

An Investigation into Service Delivery Provided by the Amathole District Municipality (ADM) in the Eastern Cape of South Africa

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ABSTRACT This study was carried out to investigate on the service delivery provided by the ADM in the Eastern Cape. The study aimed at investigating the service delivery provided by the ADM to the rural communities, and to identify the causes of failure facing the ADM in providing effective service delivery. The study used a review of documents for data collection in order to debate, criticize and discuss the various issues affecting the ADM from providing qualitative service delivery to their rural communities. The findings show that inadequate knowledge and unprofessional conduct of social development workers, especially in responding to the demand of the less privileged and inspiring the local economy are some of core factors hindering the rural development of ADM in providing qualitative service delivery to its communities. To achieve effective service delivery in this district, it is very important that the precise functions and tasks of various sectors that work together with local authorities are clearly explained and respected. The paper finally suggested that the ADM managers should improve their communication strategy that would provide quality service delivery to the communities, develop comprehensive and integrated public education and outreach programmes within their district of jurisdiction.

INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 stipulates that local government should give priority to the basic needs of all people and promote the social and economic development of the community. The White Paper on Local Government (1998) states that developmental local governments need to find sustainable ways of addressing service delivery needs and in improving the quality of residents' lives (Republic of South Africa 1998).

"Buffalo City accounts for 42 percent of the district's population of the economic output, and 72 percent of the district's formal employment (Van donk et al. 2008). The city is clearly important to the growth and development fortunes of the district and critical to realising an integrated district growth and development agenda. Sectors that provide formal employment in the district are public services (75,000 jobs); manufacturing (27,000 jobs); trade (25,000 jobs); and ag-

riculture (17,000 jobs)" (Van donk et al. 2008). "Tourism is the most important sector in the Amathole economy; with the Wild Coast, the Sunshine Coast, the Amathole Mountain Escape and the Friendly N6 popular tourist destinations. Three tourist routes overlap the Amathole District, including the Sunshine Coast (Port Elizabeth to East London), the Wild Coast (East London to Port Edward), the Friendly N6 (East London to Bloemfontein) and a fourth route, the Amathole Mountain Escape, falls wholly within the district in the northern reaches. Nevertheless, unemployment and poverty levels are high, particularly in those local municipalities which were formerly in Ciskei and Transkei" (Van donk et al. 2008: 275).

The "regular and often violent protests by residents to express their frustration and disillusionment with the level of service delivery throughout the country are an indication of the enormous challenges facing local government" (Tsatsire 2008). Most of these demonstrations are caused by "lack of basic service delivery, such as water, sanitation and housing. Failure by local government to deliver public services undermines the spirit of the South African Constitution. The survival of local government as an independent sphere of government will, therefore, depend on how successful it is in fulfilling its constitutional mandate of being an agent of

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service delivery and development (Tsatsire 2008). The status of developmental local government is underpinned by its ability to render basic services. This cannot be realised unless the challenges facing developmental local government are critically analysed and effective solutions are proposed.”

With reference to the study conducted by Khumalo and Thakhathi (2012), they emphasised that the District has eight local municipalities, each containing at least one urban service centre and these include:

- Amahlathi Municipality (Cathcart, Stutterheim and Kei Road)
- Buffalo City Municipality (East London, King William’s Town, Mdantsane and Bhisho)
- Great Kei (Komga, Kei Mouth, Haggagga, Morgan’s Bay and Chintsa)
- Mbhashe (Dutywa, Willowvale, Elliotdale)
- Mnquma (Butterworth, Ngamakwe, Centane)
- Ngqushwa (Peggie, Hamburg)
- Nkonkobe (Seymour, Fort Beaufort, Alice, Middledrift)
- Nxuba (Bedford, Adelaide)

The region is challenged with a higher demand for basic services as well as housing. There has been a growth in informal settlements in Amathole which negatively influences the health and environmental status of the district. Services such as education, reproductive health, youth development and development projects to address poverty remain a challenge for local government and government departments. The District Municipality is made up of a few former homelands where limited or no development has taken place over a number of years. This has translated in Amathole experiencing high levels of poverty across the district. The public sector dominates the region’s economy, which indicates the challenge of a limited production base in the area, and limited private investment growth into the ADMs economy. Economic situation in terms of lack of income and unemployment of the population is increasing” (Van donk et al. 2008).

