



An examination of the fridity of the district municipalities towards the needs of society: A synthesis of service delivery framework in Limpopo Province



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ABSTRACT

Recently, development has taken center stage as it encapsulates an intrinsic aspect of human life. Development is a fundamental requirement for improving the material conditions of communities that contend with abject poverty across all spheres of their lives. It is conversely justifiable that understanding development within the context of service delivery is indispensable and could be considered the backbone towards socioeconomic and political upliftment of the masses. This social science research study examines the fridity of the district municipalities towards improving the needs of society. This study seeks to closely unpack the challenges that negatively impact ordinary citizens' livelihoods to access the services as their fundamental and constitutional rights. The fridity of district municipalities to render services violates the citizens' fundamental human rights and undermines constitutional supremacy. The primary focus of this study is on disentangling the issues which have a negative bearing on development initiatives to be undertaken by the district municipalities. This study further navigates the social ills through a lens that would, in turn, reveal and expose the key stumbling blocks which deter infrastructure and socio-economic development by district municipalities. This qualitative study embraces a phenomenological approach to fulfill the descriptive observation of the phenomenon under investigation. Data was collected through phenomenological observations and focus groups among the respondents. This study postulates the essential recommendations that would inform policy shift and policy reform as fundamental approaches to development that respond squarely to service delivery.

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Introduction

The South African Constitution, (1996) is the supreme law of the country that provides the legal basis in terms of how municipalities are structured, demarcated, and categorised in the Republic of South Africa. Section 41 of the South African Constitution, (1996) further clarifies and mainstreams how best the spheres of government should uphold the principles of cooperative governance. The South African Constitution, (1996) provides guidelines and frameworks for the establishment and determination of different categories of municipalities within the borders of the Republic of South Africa as expressed in the Municipal Structures Act, (1998) and (South Africa Yearbook 2011/12: 259). Developmental local government is quintessential to the upliftment of the livelihoods of the people particularly the poor and marginalised sections of the population. District municipalities are recognised in terms of Chapter 7 of the South African Constitution, (1996) as category C municipalities and they co-exist alongside with local municipalities. In instance where the region as demarcated does not meet the minimum requirement for category C (district) status as required by the statute, due to some factors and more urbanised, it is elevated to category A (metropolitan). The district municipalities were established to replace the District Management Areas as the viable agencies for development and service delivery. "The enduring infrastructure legacy of pre-1994 nationalist policies are institutional fragmentation, backlogs in basic services delivery, a lack of

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centralised local government in rural areas and marginalised provincial economies” (Smith and da Lomba 2008: 3; Smith, Da Lomba, and Anderson 2008: 368). District municipalities were required to develop a wide district planning as a framework to guide and support planning, infrastructure development and service delivery in their areas of jurisdiction for the benefit of their local municipalities. Section 155 (c) of the South African Constitution, (1996) states that category C municipality is a municipality that has municipal executive and legislative authority in an area that includes more than one local municipality. This emphasises that district municipalities alone cannot provide essential service outside local municipalities. It is in this context that all the categories of municipalities at the local level have a role to play in eradicating the deepening poverty by improving service delivery to relieve the crisis that undermines local governance (Nyalunga, 2006).

There are three fundamental objectives this study seeks to achieve and in doing so, attention was given to the subject under investigation that is: the frugidity of the district municipalities towards the needs of society. To realise its aim, the study outlines the following objectives:

to determine the contribution of district municipalities to the broader infrastructure development and service delivery to the society.

- i. to assess the extent to which the various structures are contributing towards the improvement of the economic livelihood of communities.
- ii. to ascertain whether the existing legislative frameworks have a potential of assisting the district municipalities in responding to development and service delivery gaps.

The methodology for this study is qualitative and provided the subjectivity on the phenomenon during data collection and analysis. We considered using the document analysis within the context of the legislative framework. The Atlas TI was employed as a scientific instrument during the initial study which was a thesis and utilised the descriptive and phenomenological analysis. We have performed a further analysis from the thesis to be able to examine a phenomenon to decipher this study’s research problem. The following hypothetical statements are tested in this paper:

- i. There are challenges on how the district municipalities contribute towards the broader infrastructure development and service delivery to the society.
- ii. The various structures are not contributing towards the improvement of the economic livelihoods of communities due to lack of resources.
- iii. The existing legislative frameworks have a potential; of assisting the district municipalities in responding to development and service delivery gaps but without success due to lack of resources
- iv. The legislative framework exists to only aid the leadership and management with decision making but without success of implementation due to lack of resources.

This paper is organized as follows: after this introduction, is the next section which is a literature review which is empirically and theoretically based that underpins the praxis of the phenomenon and the theoretical framework. The third section navigates the path followed on producing this very work through the description of the methodology followed in our research. This is followed by the discussion of results wherein the Municipal Public Accounts, implications of the district municipalities on development and service delivery, the state of service delivery and development barometer at district municipalities, and constitutional and legislative frameworks are discussed. Finally, the paper concludes with key points, recommendations, future research directions and limitations.

