management plays in ensuring effective implementation of the complaints management policy in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province.

Question 3: In your view, do you think management has done enough to ensure effective policy implementation? Please substantiate.

Evaluation of responses from participants (CSOs):

What can be reasoned from comments by participants in this group is that there is a sense of uncertainty about the capability of management to drive the implementation of the customer complaints management policy. Participants indicated that when officials attend training, there is no monitoring to establish whether or not the theoretical knowledge derived from the portfolio of evidence material is converted into practical daily responsibilities by management. Some participants, particularly CSOs, argue that:

“No, I have never seen the policy let alone I do not know where to access it. I have never received training on the policy or had any kind of short briefing on how to give attention to client complaints to ensure that they are solved as per policy”. (CSO 3)

“I don’t think there are enough and committed officials to implement this policy, either the official will be protecting his/her colleagues to be exposed of the wrong doings”. (CSO 1)

“Nope, firstly the process of complaints is not clear and when the complaints have been lodged there is no clear process of how to deal with it”. (CSO 5)

“In my view, Management has done a little, there is a growing concern amongst the client with regard to poor service, long queues at the labour centres, effective policy implementation cannot be achieved without considering on-job

training; implementation is something practically, how do you ensure as a manager that (Theory of Portfolio of Evidence) it is understood and achieved, is only by practicality, implementation by management involvement to ensure effective policy implementation". (CSO 8)

However, some CSOs hold a different view as to whether management has done enough for effective implementation of the policy, as they argue that management has done well in ensuring that the policy is effectively and efficiently implemented. They content that it is just the attitude of officials who are reluctant to implement the policy. Others argue that there are internal control measures put in place by management to deal with customer complaints, while others highlight the existence of complaint boxes at labour centres as an indication of a commitment from the employer to ensure effective implementation. The views of participants captured below support the argument that the employer has done fairly well.

"Yes, because there are internal controls in place to manage the issue of complaints within our department". (CSO 7)

"Yes, I believe management has done enough because there are trainings, seminars, outreaches and Imbizos, it is the officials who are reluctant in implementing". (CSO 6)

"Yes, I think management has done enough because we have client complaint box where every client has a right to express his or her feelings about the service rendered". (CSO 4)

"Yes, because induction is conducted with all the policies of the department and all new circulars are implemented after consultation made with affected parties". (CSO 2)

Evaluation of responses from participants (Supervisors):

There is mixed reaction from the sample of participants from this group, some indicated that the management of DEL has done well even though there is still a room for improvement. Participants elaborated that:

"Yes, it has. There is a team that is structured to deal with customer complaints and there is a monthly report that is submitted to the complaints champions". (SUP 1)

Management has done well, but there are still gaps to be filled, especially with top management and certain sections are still behind in implementing the policy”. (SUP 2)

When asked the same questions if management has done enough in ensuring effective implementation of the customer complaints management policy, some participants hold a different view and argue that the employer has not done enough. Participants replied as follows:

“No, the office complaint box is not monitored and if only the DD and some trusted officials will know about the complaint, their kept secret for no valid reason. The officials in the office they were never orientated about the complaint box or even how to handle it from the Help-desk”. (SUP 3)

“No, the management has not done enough, we don’t know about the policy”. (SUP 4)

Evaluation of responses from participants (Managers):

Observation from the labour centre managers’ response indicated a balanced view regarding management’s role in ensuring effective implementation of the customer complaints management policy. Certain comments from participants indicated that there was a genuine believe that the management of DEL is doing all within its power to ensure that this policy is implemented effectively and efficiently. The following statements capture some of their views:

“Yes, they have done what they could do but could not say enough. The management have established and empowered Risk Management Unit who are seeing to it that the implementation of policies is to the best. They have also engaged the Auditor General who is also monitoring the implementation of the policies”. (DD:LCO 4)

“There is still need a need for improvement, if the department can benchmark with other Departments like Dept. of Health a lot of improvement can be achieved, matters like cell phone policy, posters on the process of lodging a complaint to be clearly displayed”. (DD:LCO 3)

On the contrary, some comments from other participants within this group advocate that management has not done enough in ensuring that the policy to manage customer complaints within five Labour Centres in DEL Free State becomes a success. Here is how they articulated their views:

“I do not think so as more power is with management and there’s little room for anybody else”. (DD:LCO 5)

“No, policy is not supported by deployment of necessary resources to ensure effective implementation, e.g., poor systems and lack of material and human resource”. (DD:LCO 1)

“No, no one has ever taken me through the policies of the department except the ethics policy”. (DD:LCO 2)

Commentary:

The responses from participants in all the groups clearly signal an organisation that is trying its level best to implement the complaints management policy. This is supported by the comments that the complaint boxes have been made available in labour centres to afford citizens a platform to alert authorities that they are not happy with the services rendered. The monthly reporting of complaints received, internal control measures put in place and community outreach and *Imbizos* are but a few examples of an indications that DEL seeks to create a platform to hear citizens’ complaints and to resolve them.

It is also essential to hear the “other voice” from officials such as those who believe the management has failed to play their part. The findings suggest that there is a lack of training on customer complaints management processes and procedures, and the attitude of officials in relation to customer service is of a great concern. Furthermore, insufficient deployment of valuable human and financial resources demonstrates that there are areas that management needs to focus on to ensure effective implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province.

The participants further suggested that the DEL should embark on a fact finding mission, or benchmark with other government departments and/or private sector organisation on how to manage customer complaints, this is viewed as an opportunity for the department to improve chances of effective policy implementation and improved customer experience. The next series of questions connect with **Theme 3 (Commitment)** of this research as adapted from the 7-C's protocol on policy implementation.

Theme 3: COMMITMENT

The financial and human resource commitment by an organisation plays a significant role and increases chances of policy success. Cloete and de Coning (2011: 112) stress that government funding is limited due to the increasing demands from society and governments cannot afford to spend millions of rand on services or programmes which do not have desired outcomes.

The next questions focused on whether the participants believed there was enough financial commitment to enable the customer complaints management policy to succeed. Question 4 was dedicated to both DD:LCOs and SUPs in terms of financial commitment, while the focus of question 4 in CSO's interview schedule specifically concentrated on whether there are available and committed human resources to implement the complaints management policy in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province.

Question 4: In your opinion, do you believe there is enough financial commitment to implement this policy? Please elaborate.

Evaluation of responses from participants (DD:LCO and SUPs):

Participants' comments suggest that the budget is available even though there can still be room for improvement to increase the budget as failure to do so might impede effective policy implementation. Some comments indicated that there is no budget directed to the policy, therefore there was a need to have a separate budget that focuses on the complaints management policy well as the need for a committee to manage the financial matters of this project. Some of the comments include:

“This is a function that needs to be dealt with by committed officials and having a separate budget can assist in that regard”. (DD:LCO 3)

“Yes, because the Department is making sure that the policies are known by employees through Advocacy sessions (planning and organising those sessions need finances and time)”. (DD:LCO 4)

“I certainly believe that there’s enough financial commitment, I also believe that much can be done to educate management on her role as an overseer”. (DD:LCO 5)

“There is budget allocated, may be due to the pandemic the department also decided to halt for while”. (DD:LCO 2)

“Budgetary constraints impede effective implementation”. (DD:LCO 1)

“There is no budget specifically for the policy”. (SUP 1)

“Nope, I think when you look at the available vacancies, which contributes to the lack of staff and then that contributes to lack of implementing the policies”. (SUP 2)

When asked the question: “In your view do we believe we have enough knowledgeable staff to implement this policy effectively?” Question 7 from the DD:LCOs and SUPs’ interview schedule, participants responded as follows:

“Yes, although the working environment does not allow e.g. Poor systems leading to increased customer complaints. Effective and good systems needed to process complaints”. (DD:LCO 1)

“No, I am not sure if the staff that have been working for the department in the past years were not trained on this policy, but they do not seem to have a full grasp of the policy”. (DD:LCO 2)

“There is a need of staff or identified employees to be capacitated with knowledge on the policy. There is a need for officials to be employed to do SDIP (Service Delivery Improvement Plan) functions”. (DD:LCO 3)

“Yes, the intense monitoring can assist as I believe that staff are knowledgeable of what they must do but due to non-monitoring they turn to ignore the implementation of the policy”. (DD:LCO 4)

“I believe we do, but the challenge is, unintended results. We create an impression to the client that if they complaint to HQ (Head Quarters) they get quicker responses, so they simply go straight there, without afford the L/C (Labour Centre) an opportunity to deal with the complaint”. (DD:LCO 5)

“Not all staff members were trained on the policy it was only specific employees”. (SUP 1)

“For what I have seen, we definitely do not have knowledgeable staff. There seems to be no one aware of what is needed and how it must be done”. (SUP 2)

“No I don’t think we have at the moment; implementation of policy requires a whole lot of things”. (SUP 4)

Commentary:

According to the Management Model (Khan and Khandaker 2016:543), the following are key factors that contribute to policy success:

- organisational structure;
- personnel and human resources;
- the activities of front-line implementers;
- equipment and technology;
- the level of coordination and cooperation;
- the exercise of authority; and,
- place/location as implementation infrastructure” (Khan and Khandaker 2016:543).

The model contents that “the greater the budget and the more efficiently it is used, the greater the chance of implementation success. Furthermore, the greater the involvement of people (key stakeholders or beneficiaries) as co-producers, the greater the chance for productive and fruitful implementation of the policy” (Khan and Khandaker 2016:544).The report findings from the data indicate that there is a strong

observation by officials that inadequate budget has a potential to negatively affect the successful implementation of the customer complaints management policy. In the main, officials contend that budget is available, but the level of financial competency could be a stumbling block to policy success. It is the view of the researcher that financing of the customer complaints management together with the visibility of posters that indicate the processes and procedures to lodge complaints and pamphlets distribution could have a positive impact in the implementation of the policy.

It could be deduced that based on the analysis of responses from participants there is a shortage of knowledgeable staff to implement the customer complaints management policy. At the centre of the factors that hinder effective policy implementation is failure to train and capacitate staff on how to implement the customer complaints management policy. Participants even suggested that there is a need to create a unit that will strictly focus on customer complaints management. There is also a sense that even if the DEL can increase monitoring and training of staff or increase the number of staff that deal with customer complaints, the need to improve departmental systems should be a priority as most of the customer complaints are derived from failing systems. The purpose of the next question posed to CSOs was to prompt their views on whether the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province have enough and committed officials to implement the policy.