It is against this background, with local government still not stable, that the researcher decided to conduct a critical analysis of developmental local government and its relevance to the democratic South Africa, using the Amathole District Municipality as a case study. A thorough literature review is undertaken so as to bring clarity on the subject and also give a broad

appreciation of the related subjects under review. Owing to the nature of the study qualitative approach is employed to validate this work. Ethical considerations in carrying out the research are outlined. Subsequently, limitations in terms of time and other resources and other limitations of the study are discussed. To enable one to appreciate how conclusions of the study were arrived at, data analysis is also discussed. It is hoped that this study will assist the identified Municipality and other municipalities, both in the Eastern Cape Province and in the country in general.

This study plays an important role in assisting the Amathole District Municipality to assess whether its policies are in line with the requirements of South African Constitution and other relevant legislation. It also assists the public in being equipped with the law that entitles them to participate in municipal decision making.

Problem Statement

Despite the fact that the ADM in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa has been trying to provide service delivery to rural communities, the ADM is still failing to provide effective service delivery especially in the areas of providing social infrastructure to rural communities. This is seen from many service delivery protest and demonstrations. It is important for ADM Managers to build their own capacity and competency on the Local Economic Development (LED) policy that will have a direct impact on basic or essential needs of the communities. Investigations on the role of ADM managers in providing service delivery to the communities of ADM will be investigated. The basic needs of the communities in order for the ADM to provide qualitative service delivery will also be assessed. Poor decisions made by the ADM managers on the LED in this district will be examined. Inadequate knowledge of social development of communities, especially in meeting the basic needs of the poor (such as housing, water, electricity among others) and stimulating the local economy are some of the underlying factors hampering the development of ADM rural communities in the Eastern Cape. Therefore, there is a need for the ADM through its service delivery and regulation, to apply greater influence over the social and economic well-being of local communities.

Research Objectives

- To investigate the service delivery provided by the ADM to the rural communities.
- To investigate the causes of failure facing the ADM in providing qualitative service delivery in its municipal District.

Research Questions

- Does the ADM provide effective service delivery to the rural communities?
- What are the causes of failure facing the ADM in providing qualitative service delivery in its municipal district?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper used a review of literature from journals, books, dissertations and internet sources. Also, the researchers used their experiences and knowledge in public administration discourses on issues pertaining to the importance of community contributions in the budgetary process in the Eastern Cape of South Africa.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The Features of Developmental Local Government

Observably, the obligatory state of developmental local government as sought in South Africa has features provided for in terms of the White Paper on Local Government of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998). Smith and Vawda (2003) identify those features as four principal elements for putting developmental local government in practice, namely, cultivating citizens through participation in service delivery, good governance, democratising development, and fostering economic growth. The features of these “are maximising social development and economic growth; integrating and coordinating; democratising development; and leading and learning” (Republic of South Africa 1998). These characteristics are interrelated.

Maximising Social Development and Economic Growth

Arguably, Van donk et al. (2008), state that “social development is a planned process, and is an approach to the transformation of society

that allows a holistic development process to take place towards the reduction or eradication of poverty, inequality and uneven development or underdevelopment.” The powers and functions of local government should be exercised so as to maximise the impact on the social development of communities, particularly in meeting the basic needs of the poor and stimulating the local economy. Through its traditional responsibilities (service delivery and regulation), local government exerts great influence over the social and economic well-being of local communities. The closeness of local government to the community makes it an ideal agent of social and economic growth. Local government is responsible for rendering quality services and should redistribute wealth through its preferential supply chain policies and a progressive taxation policy. Furthermore, local government employs many people, thereby providing jobs as well. Local government is also strategically located to boost black economic empowerment and facilitate the development of small businesses. Aspects of LED therefore, become important for local government (Republic of South Africa 1998). Economic growth is a complex and controversial phenomenon (Gylfason 1999). Gylfason similarly stresses that “economic growth refers to a positive change in the level of production of goods and services by a country over a certain time.” In the developmental local government context it may refer to such growth taking place within the municipal sphere.

Integration and Co-ordinating

The White Paper on Local Government 1998 states explicitly that “developmental local government must provide a vision and leadership for all those who have a role to play in achieving local prosperity” (Republic of South Africa 1998). Poor management among those providing services could harshly demoralise the developing effort. The local authorities within the municipalities should dynamically develop techniques that will adequately leverage resources and investment from both the public and private sectors to meet developmental targets. The desired co-ordination and integration can be achieved through Integrated Development Plans (hereinafter referred to as IDPs), which constitute powerful tools for municipalities to facilitate inte-

grated and co-ordinated delivery within their localities. Local government should therefore establish co-ordinating structures, systems and processes to regulate joint planning (Republic of South Africa 1998).