Literature Review

This section of the study interrogates the theoretical debates from various scholars of local government within the context of service delivery. The anguishes and hysterical discrepancies on the state of service delivery are fully unpacked. The gaps identified in the study are critical to spatial integrated development approach as well as municipal interventions terrain as designed to respond to the deformations, skewed development, and the typical elements of the former government’s planning. Subsequently, the conceptualization of the historical foundation and evolution of the system of local government post-apartheid South Africa is articulated and demystified.

It is arguably stated that people-centred and people-driven development is where society remains in the epic-centre of participatory democracy whereas, service delivery tops the participatory agenda. “This people-centred vision of development involves the full utilisation of all available material resources and the full participation of the various people in the community for their own development” (Ocheni and Nwankwo, 2012: 132). The district municipalities are regarded as machineries for enabling development and service delivery to happen however, there is evidence of a chaotic system which seeks to destabilise the constitutional mandate given this sphere of government’s post democratic dispensation. This study proffers an iterative framework that posits the need to align planning and budgeting to inform the societal needs and priorities. A complexity of eminent causes and effects are revealed with policy recommendations that profoundly contribute to the body of knowledge with new insights.

It is in this context, that the White Paper on Local Government, (1998: 17) defines local government as, “...developmental local government committed to working with citizens, groups and the community to find sustainable ways to meet the social, economic and material needs and improve quality of their lives”. The White Paper on Local Government, (1998) reaffirms that district municipalities in South Africa are strategically positioned as legal and constitutional entities to realise and ultimately achieve

developmental state that is envisaged in the National Development Plan. One of the weaknesses of municipalities is their inability to be development-oriented to attract the investors. Importantly, district municipalities are better placed to consolidate and instil the culture of participatory democracy as envisaged in the Municipal Systems Act, (2000).

District municipalities need among others, the skills and institutional capacity to realise service delivery objectives as well as transform this institution. Mogale (2003: 229) in Koma (2010: 111) states that for the municipalities to meet developmental requirements and accelerate service delivery to the poor and marginalised sections of the society, the state must ensure that resources are mobilised, and capacity is built and maintained at institutional level. Equally, fundamental approach should be informed by the development of key legislative frameworks to support district municipalities towards the realisation of development objectives. To this end, the White Paper on Local Government, (1998) conceptualises developmental local government as a government that seeks to integrate racially divided groups under single local authority with common and equal tax base (Powell, 2012: 12). A developmental local government is a vehicle to facilitate a developmental state by utilising municipalities as efficient tools towards building and achieving an envisioned developmental state (ASSADPAM, 2012: 2).

It is in this context that district municipalities have the potential to achieve a developmental goal at local government by mobilising the local people, thereby creating an environment that is conducive for growth (Madumo, 2012). The realisation of a people-centred development, good governance and accountability are the focal areas and find expression within the notion of state and society (Rambachan, 2013). It was the responsibility of municipalities to provide the new infrastructure and rehabilitate the old one if such infrastructure reached the end of the design life span (Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG 2007: 3). The municipal infrastructure services refer to the water supply, sanitation, roads, storm water, waste management, and electricity (DPLG 2007).

In contextualising the category C municipalities (district municipalities), attention should be given to the legislative (Municipal Structures Act, 1998) and constitutional (South African Constitution, 1996) mandate in terms of the establishment of municipalities in every corner of the Republic of South Africa. Similarly, the district municipalities are commonly prevalent in the rural and peri-urban areas where development and service delivery are at the cutting edge. This formalisation of municipalities was urgently required to address and redress development and infrastructure challenges due to the distorted apartheid spatial planning aimed at discriminating the masses to benefit from service delivery.

The gaps identified in this study are critical to spatial integrated development approach as well as municipal interventions terrain as designed to respond to the distortions, lopsided development, and the characteristic features of apartheid planning (Malefane and Mashakoe, 2008). The state of a developmental post-apartheid South Africa is to a certain extent veered towards the legislative mandate to a neo-liberal approach in a way that insulates the existing realities of service delivery imperatives. The district municipalities as stated, exist in rural or the former homelands where resources are parsimoniously limited and tantamount to the deficit to infrastructure provision. The former Minister: Mufamadi (DPLG) on the State of the Nation debate on Local Government stated that, “in designing the new system of local government, care was taken to ensure that we put in place a framework for progressively doing away with the consequences which exposed White and Black South Africans, to vastly different socio-economic environment” (Pretorius and Schurink, 2007: 19).

Most district municipalities are under-resourced and thus unable to attract the much-needed technical skills to rollout massive infrastructure development for the advancement of socio-economic upliftment and service delivery. Some district municipalities are still contending with cross-border challenges which took longer than anticipated to restore their systems in place to better respond to development and service delivery challenges. It is in this that the state’s role is to ensure equitable and efficient revenue collection, initiate capital investment projects, broaden the base of the economy to include the vulnerable, and to ensure a widespread network of social services (Mapuva, 2010: 404). One of the areas that developmental local government had to contend with is the conceptualisation of the historical foundation and evolution of the system of local government post-apartheid South Africa (Koma, 2012).