Question 4: In your opinion, do you believe there are enough and committed officials to implement this policy? Please elaborate.

Evaluation of responses from participants (CSOs):

According to Dahlgaard-Park (2015:2) (See 3.7.3), when dealing with commitment, organisations should be open to complaints from citizens and develop a culture that values complaints. Moreover, response to complaints should be in a timely manner and staff that handles complaints should be recognised and rewarded. The general feeling amongst the CSOs is that there are not enough committed officials that can ensure effective implementation of the policy, especially when complaints are escalated to the higher level of authority. This has led to under reporting of customer complaints, thus making the employer (DEL) not to see the need to employ more staff to deal with the influx of customer complaints. Some of the responses include:

“Based on the current status quo I don’t think there is enough committed officials to implement Customer Complaints Management policy only the chosen few are committed. There is a lack of control measures, those in power fail to implement. We only see suggestions and complaint boxes for clients that are useless, not serving the purpose of customer satisfaction”. (CSO 8)

“No, the department focuses on reporting on daily and monthly stats of people assisted. There is no formal way of ensuring officials completely understanding how the implementation of this policy should be carried out, there aren’t formal ways of reporting of how clients were assisted, therefore if the department does not know that clients are dissatisfied, they will not see the need of employing enough officials to implement the policy”. (CSO 3)

“I don’t think there are enough and committed officials to implement this policy. The official will be protecting his/her colleagues to be exposed of the wrong doings”. (CSO 1)

“No, there are not enough, some officials are there because they were employed, there are few officials who are committed in implementing the policy, the department should do a survey and/or research to see who should be where”. (CSO 6)

There are some participants who hold the view that there is enough staff who are devoted to implement the policy to manage customer complaints. Some comments were recorded were as follows:

“I believe so because all officials are here to implement any policy of the department for the benefit of the clients”. (CSO 7)

“Yes, training was given to capacitate the committed officials”. (CSO 2)

Commentary:

According to Khan and Khandaker (2016:542), “effective implementation of any policy can be strictly weakened over a lack of sufficient resources, incentive or competent staff, an absence of specific technical know-how or administrative capabilities, in prevalence of self-serving goals of street-level bureaucrats and an absence of organisational willingness and a lack of inter-organisational communication”. In

addition, Mctigue *et al.* (2018 :323) argue that “in order to eliminate barriers for effective policy implementation, policy makers must ensure that resources are be made available, and this should include appropriate funding and skilful and committed implementing officials”. Lack of training of staff, lack of visibility of posters displaying customer complaints management procedures and processes, and inadequate knowledgeable policy implementers were leading factors emanating from participants responses.

According to Dogaru (2017:51), “street-level bureaucrats, in this case the CSOs, working within large rule-driven organisations but interact with the citizens daily, the street-level bureaucrats act as innovative strategists, determining how a policy is implemented in practice. In fact, although the decision is handed down by the decision-makers, the street-level bureaucrats interpret, amend, or even ignore the decision when the situation demands”. It is important for CSOs to be knowledgeable on how to manage customer complaints because the failure or success of this policy depends on them.

The next section will focus on the third research question of this study which seeks to establish the benefits of effective and efficient customer complaints management policy in the five labour centres within the DEL in the Free State province.

Research question Three: What are the benefits for effective implementation of customer complaints management?

The response from participants demonstrate that, despite the challenges that labour centres face, officials endeavour to resolve customer complaints, they seek maintain customer satisfactions, improve customer experience, and protect the interest of the DEL as an organisation.

Question 5: In your view, what do you think will be the benefits for the organisation if the policy is effectively and efficiently implemented?

The participants offered the following responses:

“One of the benefits it will decrease long queues at labour centres. Workload to each employee will be at the least minimum. Organisational image and public

trust will increase. Mission and Vision of the Departmental objectives will be achieved. Happy clients will boost the morale of employees". (CSO 8)

"Smooth running of the department. Less audit findings if policies are upheld. Feedback received will help in improving the customer service thereby improving service delivery as well". (DD:LCO 2)

"Benefits will be effective service delivery-customer satisfaction and the reputation of the organisation will be at high level". (CSO 2)

"A committed and fulfilled workforce that is loyal to the core to DEL". (DD:LCO 5)

"There will be less complaints and high client satisfaction". (DD:LCO 3)

"The benefit will be to reduce complaints from clients and provide effective service that our clients deserve". (CSO 7)

"The department will be in good image to the public, service delivery will improve". (CSO 6)

"It will be more beneficial to both the Officials and the community since they will be knowing what the correct steps/procedures are to be followed on how to deal with a complaint if there is any". (CSO 1)

"It will address the shortfalls of the department and improve the service delivery".

(CSO 4)

"Clients would be assisted within correct time frames. The department would have new ways of assisting clients". (CSO 3)

"An effective and efficient services, the department has poor services due to lack of proper implementing of the policies". (SUP 2)

"Yes, client satisfaction, department reputation will blossom, staff will be capacitated to handle the matter at the lower level which will boost the morale of the staff members in different levels. An enhanced their skills, knowledge, attitude, accountability and responsibility". (SUP 3)

“If it is effectively and efficiently implemented by all accordingly-client service will improve and there will be less complaints from the clients”. (SUP 4)

“Improved client satisfaction, followed by a good reputation”. (SUP 3)

Commentary:

In an attempt to answer question three of this research, that is, what are the benefits for effective implementation of customer complaints management, participants pointed out numerous benefits that can be derived from an effective and efficient customer complaints management policy. Among prominent benefits emphasised are improved customer experience, enhanced organisational reputation, accountability, improved staff morale and the reduction of complaints. When customers of the public service do not receive good services from public service institutions, they will always find a way to raise their dissatisfaction, for example, attacking officials and the institutions involved to a level that the image of the department could be tarnished. Moreover, staff moral could be at the lowest, thus affecting service delivery. It is important for the DEL to strive to deal with customer complaints effectively in order to protect its image and promote excellent service delivery. In the next section, the research looked at the capacity of the DEL to implement the customer complaints management policy effectively and efficiently.

Theme 4: CAPACITY

Question 6: Have you been trained on this policy? If yes, how do you rate the training provided?

Evaluation of responses from participants (DD:LCOs, SUPs and CSOs):

The majority of CSOs indicated that they were not trained on the policy, while the majority of managers (DD:LCOs and SUPs) have shown through the comments that they received some form of training, or they went through some workshop on the customer complaints management policy. In an effort to assess the quality of training provided, participants indicated that there was poor planning of training sessions and the facilitator lacked understanding on the subject matter. Furthermore, some participants cited problems with the relevance of the contents covered in the training sessions that were provided by the DEL. However, some participants indicated that the workshops conducted were of an acceptable standard, although they need

refresher training on the policy concerned. The comments from CSOs were captured as follows:

“I have never been trained [by] the department about the policy”. (CSO 3)

“I haven’t been trained, so I would not comment on the training”. (CSO 5)

“No”. (CSO 4)

“NO. I was not trained”. (CSO 1)

“No, I have not been formally trained, I trained myself on various policies and researched”. (CSO 6)

“Unfortunately not, I would like to be trained on it, so that I can handle complaints effectively”. (CSO 7)

“Previously I was on training of the Customer Service many years ago, the training is basically on how you supposed to treat the customer, the customer is always right, you are the image of the organisation blah, blah etc. I would like to see the training specify why the client it is there to ask for help at the department, I think the primary reason is the vulnerability and the CSO need to be trained and understand why the client is setting in front of him or her”. (CSO 8)

“Not trained”. (CSO 2)

The comments from DD:LCOs, SUPs and CSOs reveal the existence of a gap between top management and bottom frontline workers. Comments from managers and supervisors indicate that majority of participants in this group received training on customer complaints management when compared with CSOs. Some managers responded thus:

“Yes, training was good”. (DD:LCO 1)

“No”. (DD:LCO 2)

“I have been work-shopped on SDIP and the workshop was fruitful”. (DD:LCO 3)

“Yes, the training was provided, and the training is up to the acceptable standard, however, I believe that continues training can assist as human turn to forget (refreshing the memory)”. (DD:LCO 4)

“Fully trained=100%”. (DD:LCO 5)

“Yes . . . the training was good”. (SUP 1)

“I would say yes but honestly I cannot [re]call what they did at training, there was poor planning, and the facilitator seems to lack understanding”. (SUP 2)

“No”. (SUP 3)

Commentary:

It is the researchers view that lack of training of staff on complaint management policy opens a room for poor handling of customer complaints in the DEL. Scholars of public policy implementation suggest that policy implementation is constraint in that “sometimes personnel are not available, or facilities are inadequate, and sometimes frontline implementers are unable to carry out an intervention due to lack of motivation or expertise” (Khan and Khandaker 2016:541). For frontline implementers, in this case CSOs, to implement the policy effectively and efficiently, there is a need to intensify training and ensure that facilitators are knowledgeable in the area of public service delivery and customer services. The next section address’s **theme five** of this study, that is, **client/coalitions**.

Theme 5: CLIENT/COALITIONS

According to Bayrakal (2006:138), “clients and coalitions are those individuals and groups whose benefits are associated with policy or conflict with it and, as a result, take strategic action to contribute to, or detract from, its implementation”. (See Section 2.4.1.5). “The support of clients and outside coalitions is critical during the policy implementation phase” (Cloete and de Coning 2011:151). The next question was intended to establish whether citizens who use the DEL services were consulted on the policy to manage customer complaints in the five DEL labour centres in the Free State province. The question appears as question 7 on the CSOs interview schedule and question 8 on the DD:LCO and Supervisor interview schedule.

Question 8: In your opinion, do you believe citizens were consulted about the policy?