Mosley et al. (1996) refers to integration as a method of constructive conflict resolution whereby the people involved look for ways to resolve their differences so that everyone gets what he or she wants. On one hand, integration is thus a characteristic of the relationships among the components of a system (Teune and Mlinar 1978). It is clear that the establishment of sustainable and liveable settlements depends on the co-ordination of a range of services and regulations, including land-use planning, household infrastructure, environmental management, transport, health and education, safety and security, and housing. Municipalities therefore need to work closely with other spheres of government and service providers and assume an active integrating and co-ordinating role" (Republic of South Africa 1998).

Democratising Improvement, Enabling and Reallocating

Municipal Councils play a dominant role in encouraging native democracy (Republic of South Africa 1998). Equally important, democratising development requires moving beyond a representative democracy to participatory democracy (Smith and Vawda 2003). In addition to representing community interests within the Council, municipal councillors should promote the involvement of citizens and community groups in the design and delivery of municipal programmes. According to Birch (1993), understanding democracy from the dictionary definition that means rule of the people, one immediately runs into a problem of how, in practical terms, to define the people and how to define the meaning of rule. Birch further states that, the term democratic is used to indicate a degree of social equality, not a form of government. Social democracy is a political ideology which advocates socialist economic and social policies to be carried out within a society which has democratic political institutions and processes, so the concept of social democracy is parasitical upon the concept of political democracy. Van beek (2005) refers to democracy as a form of political organisation guided by the idea that political domination and government should be grounded in the will of the ruled people. The

ruled should also be rulers; and political power should be rooted in, and legitimated by, the will of the people (Van beek 2005). Democracy as characterised in the South African developmental local government goes beyond the single meaning and takes place at various levels of governance. For example, there is no clear reason why the elite competition for popular vote should be called democracy rather than elite pluralism.

Van der Walddt and Helmbold (1995) outline democracy in the South African context from a philosophical basis and divide it up in terms of liberal democracy, social democracy and consensus democracy. Liberalism rests on the assumption that the long-standing social, economic and political problems of the day can be quickly and permanently smoothed out by the complete dismantling of the "old order" and transformation of society in accordance with the new guidelines. The principles of liberal democracy might be summed up as legitimately governing structures, respect of human rights and elected representation. Van der Walddt and Helmbold emphasised that consensus democracy "presupposes willingness on the part of all the significant political groupings represented in the legislative and executive bodies to work together in protecting and promoting the interests of the country" and in line with this, put people's opinions and interest into consideration.

Leading and Learning

"Local government operates in a global and ever-changing environment. New and unique challenges arise from time to time, and they need to be addressed. Furthermore, local government needs to be sustainable to fulfil the principles of developmental local government. Local governments should, therefore, be innovative and become learning institutions. Social and economic growth and knowledge management must become key issues. This should include investing in human capital, which also accommodates citizens. New ways should be found to create sustainable economies and preserve the environment. Internal human resources ward committees and councillors should be empowered so that all stakeholders are mobilised to build developmental institutions" (Republic of South Africa 1998). "Developmental local government requires that municipalities become more strategic, visionary and ultimately influential in the

way they operate” (Republic of South Africa 1998). Local Municipality council have a crucial role as policymakers, as thinkers and innovators, and as institutions of local democracy. Northouse (2007) defines leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Developmental local government must therefore, ensure that processes are in place to influence all agents and stakeholders towards achieving the common goal.

According to Vickers (1995), learning takes place only in individual minds, and its possibilities are closely linked with the human life cycle. Individual learning may, however, be differentiated from organisational learning (Fitzroy and Hulbert 2005). Organisations learn via their individual members but organisational learning is not dependent on a single individual. For organisational learning to become a source of competitive advantage, knowledge must become structural or organisational, even though it may start as individual or tacit. If a specific individual leaves an institution or organisation, all the learning knowledge possessed by that individual does not leave at the same time. Therefore, Fitzroy and Hulbert undoubtedly emphasised that administrative knowledge is characteristically captured in the procedures and developments of the organisation.