The principle underpinning the devolution of power to communities epitomises key strategies and features of the ANC’s policy approach which reinforces popular participation in local affairs and development (Nel and Binns, 2001: 356). For the government to achieve a vision of a developmental state, local municipalities across different categories, are required to prioritise the needs of their communities as well as to improve the material conditions and their livelihoods. It is in this context that development, service delivery, and poverty reflect the dire need for interventions to improve socio-economic development that would respond and contribute to the wide district planning in addressing the social ills the municipalities are currently contending with (Limpopo PGDS 2004-2014). The Municipal Systems Act, (2000) provides for “the core principles, mechanisms and processes necessary to enable municipalities to move progressively towards the advancement of the social and economic upliftment of local communities and ensure universal access to essential services that are affordable to all the people especially the poor and marginalised sections of the population”.

The District Development Model (DDM) In Response To Service Delivery

Developmental local government is defined as the type of local government that puts economic development on the top of the agenda and as priority number one that can design effective instruments to promote and realise the developmental principles as well as

objectives (Bagchi, 2000: 398). The District Development Model (DDM) was conceptualised to compliment the imperatives of an integrated development plan as a planning and participatory framework in local government. As an integrated approach designed to respond to holistic development gaps, the DDM was conceptualised in a way that it does not consider the resource needs of diversified district municipalities. Local government in South Africa is an integral part of the constitutional system and arrangement of decentralised government ushered in by the democratic elections of 1994 (Steytler and de Visser, 2009: 1-3). This study interrogates the current legislative gaps and how the new framework – the DDM would better articulate its position as an alternative vehicle to address the woes and hilarious deficits that are promptly placed to respond to the current state of service delivery to realise a developmental local government that is long envisaged.

The focus of this study is centred on the framework that would supersede the current models that are non-responsive to the challenges at hand. With the failure of local government to implement the imperatives of the National Development Plan, the South African government recently introduced the DDM to strengthen the capacity of district municipalities to accelerate service delivery at regional level (Khambule, 2021: 508). The DDM does not replace the existing developmental frameworks in local government such as integrated development planning, spatial development frameworks but complement each other. The DDM is an integrated-based service delivery method that seeks to change the face of district municipalities' development and service delivery approach.

The legal frameworks are in place for the district municipalities to accelerate development that either respond or support service delivery in their own space at local government level post-apartheid South Africa. The state of district municipalities as related to development and service delivery, are in disarray owing to many factors that could be associated with *inter alia* capacity, resource, and skills constraints. Hitherto, the study describes local government as a government that has a special constitutional place and mandate to foster development (Naude 2001). Rambachan (2013) asserts that the transformation agenda of local government: considers the fundamental principles for developmental local government as the conceptualisation of the DDM. The DDM is a tailor-made model which responds to government's ambition to create a developmental state that requires capacity at the district municipalities to better coordinate and provide social and economic development outcomes (Khambule, 2021: 507).

The establishment of a developmental state in South Africa is grounded on the vision of the state and society working together at all levels to advance socio-economic development and service delivery (Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (DCOGTA), (2009-2014: 2). The local government elections held in 2000 ushered in a new dawn and exciting period of change for local government in South Africa (South African Local Government Association (SALGA, 2000: 3)). There is remarkable and unprecedented progress made by municipalities in realising the vision of developmental local government since the establishment of a local sphere of government post-apartheid South Africa (de Visser, 2009: 7). The legislative and policy framework for local government after the demise of the apartheid regime laid the foundation for the new generation of local government as contemplated in the Municipal Systems Act (2000).

According to Khambule, (2021: 508), in the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, (2019), the DDM was established to address the local government's culture of working in isolation from other spheres of government on one hand, and on the other hand the lack of coherence in development planning and implementation to ensure improved delivering of social and economic developmental services. Developmental local government is defined as the type of local government that puts economic development on the top of the agenda and as priority number one that can design effective instruments to promote and realise the developmental principles as well as objectives (Bagchi, 2000: 398). It is the responsibility and legislative requirement for municipality to provide services in an efficient and sustainable manner without disadvantaging other sectors of the population.

The DDM is an integrated district-based approach to addressing service delivery challenges through localised procurement and job creation that promotes and supports local businesses, and involves local communities, (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2020: 9). Accordingly, the DDM does not provide the clarity in terms of aligning planning and budgeting as the centre of coordination and implementation of the imperatives of this model or framework. The DDM was conceptualised in a manner that it is consistent with the Back-to-Basic (B2B) Model that assists municipalities to respond to development and service delivery by promoting participatory democracy without undermining the objects of integrated development planning.

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

The framework of *decision-making transparency* as postulated in Grimmelikhuijsen and Welsh (2012) is beneficial in resolving the research objective on the determination of district municipalities' s contribution towards the broader infrastructure development and service delivery to the society. Transparency exercised by the leadership and management of a municipality can be enabled by many factors such as the public participation, consultation, and strategies on local development planning and spatial development planning where targets can be collectively set. Conversely, the *policy information transparency* which feeds into the *policy outcome transparency* could have an input towards an assessment on the extent to which the various structures are contributing towards the improvement of the economic livelihood of communities. Grimmelikhuijsen and Feenay (2017) explicate that the decision-making transparency is associated with political influence where in this case it would involve the Municipal Mayoral Committee with the Councillor representing the communities. The policy information transparency draws on the media's attention where the failure to make decisions will hold the Functionaries accountable to the public. In light of the policy outcome transparency, the public will

have the capacity to exert pressure on the promises made on the infrastructure development for an accelerated service delivery and this will be supported by the media briefs.