Evaluation of responses from participants:

Participants responded that the fact that clients did not know what to do if they are dissatisfied with the DEL services means that there was limited consultation when the policy was formulated. Some participants stated that it is the norm that before any policy is approved there will be consultation; however, they believe majority of citizens were not consulted when the customer complaints management policy was formulated. Participants stressed that social media platforms were used for consultation, but this process might have excluded the majority of clients while others were ignorant or reluctant to lodge complaints. Some of the responses from participants are recorded as follows:

“No clients always ask us for complaints contact numbers and emails that they can complain to, but it’s not even provided for officials, there aren’t notices on walls to educate clients about steps they can follow to lodge a complaint. No citizens do not even know it exists therefore they were not consulted”. (CSO 3)

“Yes, it is noted in the entrance of every centres but our clients are ignorant and they are scared to lodge complain”. (CSO 4)

“I do not think they were consulted enough they do not know much about the policy”. (CSO 5)

“No, because till now clients doesn’t know what to do if they are not satisfied about the service they received and were to lodge a formal complaint”. (CSO 1)

“Yes, they were, because it is said on radios and social media”. (CSO 6)

“Yes, clients are normally consulted about the policy and their rights to complain”. (CSO 7)

“Yes, transparency and consultation done and forms are accessible and Qmatic tablets for rating the services”. (CSO 2)

“In my opinion I believe citizens are consulted via different platforms of media, radio, television, newspapers, billboards etc. What I am not sure about it is how the clients receive the message. Even before the Pandemic Covid19

information sessions and Imbizos were held and conducted to inform the clients about our policy and services-citizens were informed about our Impimpi Toll free hotline numbers and other methods to consult the department". (CSO 8)

"No". (SUP 3)

"No I don't think they were consulted; the department has failed to consult us officials". (SUP 4)

"I have no idea but I believe that every policy before is approved there must be consultation with respective organisation". (SUP 1)

"I would not think so or if it was done the majority were not consulted, the citizens are clueless on how and what to do when lodging the complaint". (SUP 2)

"No, citizens not consulted about the policy. The policy is treated as an internal tool to handle complaints. That is the reason why citizens resort to social media in order to get attention". (DD:LCO 1)

"Not sure". (DD:LCO 2)

"I am not sure but the Department does do surveys on how satisfied are our clients. I want to believe that citizens were consulted". (DD:LCO 3)

"I do not think so. Neither do I think were trained on how they should respond or how they should receive the implementation of a policy from the officials". (DD:LCO 4)

"Yes they were consulted, but to a lesser extent in that it was main on media, thus excluding a lot of people who do not have access to such". (DD:LCO 5)

Commentary:

Responses from participants reveal that there is a need to increase the interactions with clients through *Imbizos*, community outreach, use of social media and surveys to inform them about available platforms they can use to lodge complaints. Amongst the clients/coalitions of the DEL services are the UIF beneficiaries, CF clients like doctors and health care facilities, employers, employer organisations, labour unions, traditional leaders, non-profit organisations (NPO) and non-governmental

organisations (NGO). These categories of the DEL clients could experience poor service delivery in their encounter with the department, therefore by engaging them in policy formulation and implementation, in particular the customer complaints management policy, their contribution could strengthen and facilitate for an effective and efficient policy implementation within DEL.

The advancement of information technology should propel the DEL to embark on using social media platforms to reach their clients and involve them in the formulation and implementation of public policies. With reference to the customer complaints management policy, the DEL should ensure that the website and other outline social media platforms are used to communicate processes and procedures that clients can follow when they are dissatisfied with the DEL. It is the researcher's view that some coalition partners and clients of the DEL are not familiar with DEL processes, for instance, the turn-around time to finalise UIF and CF claims or the time it should take to finalise labour related complaints is not known to all stakeholders; therefore, this makes it difficult for them to exercise their right to lodge a complaint if the DEL staff did not stick to their timeline and responsibilities. To this effect, information sessions on service standards and the customer complaints management policy should be initiated by the DEL.

The following section is dedicated to document answers to the second research question of this study. The research question was concerned with communication and coordination strategies in relation with the sixth and the seventh 7-Cs protocol variables on communication and coordination.

Research question Two: What challenges do the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State face in their effort to implement the customer complaints management policy?

Theme 6: COMMUNICATION

Question 9: In your view, is the procedures to lodge complaints clear, user-friendly, and visible?

Evaluation of responses from participants:

The participants acknowledged in their responses that, because citizens using the DEL services express their views on social media and even write to the office of the Minister to lodge their complaints, is an indication that the processes and procedures to lodge customer complaints are clear to everyone who uses the DEL services. Some of the participants caution that the procedures to complain might be clear, but they are certainly not user-friendly, while others suggest that there is a need for posters on customer complaints process flow and an increase in information sharing to ensure that citizens understand the procedures to be followed when they want to lodge complaints. The participants' responses are documented as follows:

"It's clear to us the staff who knows, others who don't know including the client they are in darkness". (SUP 3)

"No, not at all, we don't even know where to start if you want to lodge a complaints". (SUP 4)

"The process is clear and user-friendly. There are forms in different languages. If the complainant cannot write they can complain via telephone, emails can be used as well where the complainant can write/elaborate on the nature of the complaint". (SUP 1)

"There are clear but they are not user-friendly, maybe the cause of it, it's just the lack of understanding". (SUP 2)

"It is visible to everyone. Our clients are not using any toll free number that is placed to express their views". (CSO 4)

"No, because till now clients doesn't know what to do if they are not satisfied about the service, they received and were to lodge a formal complaint". (CSO 1)

"The procedure is clear and user-friendly; however, implementation is a big challenge due to poor systems". (DD:LCO 1)

"No, they are not clear, not user-friendly nor visible". (DD:LCO 2)

"No, the procedures are not clear-there is a need for posters with respect to the procedures of lodging of complaints". (DD:LCO 3)

“Yes, because the clients are aware that they can use all sort of media and even writing to the highest official in the Department (Office of the Minister) to lodge complaints”.(DD:LCO 4)

“Yes, it is”. (DD:LCO 5)

Commentary:

Policy implementation must be communicated with the implementers; therefore, this makes communication as an integral part of the variable for effective implementation. The role of NGOs and civil society organisations should form part of the communication strategy (Molobela 2019:216). In relation to this study, the beneficiaries of UIF, CF, PES and IES must also form part of the communication strategy relating to the implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the DEL.

According to the Management Model by Khan and Khandaker (2016:544) “the greater the involvement of people (key stakeholders or beneficiaries) as co-producers, the greater the chance for productive and fruitful implementation of the policy”. In the context of this study, this can be achieved by ensuring that the DEL service standards and service charters are communicated to all stakeholders to enable them to understand the standard that the DEL has promised, hold them accountable and demand answers if they fail to meet their set standards. In addition, the communication strategy should ensure that the procedures and processes to lodge complaints are clear, user-friendly, and visible. The visibility of the procedures should not only be at the local offices and social media platforms, but also at the visiting points. “Where there is no communication, or there is lack thereof, there is lack of coordination” (Molobela 2019:216). The next section considers the last variable from the 7Cs protocol, that is, **coordination**.

Theme 7: COORDINATION

The question that was put to participants was intended to find out whether there is coordination of activities among different sections of the DEL to ensure successful implementation of the customer complaints management policy.

Question 10: In your view, do you believe that there is enough support from other sections (e.g. Training and Development, Communications, finance) to ensure that the policy is implemented effectively and efficiently?

Evaluation of response from participants:

Participants indicated that there is limited support from other sections and that there is still a room for improvement. The analysis of responses demonstrate that there are no information sessions conducted on customer complaints management policy by the Training and Development section within the HRM branch. Other responses suggest that there is no consequence management when people fail to do their work. This is an indication of a gap within the Employee Relations (ER) section.

The views of CSOs compared with those of the DD:LCO and Supervisors illustrates a gap in their understanding of the support that other sections provide to ensure policy success. Managers and supervisors are of the view that there is enough support from other sections such as Finance, Training and Development and Information Systems, to ensure effective and efficient implementation of the customer complaints management policy. The comments from participants, starting with CSOs, have been captured as follows:

“No, training and development section does not go to labour centres to educate officials on policies, and the communication department only sends out written manuals to inform on new policies or changes and finance section always has budget constraints therefore deprives officials from effective learning of policies”. **(CSO 3)**

“No, there is not enough support”. **(CSO 5)**

“There is a delay in training to train the staff, I think it’s a lack of funds”. **(CSO 4)**

“No, none of the mentioned business units has conducted like information session to educate the staff about the policy”. **(CSO 1)**

“Yes, I believe there is enough support from other Business Units”. **(CSO 6)**

“Yes, there is support but on the minimal scale. Improvements can be welcomed by officials in order for us to deliver effective service to our clients”.
(CSO 7)

“Yes”. **(CSO 2)**

“In my view, there is not enough support from other Business Units because the policy is not implemented due to the fact that, there is no control measures and official that will be held accountable for the Failure of policy implementation. There is no consequence management implementation, everybody is free, and by the way other business units refrain from supporting the policy”. **(CSO 8)**

The views expressed by DD:LCOs and Supervisors are captured as follows:

“Training development is supportive, same with other sections. Finance is an integral part of the overall service delivery there is no separate budget for customer care. Again, other sections can only do so much, but if the systems and availability of human resources do not receive attention, effective implementation will remain elusive”. **(DD:LCO 1)**

“Yes, there is a task team that is busy drafting a customer satisfaction survey and posters directing clients on how to lodge a complaint”. **(DD:LCO 2)**

“Yes, there is support as and when training needs are indicated on the PDP (Performance Development Plan), they arrange the requested training so it is also dependent on the manager and the subordinate to include such training so that it is on the Provincial Skill Plan”. **(DD:LCO 3)**

“Yes, it is part of Performance Agreement for Training and Development to see to it that those trainings are conducted. Communication Unit see to it that those advocacies are communicated to all via e-mails and constant reminders before the actual date of advocacy. Finance provide catering, venue and any other resources needed in order for the policy advocacies to be a success”. **(DD:LCO 4)**

“I believe there’s enough support from all other sections except finance, for they could have procured a functional telephone system and an adequate IT system as well”. **(DD:LCO 5)**

“No, they don’t have a clue”. (SUP 3)

“I think there is no support, if there was I think the policy could have been implemented effectively and efficiently”. (SUP 4)

“There is support especially communication. There is website, pamphlets and advertisement on Billboards, TV and Radio”. (SUP 1)

“No, the case management system has been around for a while now but most staff hasn’t been trained. As for communication departments I haven’t seen any communication about it”. (SUP 1)

Commentary:

In order to coordinate activities linked to the effective and efficient implementation of the customer complaint management policy, all business units of the DEL in the Free State province should have a master plan that focuses on the following measures:

- i. Financial support;
- ii. Increasing training of staff and improvement on the contents of the training material with special focus on customer complaints management;
- iii. Psychological support to staff affected by regular customer complaints and the development of the coping mechanisms guide to all staff; and.
- iv. Disciplinary processes to constant culprits of poor customer relations.

According to Dogaru (2017:53), “street-level bureaucrats are affected by the following three conditions:

- i. Relative unavailability of resources, both personal and organisational;
- ii. Existence of clear physical and/or psychological threat; and,
- iii. Ambiguous, contradictory and in some ways unattainable role expectations”.

Moreover, Dogaru (2017:53) elaborates that “the influence of street-level workers also introduces considerable uncertainty into the achievement of public policies. The final achievement of policy goals depends on the cooperation of policy makers, workers and citizens”.

The last interview question directed to participants was intended to obtain a general view about the research or any other matter that the interview questions might have omitted. The comments from the participants assisted the researcher in determining the answers to research question number four of this study, which seeks to investigate systems and procedures that should be put in place for effective implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province.

Question 11: Is there any other information that you would like to add to this interview?

Some of the participants decided not to express their comments on this question. The general sense from those who responded is that, how they are treated or how they are treating others has an influence on the impact that the customer complaints management policy might have in their working environment. There was also a strong sense of despair amongst participants with regard to failing systems, inadequate staff, lack of training, and inadequate financial support. Some of the comments were articulated as follows:

“I would like to believe that complaints could be limited if not there at all, if all public servants can understand and do their part in servicing the clients. The principle of service the client once and for all (one stop service) without any return be implemented. Proper monitoring by Management and Supervisors on how the clients are serviced not be reactionary, acting when there is a complaint. Client service be given a priority at all costs”. (DD:LCO 4)

“Inculcate the culture of teamwork throughout the DEL organisation without the ‘Joshua door effect’”. (DD:LCO 5)

“The staff morale is at its all times low due to poor working environment, a lot of complaints and lack of necessary support from management contribute to lack of policy implementation”. (DD:LCO 1)

“Even the service/complaints champions needs training”. (DD:LCO 2)

“The department runs from giving trainings because they avoid spending on official accommodation bookings, what the department should focus on is implanting technological ways of training staff simultaneously. When policies are implemented the task team responsible does not include official dealing

with clients concerns on a daily basis. The department focuses on statistics of clients assisted rather than how they were assisted in order to find problem areas hindering excellent service and finding solutions. The only measure for clients to express their dissatisfaction is a complaint box. Management does not cater for clients who can't read and write for them to have ways to express their dissatisfaction with the service given to them". (CSO 3)

"The department must start taking this policy very serious because it will in future assist on where to improve its services, and also Information Sessions and Public hearings be conducted to give the community the opportunity to also rise their discomforts about the services they receive from the departmental officials and were to improve. Names of the Complaint Champions be made visible on a notice board or on the door of every office". (CSO 1)

"As we are having a large number due to poor service delivery. As our system are failing us. There is long queues and people/clients are not serviced as we desire due to downtime of our system. We do not even have warm bodies/Resources as Labour centres have shortage of staff to cover Labour centre as well as visiting points". (SUP 1)

"Effective implementation will assist for both complainant and the organization, it will build a trust to the client and confidence to the staff. These will ensure the responsibility and accountability of the organization and proof the best service delivery. Batho-Pele principles, the staff will be client orientated and capacitated with ethics and Code of Conduct". (SUP 3)

"The DEL must take opinions/inputs of officials at the lower level seriously, because those officials are foot soldiers. They were the ones who are working hard, so their voices need to be heard". (SUP 4)

"For me to add, I will say this is a brilliant research topic that can take the department forward. The implementation of the Customer Complaints Management policy according to my perception and experience, department of Employment and Labour need to extent its horizon by extending its services to establish a Business Unit called Complaints and Enquiries within the department in order to implement the customer complaints management policy effectively and efficiently, or an Independent Special Unit that will not be biased,

that will ensure justice is prevailing. Independent Special Unit will ensure Control measures are there and useful and those who are not doing their job are held accountable for failing to perform their duties". (CSO 8)

Commentary: The analysis of responses from the participants reveals that the solution to any challenge still lies within the officials themselves. The participants suggested the following systems and procedures to be put in place to ensure effective and efficient implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province:

- i. Proper monitoring of staff by managers and supervisor.
- ii. Training of staff to clarify their role as public servants through the Public Service Code of Conduct.
- iii. Inclusion of frontline staff as part of the Task Team that deals with customer complaints because of the wealth of experience that they have in dealing with clients or customers.
- iv. Improvement of internal processes especially departmental systems as they contribute to customer complaints.
- v. Management of the DEL should learn from customer complaints as this can trigger innovative ideas to tackle new challenges facing the department and improve service delivery.
- vi. Increase access to customer complaints platforms to cater for people who cannot read or write, furthermore, improve access to people with disability.
- vii. Names of complaints champions to be visible on notice boards or doors in each labour centres.
- viii. Strengthening citizens' engagement through Imbizos and community outreach programmes in order to listen to their voice regarding service delivery and mechanism to lodge complaints.
- ix. Improve internal coordination of activities to allow inputs from street-level bureaucrats; and,
- x. Creation of a customer complaints and enquiries business unit dedicated to the course to improve service delivery.

In section 4.5.1.1.2, it was stated that this study will embark on a document study to gain more insights on matters relating to public service customer management. Gibson and Brown (2011:2) state that “documents might include letters, diaries, maps, minutes from meetings, social registers, governmental reports, emails, websites, posters, wikis, blogs, and any other record of social practice. Through documents, researchers can gain detailed insights into people's lives, and to the workings of organisations”. The next section will be dedicated to policies and governmental reports relating to public service customer complaints and the analysis of the DEL’s customer complaint management policy.

5.4 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The following documents were consulted and their contributions to the public service customer complaints management policy are explained. The first document is the Service Delivery and Organisational Transformation Framework of 2013 (DPSA).

5.4.1 Service Delivery and Organisational Transformation Framework, 2013 (DPSA)

The main purpose of the service delivery and organisational transformation framework (SDOTF) is to strengthen and enhance understanding of the value chain regarding the improvement of service delivery and organisational transformation in Public Service (DPSA 2013:10). The SDOTF document outlines what the government departments are supposed to do in order to sustain service delivery. The process involves the development and the implementation of:

- i. Strategic plans.
- ii. Integrated human resource plans.
- iii. Financial plans.
- iv. Operational plans.
- v. Service standards.
- vi. Service Delivery Improvement Plans; and,
- vii. Monitor reporting and evaluation mechanisms” (DPSA 2013:7).

It should be noted that participants indicated that the DEL has already developed the SDIP and the service standards. This is a good demonstration of the DEL's commitment to align its programmes with the DPISA's policies and guidelines.

5.4.2 Public Administration Management Act No 11, 2014.

The objectives of this Act are: “to provide for capacity development and training; to provide for the establishment of the National School of Government; to provide for the use of information and communication technologies in the public administration; to establish the Public Administration Ethics, Integrity and Disciplinary Technical Assistance Unit” (South Africa 2014). The analysis from semi-structured interviews indicates that there was inadequate training of staff on the customer complaints management policy in the DEL in the Free State province. Section 10(1)(a) of the Act directs the heads of public service institutions through education and training of its employees, develop its human resource capacity to a level that enables it to perform its functions in an efficient, quality, collaborative, and accountable manner. It is the view of the researcher that for an effective and efficient implementation of the customer complaints management policy, training of staff and collaboration with external partners who specialise in issues of customer care should be accelerated by the DEL management. At the time of the study the DEL requested all employees to complete the online course on Ethics in the Public Service through the National School of Government (NSG). It is important for all public servants to conduct themselves ethically accepted manner, hence the course is considered a good initiative of the DEL.

5.4.3 Service Charter for the Financial year 2021/22 (DEL)

The 2021/22 service charter outlines, amongst others, the mandate of the Department which is “to regulate the labour market through policies and programmes developed in consultation with social partners”. The aim is for the DEL to:

- Improve economic efficiency and productivity, create decent employment,
- Promote labour standards and fundamental rights at work.
- Provide adequate social safety nets to protect vulnerable workers.
- Sound labour relations.
- Eliminate inequality and discrimination in the workplace.
- Enhance occupational health and safety awareness and compliance in the workplace; and,

- Give value to social dialogue in the formulation of sound and responsive legislation and policies to attain labour market flexibility for competitiveness of enterprises which is balanced with the promotion of decent employment (Department of Employment and Labour 2021:1).

In addition, the DEL service charter provides a list of beneficiaries of their service and they include:

- Employers.
- Employees.
- Unemployed.
- Underemployed.
- Private employment agencies.
- Trade unions and trade unions federations.
- Employer organisations; and,
- Medical service providers.

It is important that the information containing the mandate of the DEL be visible to citizens to enable them to direct their concerns to the relevant departments in order to eliminate unnecessary delays and dissatisfaction about services. Additionally, outlining the beneficiaries of the DEL services and having regular consultation in a form of surveys to assess the level of customer service can be of benefit to both the DEL and its clients.

5.4.4 Service Standard for the Financial year 2021/22 (DEL)

Through the Service Standards, the DEL commits itself to provide services that are measurable in terms of quality, quantity, equity, time, and access. The DEL has committed to acknowledge 92% of written complaints, suggestions, and compliments within 24 hours of receipt. Furthermore, the DEL promises to resolve 92% of complaints (with complete information) within 14 working days of receipt. The DEL Service Standard invites citizens to provide feedback in a form of comments, suggestions or compliments in order to for DEL to review their policies, business processes, service standards and service delivery strategies (Department of Employment and Labour 2021).