Empirical Review

The legislation is a necessity in every country and if the regulations were executed according to the provisions as stipulated, there would not be any naming and shaming to the government. This study therefore hypothesizes that the legislative framework has potential in assisting the district municipalities in responding to development and service delivery gaps but without any success and it is believed that the Acts are there just to guide decision making and the development of strategies.

The third objective which is to ascertain whether the existing legislative frameworks have a potential of assisting the district municipalities in responding to development and service delivery gaps is a misnomer to a certain extent given the situation on the ground. In South Africa, rural development was a key priority programme for the past five years (between 2009 and 2014) (Olivier, Van Zyl and Williams, 2010: 101). Government started to give attention to development as an integrated approach to fight underdevelopment with the purpose of resuscitating service delivery and development. If this situation cannot be given immediate attention and arrested, municipalities would be the breeding ground for poverty due to lack of provision of essential services. The targeted programmes by national government to transform the village into an urban town with major infrastructure do not yield the desired results (Obadire, Mudau, Sarfo-Mesah, and Zuwarimwe, 2013: 273). The South African Constitution, (1996) provides a binding framework for the planning, coordination, and implementation of development as one of the key foundations of South Africa's developmental approach (Olivier et al., 2010: 101).

Methodology

Research Design

Phenomenological research begins with the acknowledgement of the gaps in understanding and clarifying the benefit of research (Hancock, 1998: 4). The reason why phenomenology research was considered as important in social science research is because human beings are making sense of the world they are living in (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009: 116). Phenomenological design necessitates the awareness, increases perception, and gathers an understanding. The methodology for this study is profoundly qualitative and provides the subjectivity on the phenomenon during data collection and analysis.

The research reflects on fundamentals of the social science study that encapsulates and resonates well in a qualitative nature, and it embraces the document analysis within the context of the legislative framework. Only the Acts were scrutinised and analysed to give an impetus to the study. Understanding of the phenomenon under investigation involved secondary analysis from the data acquired from a thesis' point of view which was undertaken by Thobejane (2019). The data was consolidated into dependent and independent variables using service delivery implications and the legislative frameworks as points of departure. In the light of this expression, phenomenological studies were found to be humanistic and anti-positivist and therefore pursue the qualitative method. This methodology responds and relates to the frigidity of the district municipalities towards the needs of society, a synthesis of service delivery framework which is the main topic that is being reconnoitred in this article.

Sample of the study

It is quintessential that the terminology, meaning, and clarity in sampling are examined so that underlying assumptions are made more explicit (Coyne, 1997: 623). Sampling procedures must meet a certain standard in terms of meeting some key features of qualitative samples (Coyne, 1997: 623). The social science actively selects and uses the most productive sample to satisfy the research objectives (Marshall, 1996: 523).

The phenomenological description of the respondents/participants was clearly articulated in the form of a graph which further demonstrates the categories of respondents in terms of the age groups, education, and gender during data collection. This article considered that non-probability sampling technique which is a qualitative social science method. In addition, non-probability is more of a non-statistical method used in social science research than probability sampling which is statistical and commonly used in quantitative research. Non-probability sampling technique is an unscientific sampling that is based on the convenience to the researcher (Bird, 2009: 1322). The data was collected from an initial sample disaggregated from a myriad of stakeholders. Thirty (30) respondents came from the business sector, Forty-Five (45) respondents (individual members of communities) from the sampled municipalities, Thirty (30) respondents from the Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs), Fifteen (15) respondents from the Mining Forums and Forty (40) respondents from the Traditional Councils.

Whereas the sample for this study considered the secondary sources from the following documents:

- i. Thesis.
- ii. South African Constitution, (1996).
- iii. Municipal Structures Act, (1998).
- iv. Municipal Systems Act, (2000) Municipal Demarcation Act, (1998),
- v. White Paper on Local Government, (1998).
- vi. Limpopo PGDS (2004-2014).

- vii. Reports from the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP).
- viii. Municipal Public Account Committee (MPAC).
- ix. SALGA.
- x. The National Development Plan (NDP).
- xi. Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP).
- xii. Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS).
- xiii. National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP).
- xiv. Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC).
- xv. Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP).

These national policies were profound in providing information on the role played by municipalities in response to development in each area to corroborate the data collected during a comprehensive doctoral study.

Data collection

The initial primary data was collected from the respondents within the age categories presented in the Figure 1 below. Data was collected on these local structures as illustrated in Figure 1 n which local forums were classified as focus groups to solicit their level of understanding of development matters.