Remarks from participants in the semi-structured interviews suggest that officials within the DEL in the Free State province are aware of the expected timeframes to resolve customer complaints and the procedures that customer should follow to lodge complaints and escalate their dissatisfaction of the DEL services. The participants' comments are consistent with the processes outlined in the Service Standard document.

5.4.5 Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments Management Policy, 2017 (DEL)

The essence of this study was to investigate whether there were effective and efficient processes and procedures for the implementation of customer complaints management policy in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province. The analysis of the policy document indicates that the policy is grounded on the South African constitutional and legislative frameworks. According to Dahlgaard-Park (2015:12), the guiding principles for the development of policies and procedures for the management of complaints is to develop clear policies and procedures regarding how complaints will be received, recorded, managed and reported. Moreover, organisations ought to ensure policies on how complaints will be managed are available and communicated clearly to the public and staff. The policy statement of the DEL customer complaints management policy states that “the Department is committed to provide complainants with easy access to our complaints resolution process via any of service delivery points, postal and fax services, telephone, e-mail, and the website (Department of Employment and Labour 2017:6).

The researcher has noted that there is an email address for customer care services for all nine provinces on the Departmental website and this has also been confirmed by some participants who indicated that there is a complaint box in their respective labour centres where customers can deposit their complaints. Comments from participants with reference to the visibility of the complaints processes and the availability of trained official with necessary skills and expertise to handle complaints revealed that the processes were invisible and unfriendly. Moreover, there was inadequate training of staff at the lower level of the implementation phase, in this case, the CSOs. This is an area which the DEL will be required to improve on in order to enhance effective and efficient implementation of the customer complaints management policy, more especially since within the policy document the DEL has

committed to “ensure that the internal complaints process is transparent and visible so that complainants have full knowledge of what procedures to follow in order for the complaints to be resolved and make available adequately trained officials that possess the necessary skills and expertise to handle complaints, compliments and suggestions effectively” (Department of Employment and Labour 2017:6).

5.5 CONCLUSION

The objective of this chapter was to present the research findings. Furthermore, several documents were analysed in relation to the South African public service customer complaints management system. The findings of this study suggest that the customer complaints management of the DEL is firmly grounded on the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 and other legislative frameworks.

Seven themes emerged from the literature review and findings on each theme were analysed based on the responses from participants and the major finding was that for any policy to be effectively and efficiently implemented, policy implementers should ensure that the following variables: Context, Content, Commitment, Capacity, Communication, Client/Coalition and Coordination receive attention as they may have an impact on the success or failure of the policy. Lack of necessary support, poor systems, inadequate training of staff and poor coordination of activities were found to be amongst the factors that could affect effective and efficient implementation of the customer complaints management policy of the DEL in the Free State province. Recommendations emanating from the findings of the study are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness and efficiency of the processes and procedures for implementing the customer complaints management policy in five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province. The responses from the semi-structured email interviews and documents study were analysed and presented in the previous chapter. The findings suggest that when customer complaints management in the public service is effectively implemented, it might promote accountability, transparency, improves service delivery and it can generate innovative ideas to solve public service challenges.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the recommendations of the study on the effectiveness and efficiency of implementing the customer complaints management policy in the five labour centres of DEL in the Free State province. Furthermore, the chapter provides a synthesis of the chapters of the study, followed by the discussion of the summary of findings and suggested areas of future research.

6.2 SYNTHESIS OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 detailed the general overview of the study. The chapter began with the introduction of the customer complaints management within the South African public service. Chapter 1 highlighted that the public service institutions in South Africa should promote a high professional ethics and should act upon citizens' complaints received for poor service delivery. It has been established that the mechanisms should be put in place to address accessibility, speed, fairness, visibility, and accountability during the process of managing customer complaints.

Chapter 1 highlighted that according to the Client Satisfaction Survey conducted by the DEL in the Free State province (2016/2017: 19), seventy-five percent (75%) of citizens indicated that they were not aware that they can lodge a complaint if they were not pleased with the DEL services compared to twenty-five percent (25%) who indicated that they know how to lodge complaints when not satisfied with the quality of services offered. It is important that institutions conduct surveys to learn from their customers and to formulate appropriate strategies for service delivery improvement. It

was within this context that the study was set out to investigate the processes and procedures necessary for the effective and efficient implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province. In line with the research problem, the study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent do the officials in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province have knowledge about the implementation of the customer complaints, compliments, and suggestion policy?
- What challenges are facing the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State in their endeavour to implement the customer complaints management policy?
- What are the benefits for effective implementation of customer complaints management?

Chapter 1 also presented brief discussions of ethical considerations, research design and methodology that were followed, envisaged contributions and the limitations of the study, as well as the layout of the sequence of chapters.

Chapter 2 of the study focused on the literature review on policy implementation. The importance of policy implementation literature for this study was to grant the researcher the opportunity to fully comprehend the world of policy implementation to enhance his journey to investigate the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the South African public service, using the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State as a case study. The researcher adapted the 7-C protocol on policy implementation, which are considered critical variables of this study.

Chapter 3 addressed the legislative frameworks relating to public service customer complaints management. The Constitution laid a foundation for assessing what mechanisms citizens have when they are dissatisfied with the quality delivery in the public service. The emphasis was on Chapter 2 (Bill of Rights) of the Constitution, which pronounces on the rights of human dignity, equality, and freedom of the citizens, among others. The chapter further expressed the importance of Section 195 of the Constitution.

The chapter proceeded by discussing the legislative frameworks guiding the public service such as the PSA, PAJA, PAIA and the *Batho Pele principles*. Furthermore, relevant institutions responsible promoting customer complaints management within the South African public service such as the OPP, HRCSA, PSC and Ombudsman were discussed. The chapter was concluded by a discussion of international best practices on complaints management and the advantages of an effective complaints management system.

Chapter 4 presented a review of the research design, methodology and data collection methods that were used in order to answer the research questions of this study. Furthermore, the philosophical outlook and the research paradigms relevant to this study were explored. The researcher selected the qualitative methodology, a case study approach utilising semi-structured email interviews as a data collection method. The chapter further highlighted the limitations of the study and ethical considerations that culminated in the granting of permission by the DEL and Unisa for the research to be conducted.

Chapter 5 of the study presented and discussed data emanating from semi-structured interviews conducted. The chapter commenced with researcher outlining his experience and challenges he faced during the data collection phase of this study. Data collected from participants assisted the researcher to obtain answers to the research questions, draw findings and develop recommendations. The research data was thematically analysed through seven themes adapted from literature studies on policy implementation. Flowing from the findings of the study, recommendations and suggested areas for future research are discussed in this chapter.

6.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this section is to summarise the research findings of the study. This will be done by revisiting the objectives of the study to determine if they have been achieved as contemplated in chapter 1 (See section 1.5).

Research objective 1: To investigate the knowledge that the officials in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province might be having about the implementation of the customer complaints management policy.

Finding 1:

The qualitative data from the participants indicates a mixed insights from both DD:LCOs, Registrations Supervisors and CSOs regarding their key responsibilities in handling customer complaints. Some participants indicated very limited knowledge about the processes to handle customer complaints, some argued that they do not know what do when handling customer complaints, while others say they have thorough knowledge of the processes. It can therefore be concluded that despite the introduction of the SOP, SDIP and Complaints Champions in labour centres, staff in the five labour centres studied do not fully understand their roles when customers lodge complaints in the DEL. It is suggested that orientation of new staff should be prioritised in order to clarify the confusion of what “complaint” means within the department. It has been established that staff within the five labour centres confuse the customer complaints with the complaint’s cases received from clients in relation to non-compliance with labour laws, they also confuse their own internal complaints in relations to labour relations matters.

Finding 2:

It has been revealed from the data analyses that in all the groups of participants there was confusion of the term “complaints” within the five labour centres. For instance, participants indicated that they complete the **IES1** upon receipt of customer complaints. The **IES1** is a template or a form used to record complaints of non-compliance of labour legislations in the Republic of South African lodged by employees. Some participants indicated that they do not know where to go when they have complaints; a clear sign of confusing the LRA matters that should be handled by their respective labour unions or through the ER branch. The confusion arises from

lack of training and an inadequate orientation of new employees. It can be deduced that there is a need for intensive training to distinguish what customer complaints are in comparison with other complaints handled by the DEL.

Finding 3:

It has been established that the customer complaints management policy in the five labour centres was clear on the steps that need to be followed, however, the steps of where and to whom complaints are to be submitted were not visible and user-friendly. It is important that the procedures to lodge complaints be visible and be user-friendly in order to accommodate all stakeholders of the DEL. The customer complaints management policy should also be easily accessible to internal staff as some participants indicated that they do not even know where they can access the policy in the DEL internal systems.

Research objective 2: To determine challenges that the labour centres of the DEL in the Free State face in their endeavour to implement the complaint management policy.

Finding 4:

The findings from this study shows a trend of unequal access to training of staff. The CSOs indicated that they were excluded from trainings and only a few selected individuals were informed of the customer complaints management policy. The finding suggests that there is a need for continuous training of staff, especially the frontline staff as they are directly dealing with dissatisfied and difficult clients on the daily basis.

Furthermore, the finding notes that, the quality of training on customer care needs improvement, this is because the training lacks specification on the needs of customers of the DEL services. This finding also indicates the existence of poor planning and coordination, as well as lack of insight or technical skills by facilitators, particularly when dealing with customer complaints management.

Training and the development of staff in the public service should be conducted by accredited service providers and facilitators who understand the dynamics of public service. It is also suggested that provinces design training manuals that deal with specific customer complaints trends within the province. This approach could assist as each labour centre across the country faces different challenges, and complaints

could be better resolved when officials have been trained on the most common challenges experienced in their respective areas.

Based on the sentiments of the participants, it can be deduced that lack of training at lower levels of staff, in this case frontline staff, could trigger a slow response to customer complaints. Training of all the DEL staff on customer complaints management policy might enhance the speed in which customer complaints are handled.

Finding 5:

Findings from the semi-structured interviews suggest that there is insufficient financial commitment made for effective and efficient implementation of the customer complaints management policy. Participants indicated that there were no posters and/or pamphlets that outline the processes and procedures for the customers to lodge their complaints. Each labour centre and satellite office should have a clearly marked process with faces, contact numbers and names of customer complaints officers.