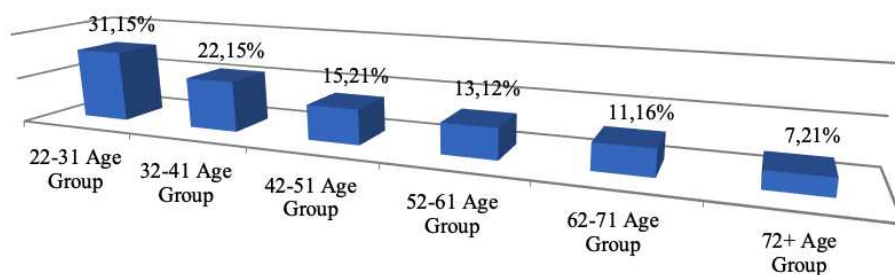


Figure 1: Age Groups of Respondents in The District Municipalities; *Source:* Thobejane, 2019

Data gathering methods applicable for qualitative research included key informant interviews, direct interaction with participants, and phenomenological interviews that necessitated the researcher to better understand the participants’ interaction with development holistically.

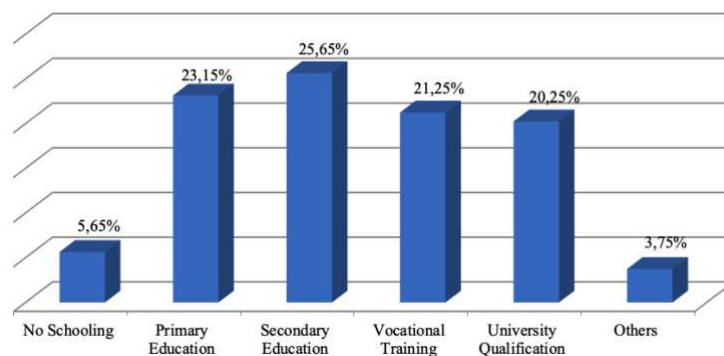


Figure 2: Educational Background of The Respondents in The District Municipalities; *Source:* Thobejane, 2019

The Figure 2 above illustrates the level of education possessed by the same respondents and how their educational background indicates the extent to which the participants understood the service delivery and the role of the district municipalities as opposed to the provincial sphere of government.

Gender plays an intrinsic role in any scientific study as it highlights the resource planning and allocation in support of development and service delivery. Gender was taken into consideration during the selection of respondents as displayed in Figure 3 below.

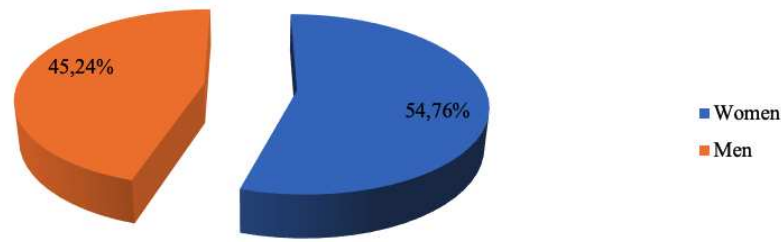


Figure 3: Based on Gender Disparities in The District Municipality; *Source:* Thobejane, 2019

In this study, the gender of participants was contextualised as a key factor to determine the importance of the district municipalities in discharging their constitutional and legislative mandate. This is depicted by the pie chart above which seeks to unbundle the gender parities of the respondents during this study. Equally, the participation and involvement of these participants were measured in terms of the graphs above which relate to the level of their education to hold them to account to the voters on the one hand and to fast-track development and service delivery on the other hand. It is the responsibility of the district municipalities to promote corporate governance.

Data Analysis

The Atlas TI was employed as a scientific instrument entrusted with empirical data analysis during the initial study. Atlas TI is recommended inherently as a software that supports qualitative social science research where the basis of the research design relies on the descriptive and phenomenological analysis as it allows formerly manual procedures to be accomplished more quickly and seamlessly. Indispensably, it cannot be overstated that the use of Atlas TI necessitates the systematic and procedural exploration of complexities necessary to produce a thematic analysis of the quality required in the academic context. The application of Atlas TI Version 6 heralds the most significance milestone in the interpretation during analysis, particularly when the researcher used interview schedules for data collection. Kelle (2004: 483) concludes that the Atlas TI programme appears to be the exception on the rule and software programmes because it offers the user the opportunity to make possible connections between the different codes of the qualitative database. Creswell (2008: 249) found it “equally important that it is the quick recall of data like an idea obtained from the networks created, which makes this program more than useful and valuable”.

Findings and Discussions

There are several development challenges, which may be related to overcoming endemic and high-risk and often referred to as paradoxical problems (Woodhill 2004: 1). This Figure 4 below reflects the extent of interventions on various structures in support of development at district municipalities.

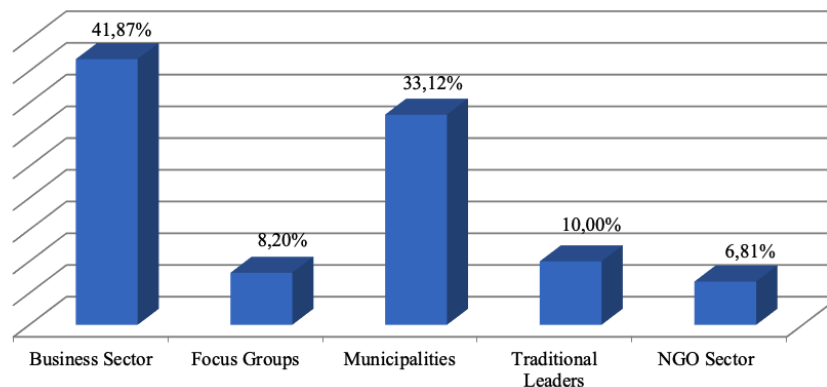


Figure 4: The Level of Interventions by Structures in The Form of Capacity at The District Municipalities; *Source:* Thobejane, 2019

A synthesis by the district municipalities as illustrated in Figure 4 above, provides the picture in terms of the extent to which the provision of service delivery and development look like. This highlights what is expected from the district municipalities in support of local municipalities to discharge their legislative and constitutional mandate given to them in the advent of democracy post-2000 democratic local government elections. This discrepancy in terms of provision of services is because district municipalities are under-resourced but also the package differences between the category C municipalities and their local municipalities particularly the category B (B1).

Figure 5 below illustrates that the business sector with 41.7% plays the most crucial role in terms of interventions programme for supporting development at district municipalities. This is followed by municipalities at 33.12%. The presentation fulfils the second

research objective of assessing the extent to which various structures are contributing towards the improvement of the economic livelihood of communities.

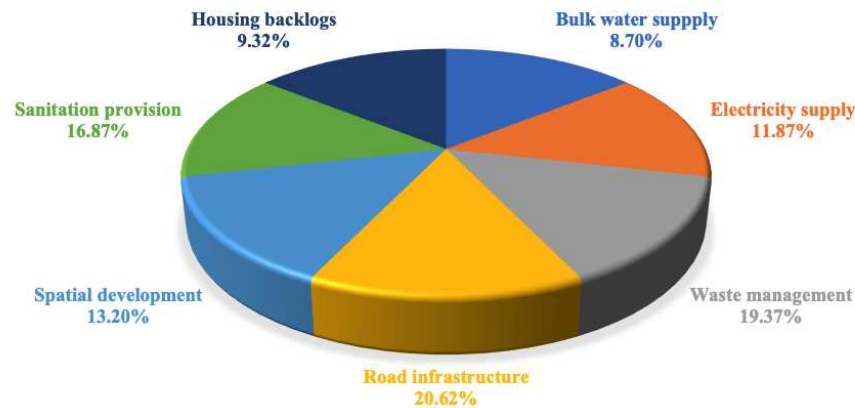


Figure 5: Pie Chart on Development and Service Delivery Backlogs in The District Municipalities; *Source:* Thobejane, 2019

This Figure 5 above illustrates service delivery gaps in terms of responding to the second research objective on the extent to which the various structures are contributing towards the improvement of the economic livelihood of communities. It is clearly depicted with percentages that the district municipalities are not doing so well in terms of service delivery and yet the legislation stipulates clearly what the roles of the district Municipalities are.

Municipal Public Accounts Committee (Section 79 of the Municipal Structures Act)

According to SALGA (2012: 3), one of the strategic objectives of the Local Government Turnaround Strategy of 2009 was to build clean, effective, efficient, responsive, and local government which is accountable through governance systems and structures that are operational in municipalities however, their quality and effectiveness are sometimes questionable. The district municipalities are legislatively required to establish a Section 79 committees in accordance with the Municipal Structures Act (1998). The establishment of this committee(s) would be in line with Section 79 of the Municipal Structures Act (1998) which is Municipal Public Account Committee (MPAC). The main purpose of the MPAC is to exercise oversight over the executive functionaries of council and to ensure good governance in the municipality (SALGA 2012: 8). “The local government fiscal framework’s credibility is because it is deliberately designed to raise awareness on municipality’s accountability to residents” (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation 1994-2014: 39).

The institutional manifestation facing district municipalities is a deep-rooted crisis due to the shortage of appropriate capacity, managerial skills and technical knowledge for these positions that are crucial for development which in turn weakens service delivery in the local sphere (van Donk, Swilling, Pieterse and Parnell, 2008: 53). In dealing with this challenge, the DPLG (2004) initiated flagship projects such as a large-scale capacity building intervention called Project Consolidate across the country that were implemented in 134 municipalities (almost 50% of the total number of municipalities in the country) in which many of them are in the rural areas (van Donk et al., 2008: 53). It is increasingly evidenced that little attention was given to development and service delivery in municipalities. It is in this context that district municipalities continue losing public confidence and credibility. The provision of various legal frameworks was to resuscitate local government in support of the district and local municipalities as they are at the epicentre of the government delivery system but most importantly, at the heart of poverty eradication through development initiatives (Mogale, 2003: 227). The findings have managed to provide evidence and underscore the hypothesis postulated by the authors accurately and successfully.

Primarily, service delivery suffers due to lack of accountability and most importantly, no action is taken to ensure that a culture of accountable and responsive local governance is instilled. Lack of accountability by those in power reflects lack of strategic leadership. Siddle and Koelble, (2016: 34) stated that “one of government’s principal responses to the difficulties facing local government was the introduction of a number of capacity building projects aimed at improving the capacity of local government to deliver services without signs of success”. One of the crucial instruments developed to support service delivery is Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) which synchronises and gives effect to the Integrated Development Plan and budget which is a key planning and budgeting tool in every municipality.