Finding 6:

Participants reported that due to limited number of officials handling customer complaints, there is a risk that the DEL might be underreporting customer complaints. Furthermore, the speed with which customer complaints are handled is affected by this lack of capacity in the DEL. The staff responsible for the management of customer complaints also have other responsibilities, for instance, some SDIP champions are Assistant Directors or Deputy Directors of other branches in which they have signed a performance agreement, and they are expected to fulfil their obligations and reach their targets. As a result, they might not thoroughly investigate and analyse customer complaints received thus affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of the customer complaints management policy. The establishment of a customer complaints technical unit that has knowledgeable staff could contribute towards an effective and efficient implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the DEL.

Finding 7:

Responses from the semi-structured interviews indicate that the DEL has used different platforms to communicate with the citizens about where they can lodge complaints. Amongst the platforms highlighted by citizens are the client satisfaction survey, the Queue Management Service ratings platform, notice boards and the social media. The findings indicate the existence of limited consultation of relevant stakeholders when policies are formulated and implemented. The researcher is of the view that if consultation processes on the implementation of the customer complaints were adequate, some of the platforms used by private companies like the service ratings survey via sms and e-mail links could have been suggested and used to allow citizens to rate the DEL's services.

The beneficiaries of the DEL services include public and private hospitals, employers, employer organisations, NPO and NGO and the general public. The service providers have advanced customer complaints procedures and customer complaints management processes which the DEL can adopt to strengthen the implementation of the current customer complaints management policy.

According to Marais *et al.* (2017:37), to operationalize principles of good governance such as transparency and participation to a large extent depends on the degree of access that citizens have to government information. Furthermore, "citizens need means to engage with governments and to assess, through access to relevant and timely information, the extent to which governments are performing the responsibilities of public office effectively and efficiently. If governments are to be transparent about how and why decisions are made, they need to both give citizens the opportunity to contribute to the process, and provide relevant information regarding those decisions" (Marais *et al.* 2017:37). The findings of this study reveal that for an effective and efficient implementation of the customer complaints management policy in DEL, consultation with citizens needs to be improved.

Finding 8:

The findings also indicated the prevalence of inadequate communication and coordination strategies in some respects in ensuring that the processes and procedures to lodge customer complaints are communicated to both the internal and external clients. Participants highlighted the need for posters outlining the procedures

to lodge complaints. In order to develop a communication plan that deals with customer complaints, there is a need to work closely with other departments. It can be deduced that training and development sections have not trained staff enough on the implementation of the customer complaint management policy, thus the communications section has been accused of not visiting labour centres and only distribution of information via emails without an assurance that the contents are understood by all staff.

The study also found that there was no consequence management when officials fail to deliver the DEL services according to the agreed service standards. There is also a need for a well-coordinated approach to customer complaints management in the DEL. All relevant sections of the DEL should work together towards effective implementation of the customer complaints management policy. This can happen if communication is clear, visible, and user-friendly, and officials responsible to manage areas of misconduct play their part when the DEL staff are found to have deliberately omitted their responsibilities when rendering services to the clients.

Finding 9:

Findings from the semi-structured interviews further suggest that the DEL should be applauded for some efforts made to enhance customer satisfaction. The department has introduced the queue management system (QMS) through which queues are managed to give client better service experience. This system serves to identify slow movement of queues, monitor the time spent by officials when assisting clients and provide feedback on the quality of services rendered. However, the findings also revealed some system challenges with the Qmatic platform which is offline most of the time. It can be argued that if the ratings service platform can be monitored and correctly implemented customer service experience could be improved and customer complaints be reduced.

Finding 10:

At the time of this study the majority of labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province did not have reliable telephone systems. Participants also indicated that there was a need for a functional telephone and IT systems to enable officials to effectively manage telephonic enquiries and timeously give feedback to clients on their complaints. Improving the information technology systems of DEL could help in reducing customer complaints as the majority of complaints arise due to slow or frequent offline systems.

Research objective 3: To determine the benefits associated with effective implementation of customer complaints management.

Literature on customer complaints management and the responses from participants of this study charted the following benefits for an organisation in relations to customer complaints:

- i. Improved customer experience;
- ii. Enhanced organisational reputation;
- iii. Increased accountability;
- iv. Boost staff morale;
- v. The reduction of complaints;
- vi. Improved service delivery;
- vii. Increase loyalty to the organisation;
- viii. Trigger innovative idea to assist clients; and,
- ix. Increase knowledge and understanding to both the employees of DEL and citizens on effective and efficient customer complaints handling processes.

The following section proposes measures that the DEL can implement to strengthen the current processes and procedures for effective and efficient implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section presents the recommendations emanating from this study.

Research objective 4: To determine the processes and procedures for effective and efficient implementation of the customer complaints management policy in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province.

6.4.1 Induction of newly appointed staff be prioritised

The findings of this study highlighted that some staff members in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province were not familiar with the processes and procedures for managing customer complaints. It is therefore recommended that newly appointed officials should undergo an induction workshop that will assist to clarify what complaint management entails and what is expected of them in implementing the customer complaints management policy. The researcher proposes that when dealing customer complaints during the induction stage for newly appointed officials, the following areas should be covered to avoid confusion and set a clear path for managing customer complaints:

Table 6.1 Proposed staff induction framework in dealing with customer complaint management

Induction Coverage	Purpose	Expected Results	Responsible Agency/Person
DEL CONSTITUTIONAL MANDATE	To equip staff with knowledge of what it is expected from them in terms of the Constitution	Staff be familiar with legislations which falls within DELs jurisdiction and which procedures to follow when dealing with complaint cases	DEL HRM (Training and Development IES

<p>COMPLAINTS,SUGGESTIONS AND COMPLIMENTS MANAGEMENT POLICY</p>	<p>To clarify the purpose, objectives, the processes, and the role players in managing customer complaints</p>	<p>Knowledgeable staff who understand their role and responsibilities when dealing with customer complaints</p>	<p>DEL HRM (Training and Development</p>
<p>LABOUR RELATIONS</p>	<p>To address grievance procedures in the public service</p>	<p>Clarification of processes to lodge internal complaints related to Labour Relations</p>	<p>DEL HRM (Training and Development and Employee Relations Public Service Commission Recognised Unions</p>

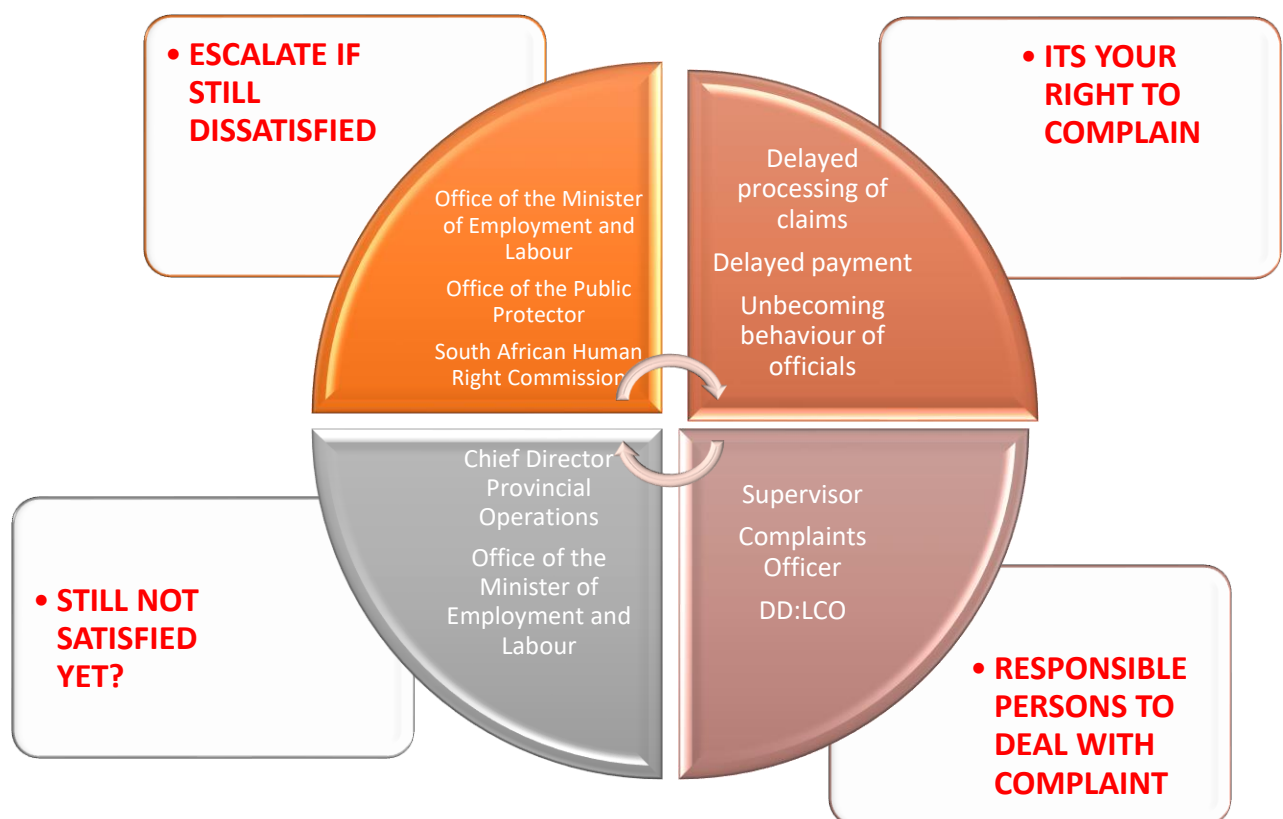
Source: Researcher’s own compilation, 2021

It is envisaged that when officials join the department they must be oriented to clearly define what their responsibilities are when handling customer complaints. The proposed framework seeks to distinguish complaints handled by the DEL and the role of officials in handling customer complaints. This is to enhance speedy responses to customer complaints. Collaboration with the PSC could increase the knowledge of officials regarding steps to follow when they have their own complaints against the employer. By introducing new appointees to processes and procedures to handle customer complaints, a culture within the organisation that puts the interest of customers first might be developed.