State of Service Delivery and Development Barometer at District Municipalities

There are distinct national policy frameworks that better respond to rural development as the catalysts geared toward addressing the rural infrastructure development challenges. The national policies that are fundamental and impacting on development in support of service delivery in municipalities are: Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP); Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS); National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP); Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating

Commission (PICC); National Development Plan (NDP); and Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP). These national policies are crucial in assessing the role of district municipalities in response to development in their areas of jurisdiction. Post 1994 apartheid South Africa, the government was seen paying attention on the development of national frameworks that seek to redress the injustices of the past. Among others (policy frameworks) developed as stated above were to reverse the distorted (infrastructure) development which was planned to disenchant some section of the population particularly the historical disadvantaged individuals.

The implementation of the first two South African rural development policy frameworks during assessment highlights that there is an urgent need and intervention for radical approaches to respond to development through coordination, planning, and implementation of rural development strategies (Olivier et al., 2010: 101). Olivier et al., (2010: 101) stated that “this need is currently being addressed by the post-April 2009 government elections however, significant challenges regarding the coordination and alignment of other existing development related programmes still have to be resolved, both at the levels of conceptualisation and execution”.

Approach to development is an essential intervention as it calls for the establishment of meaningful development capacity in South Africa (South Africa Yearbook, 2011/12: 410). Yet urbanisation by itself is not a long-term answer to the problems of development but instead at its best may serve as a temporary release valve (Steyn, 1992: 41). The district municipalities impact negatively in its local municipalities in terms of service provision and infrastructure development. Furthermore, according to Steyn (1992: 42), “this perspective emphasises the importance of seeing development as a long term, nationally integrative process which seeks to redress imbalances in income-earning opportunities, so as to rebuild the quality of life in the rural areas”. It is in this context that development at local government should be seen as horizontally and vertically integrated and centrally coordinated.

Constitutional and Legislative Frameworks

Section (139) of the South African Constitution, (1996) states that when a municipality does not fulfil an executive obligation in terms of the constitutional obligation or legislation, the relevant provincial executive may intervene by taking any appropriate steps in ensuring the realisation and fulfilment of that mandate. It is the responsibility of the district municipality as enunciated in Section 152 (2) of the South African Constitution, (1996) to strive within its means (financially and administratively) and its capacity to achieve the objectives set out in subsection (1) of Section 152. Section 153 of the South African Constitution, (1996) further enjoins that a municipality must:

- i. structure and manage its administration, budget, and plan processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community and promote social and economic development of the community.
- ii. participate in the national and provincial development programmes.

The national and provincial governments by legislative and other measures as envisaged in the South African Constitution, (1996), Section 154 (2), encourages the two spheres of government to support and strengthen the capacity of municipalities to manage their own affairs and to exercise their powers in performing their functions. Section 156 (5) of the South African Constitution, (1996) therefore states that, a municipality has the right to exercise any power concerning a matter reasonably necessary for, or incidental to, the effective performance of its functions. It is the responsibility of the provincial government in terms of Section 155 (6) to establish municipalities in its province in a manner consistent with the legislation enacted in terms of subsections (2) and (3) by legislative or other measures to, among others - promote the development of local government capacity to enable municipalities to perform their functions and manage their own affairs.

Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act, (2000) enjoins that a municipality must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance, and must for this purpose encourage, and create conditions for, the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality. The way municipalities across South Africa were structured in terms of Municipal Structures Act, (1998), Municipal Demarcation Act, (1998) read with the South African Constitution (1996) was to redress the injustices of the past as well as to ensure that they are more responsive to the needs and the plight of their communities. It is in this context that Chapter 5 of the Municipal Systems Act, (2000) provides for the notion of integrated development planning with takes the precedence in all municipal plans. In ensuring that municipalities comply with this framework, the Municipal Systems Act, (2000) states that for municipal planning to be developmental, a municipality must undertake developmentally oriented planning to ensure that it:

- i. strives to achieve the objects of local government set out in section 152 of the South African Constitution, (1996).
- ii. gives effect to its developmental duties as required by section 153 of the South African Constitution, (1996), and together with other organs of the state,
- iii. contributes to the legal instruments provided for the progressive realisation of the fundamental rights as enshrined in the South African Constitution, (1996).

This disadvantaged the district municipalities to attract the most skilful section 56 managers accountable to the municipal managers. In the centre of this arrangement, consideration was not given to the long-term impact of the district municipalities. In South Africa, the district municipalities are less paying institutions and they are struggling to attract the most skilled employees that would be in a better position to implement development and service delivery programmes. The district municipalities as big as they are, their employee’s packages are capped to the level of category B4 local municipalities whilst the district municipalities are prevalent in the rural areas where infrastructure development and service delivery are on the brink of collapse. The ascriptions emanating from this section of the study were able to fulfil the third objective which served to ascertain whether the existing legislative frameworks have a potential of assist the district municipalities in responding to development and service delivery gaps. This study has established a determining barometer that suggests that the district municipalities are at the crossroad in terms of discharging and realising their mandate. Therefore, it is fair to state that the existing legislative frameworks does have a potential of assisting the district municipalities in responding to development and service delivery gaps but not able to succeed due to challenges listed in the above paragraphs.

Table 1 below summarises the acceptance and rejection of the status of the hypothesis for the current study

Table 1: Hypothesis Summary

	Hypothesis Summary	Indicator, Development Barometer	Label
H01	There are challenges on how the district municipalities contribute towards the broader infrastructure development and service delivery to the society.	.000	Accepted
H02	The various structures are not contributing towards the improvement of the economic livelihoods of communities due to lack of resources.	.000	Accepted
H03	The existing legislative frameworks have a potential; of assisting the district municipalities in responding to development and service delivery gaps but without success due to lack of resources	.000	Accepted
H04	The legislative framework exists to only aid the leadership and management with decision making but without success of implementation due to lack of resources.	.000	Accepted

Source: Author

Conclusions

The district municipalities should always refer to their constitutional mandate as articulated in Section 152 (1) of the South African Constitution (1996) that informs the basis for their existence in every corner of the Republic of South Africa. This is consistent with Section 151 (1) of the South African Constitution which states that “the local sphere of government consisting of municipalities is established for the whole of the territory within the Republic”. It is in this context that when a Municipal Demarcation Board makes a determination of municipal boundaries in terms of Section 151 it takes the precedence to give effect to the Municipal Demarcation Act, (1998). The challenges facing service delivery and infrastructure development could be attributed to inadequate implementation and monitoring of the MPAC resolutions that are crucial for accountability. Additionally, the SDBIP serves as a yardstick for assessing the extent to which district municipalities spend their allocated budget that should be aligned with their planning priorities to respond to service delivery and development to change the lives of their constituencies better.

Section 153 (a) deals with developmental duties of municipalities and it states that it is the responsibility of individual municipality to among others, structure and manage its administration, budgeting, and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community, and to promote the social and economic development of the community. This study provides the contextual background in terms of how municipalities at district level should coordinate their planning and budgeting to give effect to socio-economic development but in the main, to improve the livelihood of the societies they serve.

While the Municipal Structures Act, (1998) provides for the establishment of municipalities in accordance with the requirements relating to categories and types of municipalities, the Municipal Systems Act, (2000) provides the legal frameworks that enjoins municipalities to be developmentally oriented agencies for service delivery. It is against this background that the legislative frameworks are there to support municipalities to discharge their constitutional mandate. It would be disproportionate if it could be said that legal frameworks are inadequate to support and guide municipalities in South Africa. The fridity of the district municipalities towards the needs of society; a synthesis of service delivery framework was the subject under investigation. Investigation of the research programme in one district municipality in the initial study was a limitation, however, the strength of this particular study was built from a review of wide local government plans, programmes, strategies, reports, and their analysis thereof, enabled us to reach this general holistic conclusion. There is a need for more futuristic studies on this for crafting more frameworks

to support district municipalities to realise their tantalising vision of achieving a developmental state that is grounded on developmental and capable local government. This study expounded the essential recommendations which would inform policy shift and policy reform as fundamental approaches to development which responds squarely to service delivery.

The recommendations in this study propose the new approach to development and service delivery at district municipalities, after critical and careful observation of infrastructure backlogs particularly in rural areas where the district municipalities predominantly exist. Most importantly an assessment is indispensable to inform the decision-making structures to develop a turn-around plan as a response. Intrinsically, a policy shift is urgently required to better respond to development challenges in support of the district municipalities to accelerate service delivery but also to ensure that the legacies of apartheid which relate to lopsided development are swiftly and properly addressed. It was established that the resources should be allocated to the district municipalities to better attract the employees that are capable of driving development and service delivery for the benefit of society. The classification and categorisation of the district municipalities and local municipalities needs to be reviewed to give effect to service delivery in support of their local municipalities. The district municipalities are regional and their counterparts which are the category A municipalities are more resourced, well advanced in terms of infrastructure development and the standard of services because they are metropolitans existing in the major city centres.

This study has managed to untangle eminent issues to determine the contribution of district municipalities to the broader infrastructure development and service delivery to the society. It is in this context that infrastructure development coupled with service delivery are intrinsic in promoting socio-economic livelihood of communities. To this end, the current legislative frameworks need to be reviewed, revised, and improved in support of the district municipalities to be able to accelerate development and service delivery. The district municipalities must develop a model that fits its rural typology to attain socially cohesive, developmentally responsive, and stable rural communities with viable institutions...and developmental needs (Human Science Research Council, 2000: iv). Institutional resources and individual capacity were cited as some of impediments for the district municipalities to achieve developmental agenda of the state and to accelerate services to improve the material conditions of the poor and marginalised sections of the population. It is undoubtedly, true that the challenges facing the district municipalities are crucial and fundamental to bring about reform. Whilst the national policies were reviewed in this study, attention should focus on alignment, implementation, coordination as well as monitoring and evaluation for their impact.

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