6.4.2 Design the customer complaints process flow and posters that are clear and user-friendly

Participant indicated that the current complaints workflow posters are not visible and user-friendly. It is proposed that posters that entail the following information be developed.

Figure 6.2 Proposed poster on customer complaints management process



Source: Researcher's own compilation, 2021

In figure 6.2 above, the researcher proposes that the DEL develop posters that are user-friendly and easy to follow.

- **ITS YOUR RIGHT TO COMPLAIN:**

This part is intended to outline areas in which citizens can lodge complaints when not happy with services rendered. This section could also outline key processes or connect with the service standards of the DEL, clearly indicating the turnaround

times for all services. Highlighting this processes may ensure that clients are aware of their right to complain when standards are not met.

- **RESPONSIBLE PERSONS TO DEAL WITH COMPLAINT:**

It is recommended that in each labour centre, visiting point or satellite offices contact numbers, names, and faces of responsible officials be displayed on the posters. The names of supervisors for each section of the labour centres should be displayed. For instance, supervisor for registrations services, team leader for IES and or supervisor for CF and PES. This is to enable complaints to be directed to the relevant section and be dealt with promptly. Where customers are not satisfied with the feedback from the level of supervisor, then they can escalate to the manager in charge. Clearly displaying the above-mentioned information will enable clients to effectively utilise the customer complaints management processes.

- **STILL NOT SATISFIED YET?**

It is recommended that the posters also display the next level to which complaints can be escalated in a case where they are not satisfied with the response from the labour centre managers. Contact numbers of the head of the provincial operations the office and of the minister should be displayed for ease of reference should the clients need to further escalate their complaints.

- **ESCALATE IF STILL DISSATISFIED**

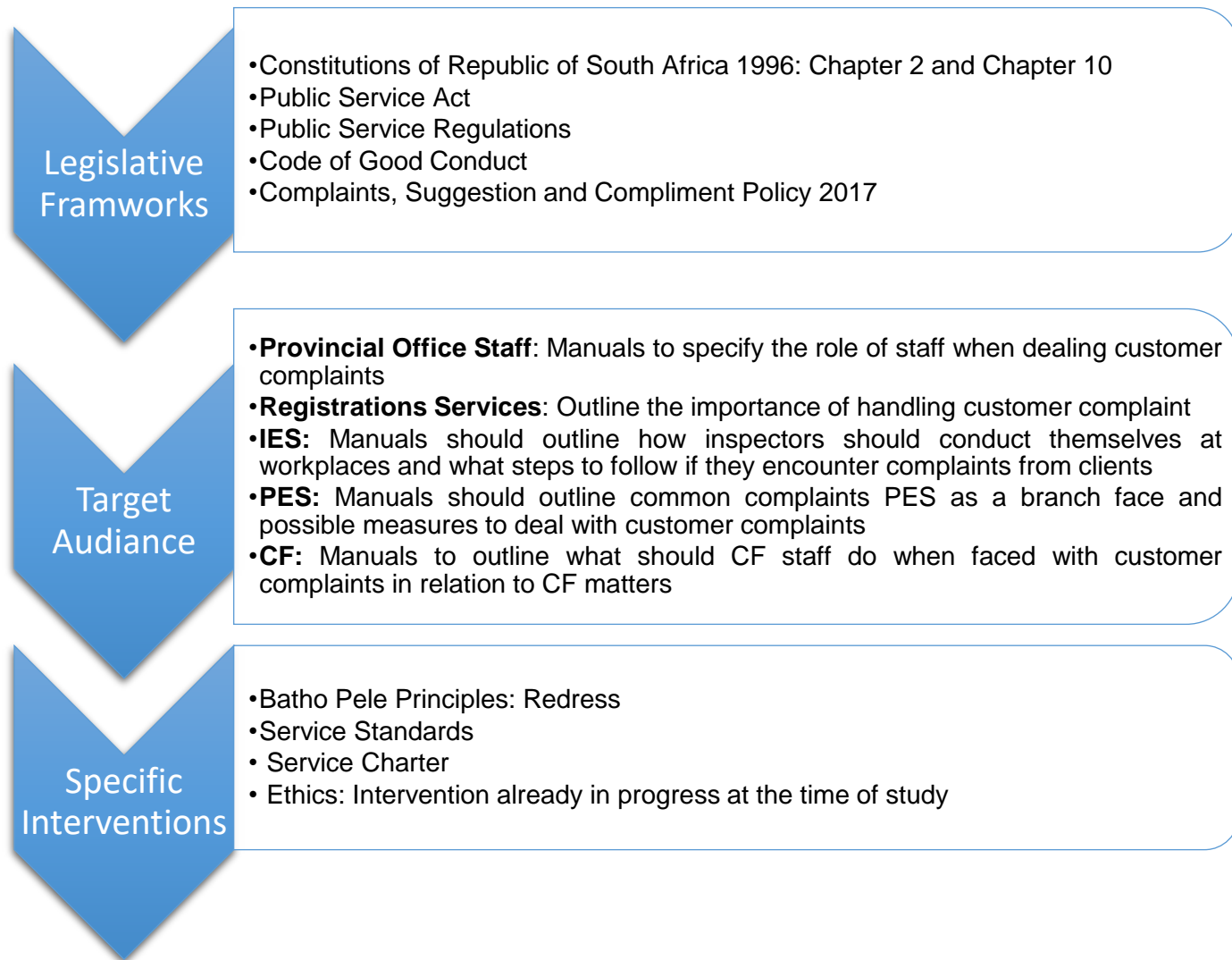
For effective management of customer complaints, citizens should be informed of other institutions to which they can escalate their complaints. Contact numbers of institutions such as the OPP, SAHRC and the Ombudsman should be displayed on the posters for easy reference.

6.4.3 Improve access and the quality of staff training on customer complaints management

It is recommended that all staff be trained on the customer complaints management policy. The policy should also be accessible to internal staff since some participants reported that they do not know where to find the policy. The study recommends that there should be a training manual on how to implement the customer complaints

management policy in the DEL. It is imperative that DEL utilises the expertise of internal staff for training. The importance of internal staff expertise will help to practically explain complaints received and how they can be dealt with. The coordination, preparations and the facilitation of training should be cascaded to the labour centres.

Figure 6.3 Training Manual on complaints management process



Source: Researcher’s own compilation, 2021

Figure 6.3 presents the challenge of unequal access to training of staff and the quality of training provided. Participants indicated that training on processes to lodge complaints was only offered to few selected officials. Therefore, it is recommended that training on the customer complaints management process be offered to all staff in the DEL.

In each section, for instance, PES, UIF or IES, there are different services offered to citizens and the challenges might also differ, it is therefore important that when training is offered, it should address specific challenges of a particular branch and staff should be trained on how to handle those specific complaints.

6.4.4 Increase capacity to deal with customer complaints by establishing a Customer Complaints Management Unit or Directorate

It is recommended that the DEL should increase the capacity of staff that deal with customer complaints. This can be achieved by the establishment of a Customer Complaints Management Unit. The comments from participants highlighted a tendency in which the labour centres report stats monthly and quarterly for compliance purposes only, while on the ground the customers remain dissatisfied. In order to address this phenomenon, it is recommended that each province should have a Deputy Director and the Assistant Director who deal with customer complaints management. At the labour centre level, there should be an official who deals specifically with customer complaints, suggestions, and compliments. The following key responsibilities areas are proposed for the unit.

Figure 6.4 Proposed Key Responsibility Area for Customer Complaints Management Unit or Directorate

Auditing

Conduct monthly and quarterly report on customer complaints statistic received in the province

Audit labour centre quality assurance committee (QAC) reports to check if customer complaints are analysed and acted upon

Monitoring and Evaluation

Labour centre visit to monitor policy compliance

Trend Analysis and report to office of CDPO on areas of concern and make recommendation for improvement

Monitor business units performance on customer complaints management

Policy review and evaluate policy success and failure

Follow-up on staff consequence management to establish accountability on customer complaints received.

Training

Embark on staff training on customer complaints management policy in collaboration with Training and Development

Benchmarking success stories on public service customer complaints management and advise the office of the CDPO or the OCOO.

Initiate Survey to establish customer satisfaction and give feedback on suggestions received

Responsible to identify excellence in service delivery and source rewards such as (holiday discounts for families or vouchers for best clients services.

Source: Researcher's own compilation, 2021

The recommended unit seeks to audit, monitor, and evaluate the processes and procedures to manage customer complaints, and to reduce the pressure on the current staff handling customer complaints. It is important that the data from customer complaints unit is analysed in order to advise the policy makers on areas of improvement and to promote accountability. The establishment of this unit could also strengthen training of staff and improve the quality of training as the unit will be responsible for planning the training sessions.

6.4.5 Increase consultation and cooperation with relevant stakeholders

It is recommended that the DEL should use all public platforms such as community outreach programmes and *Imbizos* to advocate and encourage citizens to utilise the customer complaints processes to register their dissatisfaction. It is further recommended that the DEL liaises with other stakeholders such as the CDWs, labour unions and private institutions to initiate service satisfaction surveys in order to gauge the level of service delivery and identify areas of improvement. Increasing public

participation and consultation has the potential for building public confidence in public policy implementation.

6.4.6 Improved communications and coordination of activities

The study recommends the following processes to address the issue of communications in relations to customer complaints:

- i. **Internal communication:** It is recommended that the policy be made easily accessible to internal staff. It is further suggested that TV screens be used in labour centres, for instance, the PES and Qmatic screens be used to display messages about service standards, service charter and inform clients about the processes and procedures to lodge complaints. In addition, it is recommended that the internal staff communication magazines should have monthly slots or articles highlighting the importance of managing customer complaints and act as a reminder of each employee's responsibilities in handling customer complaints.
- ii. **External communication:** It is recommended that the labour centres utilise the services of local newspapers and radio stations to communicate messages about the processes and procedures to lodge complaints in the DEL.

6.4.7 Intensify reliability of IT services and the telephone systems

Slow and unreliable systems have been identified as the root causes of many customer complaints. At the time of the study, some labour centres did not have reliable telephone systems. Clients were frustrated when they call offices and get no response or they would be promised feedback which never comes. The researcher observed that there were also complaints about the DEL's online systems such as the U-Filling and TERS systems for which clients expressed frustrations on social media platforms, and that the toll-free number was out of order and there was no feedback about customers' claims. Thus the IT systems needs to be improved and the telephone systems be enhanced to be able it to handle the rate of queries the DEL is receiving due to the current circumstances of covid19 epidemic and the high employment rate in South Africa.

6.4.8 Strengthen consequence management processes

Thorough investigations should be pursued when customer complaints are received and corrective measures be taken against officials who did not execute their responsibilities effectively and efficiently. “Public accountability is reinforced when complaint and redress procedures address systemic and policy shortcomings. An exclusive customer focus, which restricts voice to the content of decisions or the actions of officials who fail to follow correct procedures, can fail to address concerns about the policies that lead to the decisions in the first place” (Brewer 2007:554). It is important to note that staff at labour centres and in provinces cannot be players and referees at the same time, that is why it is recommended that a unit or directorate that will deal and monitor customer complaints management processes be established. This is to ensure that officials are held accountable, irrespective of their positions.

6.4.9 Independent review by DPSA on all public institution’s customer complaints management processes

It is recommended that the DPSA should regularly audit all government departments, including the DEL, to determine the effectiveness of the current systems and policies for managing customer complaints in the public service. The DPSA should also conduct surveys and unannounced visits on a regular basis to track progress on how customer complaints policies are implemented in various government departments, how departments use data to develop new strategies to improve service delivery, and what are the departments doing where individuals have failed to deliver services according to set standards.

6.5 AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of study was to investigate processes and procedures for effective and efficient management of customer complaints in the five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province. The study endeavoured to determine whether officials have requisite knowledge about the customer complaints management policy, how it is implemented, the benefits connected to its effective implementation and to establish what challenges labour centres might be experiencing in implementing the policy.

- The research focused only in five labour centres of the DEL in the Free State province and therefore recommends that similar studies be conducted in other labour centres in other provinces using similar research approach to determine if there is a pattern of similar shortcomings.
- It is further proposed that a quantitative study be conducted on all complaints received from 2017 when the customer complaints management policy was introduced in the DEL to assess the efficacy of the policy.
- A comparative assessment of the effectiveness of customer complaints management processes between government departments in South Africa, for instance, department of health, home affairs, South African police services and department of justice and constitutional development is also recommended.
- A study on the role of the DPSA in ensuring that government departments effectively and efficiently implement the customer complaints management policies should also be initiated.

6.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter a summary of the main research findings was outlined, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made in order to strengthen the current processes and procedures to effectively and efficiently managing the customer complaints policy in the DEL in the Free State province.

The study found that staff at lower levels were not adequately trained on the customer complaints management policy and literature on customer complaints emphasised the importance of empowering officials who are in contact with the customers. Moreover, under reporting of customer complaints was found to be prevalent in the DEL due to inadequate capacity, poor communications, and coordination of activities within the department.

In an attempt to improve the implementation of the customer complaints management policy, the study recommended that a unit or directorate that specifically deals with customer complaints management be established, training of staff be prioritised and training manuals on customer complaints be specific and aligned with the current the DEL circumstances. The epistemological position of this research study lies in the fact that there is a wealth of knowledge that the researcher can acquire from different actors, in both managers, supervisors and the client service officers concerning the implementation of the complaints management policy of the DEL in the Free State province. Thus, the knowledge that was generated from different actors on the policy implementation enabled the researcher to draw credible and trustworthy findings to the research study.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL



Ethics
Certificate_Mr Mogc



DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 30 March 2021

PAM/2021/007 (Mogotloane)
Name of applicant: Mr T Mogotloane
Student#: 32327560

Dear Mr Mogotloane

Decision: Ethics Clearance Approval

Details of researcher:

Mr T Mogotloane, student#: 32327560, email: 32327560@mylife.unisa.ac.za, tel: 0839677086

Supervisor: V Louw, staff#: 90053915, email: louwvn@unisa.co.za,

Research project 'Implementation of the customer complaints management policy at five labour centres within Department of Employment and Labour: Free State Province'

Qualification Master of Public Administration (MPA)

Thank you for the application for **research ethics clearance** submitted to the Department: Public Administration and Management: Research Ethics Review Committee, for the above mentioned study. Ethics approval is granted. The decision will be tabled at the next College RERC meeting for notification/ratification.

For full approval: The application was reviewed in compliance with the *Unisa Policy on Research Ethics* and the *Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment*.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

- 1) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to this Ethics Review Committee.



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APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER



DEL HQ
APPROVAL.pdf



employment & labour

Department
Employment and Labour
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X312, PRETORIA, 0001, Labor's House, 215 Francis Baard Street, PRETORIA,
Tel: (012) 309 7058, Fax: (012) 309 4592

18 May 2021

Enquiries: TN Dire
Telephone: 012 3094188

Mr. T Mogotloane
Department of Employment and Labour
FREE STATE

Dear Mr. Mogotloane

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR.**

Your signed letter requesting permission to conduct research refers.

Please be advised that your request to conduct research in the Department of Employment and Labour is approved.

Please be advised that you will treat the information derived from your research in the Department for the execution of your research as completely anonymous and confidential. Furthermore, the information will not be used for the purposes of victimizing the Department in any way. In addition, you must at all times be obliged to safeguard the confidential information in pursuant of your research. It must also be emphasized that no information must be used, reproduced, disclosed or disseminated to any organ of state, firm, corporation, person, including third parties, except with the express prior consent of the Department.

Furthermore, no data may be modified or merged with any other data, use it for any purpose or do any other thing that may in any manner whatsoever, affect the integrity, security or confidentiality of such data. You are further

FS

APPENDIX C: DECLARATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDIT



Tshimollo Consulting

E-mail: pilanelebogang9@gmail.com
Tell: 073 385 2587 / 064 6569824

26 October 2021

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences
University of South Africa

Dear Sir/Madam

Proof of Language Editing of masters dissertation – Mr TS Mogotloane (32327560)

This letter serves to certify that Tshimollo Consulting, a research and consulting company, has edited Mr TS Mogotloane's dissertation with the title: **"Implementation of the Customer Complaints Management Policy in five Labour Centres in the Department of Employment and Labour: Free State Province"**.

The editing included checking and correcting language (e.g. spelling, tenses, word usage, abbreviations and acronyms and sentence structure), checking in-text citations and comparing them with the entries in the list of references, and checking that the style used in the list of references conforms to the prescribed style.

Inconsistencies relating to numbering, headings, spacing, lists, tables and figures, have also been edited.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Mpedi Madue', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Prof Steve Mpedi Madue (PhD)

*Language Editing, Research, Academic Writing,
Coaching, Mentoring, Guidance And Training.*

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Ethics clearance reference number: PAM/2021/007 (Mogotloane)

Research permission reference number:

Title: Implementation of the customer complaints management in five labour centres within Department of Employment and Labour; Free State Province”.

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Tebogo Mogotloane and I am doing research under the supervision of Mrs Valery Louw, lecturer in the Department of Public Administration and Management towards a Master’s Degree at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **“Implementation of the customer complaints management in five labour centres within Department of Employment and Labour; Free State Province”**.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the processes and procedures necessary for the effective and efficient implementation of the policy on management of customer complaints, suggestions and compliments in five labour centres with the Department of Employment and Labour in the Free State Province.

The five labour centres identified for the purpose of this study are the following: Harrismith, Phuthaditjhaba, Kroonstad, Sasolburg and Bloemfontein and the contact details of the prospective participants was obtained at the National Department of Employment and Labour. At least ten (10) managers/supervisors who are responsible implement and manage customer complaints management policy are invited to partake in this study because of their first-hand experience and insight on the policy. Furthermore, at least ten (10) frontline staff are invited in order to incorporate their knowledge, understanding and their perspective to the study.

The study involves semi-structured interviews that will last for 60 minutes in order to investigate the processes and procedures necessary for the effective implementation of the policy on management of customer complaints, suggestions, and compliments in five labour centres with the Department of Employment and Labour in the Free State Province. Participation is voluntary and there is no penalty or loss of benefits for the participation. The

interview will be conducted at your workplace at your most convenient time. You are under no obligation to consent to participation and if you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. There will be no gifts offered or any form of compensation to participants during the study.

This study is intended to enlighten policy implementers of their role in ensuring effective and efficient policy implementation. The study will further describe and explain challenges that will hamper effective implementation of the customer complaints management policy and enhance the knowledge on the benefits associated with an effective and efficient implementation of the customer complaints management policy with Department of Employment and Labour in the Free State Province. There is no risk involved, however the researcher is going to utilise their time which might cause inconvenience to participants who have busy schedule.

The researcher will ensure that everything that will be discussed during the research will not be disclosed and will not be used for any other purpose other than this study. The researcher and supervisor will have access to the data. Hard copies participants interview answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet. Electronic information will be stored on a password protected laptop computer. The researcher will use the Unisa policy on how to destroy data.

Information provided by participants will remain confidential and the identity of participants will not be revealed in any record or report and the researcher will ensure that there is no link between data collected and the participants. Both the researcher will take measure to ensure confidentiality by securing email access with a password. The participants are encouraged to delete their responses and empty their trash as soon as they have sent their responses to the researcher. The researcher will cut and paste the text into a word processing programme, save in a password protected computer or laptop to protect names and addresses of participants and will also delete and empty trash

The researcher and the supervisor will have access to the answers and may be reviewed by members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. The study has received written approval the Research Ethics Review Committee and the Department of Public Administration and Management and the College of Economic and Management Sciences Ethics Review Committee. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

If you wish to be informed about the final research findings, please contact Mr Tebogo Mogotloane on 083 967 7086 32327560@mylife.unisa.ac.za or tebogo.mogotloane@labour.gov.za. The findings are accessible for the period of six months.

In the event that you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact the supervisor, Mrs Valery Louw, on 012 429 6074 louwvn@unisa.ac.za

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.



Signature

Type your name ...Tebogo Mogotlaone.....

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits, and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname..... (please print)

Participant Signature.....Date.....

Tebogo Samuel Mogotloane



Researcher's signature

Date: 07 April 2021