Developmental Outcomes of Local Authorities

In terms of the White Paper on Local Government of 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998), the key outcomes that developmental local government seeks to achieve are as follows:-

Provision of Household Infrastructure and Service

Observably, many local authorities in South Africa are expected to render direct services that are needed for survival. This includes the provision of infrastructure such as roads, water, electricity and sanitation. Apart from the fact that basic services are a constitutional right, these services are needed to promote the wellbeing of individuals. Basic services should be provided and extended to those people who were either denied these services before, or who are still not receiving them. The 1998 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa also stipulates that National government job creation initiatives and

the establishment of community based contractors to assist in service delivery can serve to expand and improve service delivery.

Creation of Liveable, Integrated Cities, Towns and Rural Areas

“Apartheid separated communities along racial lines, thereby creating segregated communities. Spatial structures in South Africa are characterised by townships being located far away from towns and places of work” (Department Provincial and Local Government Republic of South Africa 2007). This is the reason why the development of a new Integrated Spatial Development Framework (ISDF) is so crucial. “An integrated Spatial Development Framework enhances social and economic development, and reduces community costs. Unfortunately, the poor and the previously disadvantaged are particularly affected by the existing spatial structures. Integration must ensure affordable mobility between work, home and recreation; combat crime, pollution and congestion; and promote the participation of the previously disadvantaged in the social and economic life of a municipality” (Republic of South Africa 1998).

“Rural areas should benefit from rural development programmes that seek to create liveable environments. Forced removals and the homeland policies of the apartheid government aggravated poverty in rural areas, which needs to be rectified through developing and investing in these areas. Sustainability should include environmental sustainability, as an integral part of integrated development plans” (Republic of South Africa 1998).

Local Economic Development (LED)

“Local government plays an important role in developing local economies, thereby creating jobs. Stimulating the local economy should start with rendering quality cost-effective services and providing an environment favourable for investors. Regulations and policies should not be rigid, but flexible. Supply Chain Management Policies and the Expanded Public Works Programme can assist in job creation (Blakely 1989). Municipalities should expedite and simplify processes and procedures around the evaluation and approval of tenders, building plans and rezoning applications.” LED initiatives are implemented

by means of a well-formulated LED strategy, containing specific projects. Business development through the attraction of new business and assisting existing businesses is required (Blakely 1989; Human et al. 2008; Meyer-Stamer 2003). The economic base of the local area needs to be strengthened by focusing on export activities and value-added products (Blakely 1989; Davis 2004). Local government needs to focus on locality development through marketing of comparative advantages, land development and Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise (SMME) support (Porter 1985; Blakely and Bradshaw 2002; Meyer-Stamer and Hindson 2007; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 2007). LED initiatives include the creation of a positive investment climate, support to SMMEs and emerging businesses, attraction of new businesses, area based development plans for regeneration, and support to poor communities (World Bank 1991; Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) 2001; Trollip 2001; Davis 2004; International Labour Organization (ILO) 2005; Trousdale 2005; Van der Heijden 2008).

Recent Barriers and Causes of Failure Facing ADM in Providing Qualitative Service Delivery

In spite of significant progress in the rationalisation and modernisation of municipal governance, there are specific challenges inherent in the new systems which are possibly hampering the successful transformation of local government. What follows is an examination of some of the most pertinent institutional difficulties that have arisen in the first decade of democratic local government in South Africa.

Size

One of the most important challenges “is the size of the average South Africa municipality. The country has 283 municipalities that serve a population size of 52.98 million and cover a land-mass of 1,220,813 square kilometres (Statistics South Africa 2013). Quick comparisons with Spain (50 provinces and 8,108 municipalities), and Germany (323 districts and 12,477 municipalities), show that South Africa’s municipalities are vast in size and population. In fact, municipalities are actually charged with a regional mandate. Not only are municipalities slowly

emerging from the painfully difficult amalgamation of varied previous municipal administrations, but the management of often very diverse communities is itself a difficult task”. “Furthermore, it is suggested that the size of the South African municipality is a considerable challenge for that municipality when it wants to realise effective community participation. This challenge relates specifically to rural areas. In the quest for economically viable municipal units with redistributive potential, the norm is that a number of towns are demarcated into one municipality together with their rural hinterlands, which are thus very extensive and, again, often diverse in character” (Atkinson 2007).

Executive Mayors

With regards to aforementioned facts, “strong municipal executive leadership is a characteristic of the new generation of municipalities. Many municipalities have executive mayors.” The municipality Structures Act 1998, ss. 55 and 56 (Republic of South Africa 1998) also emphasised “that municipal executive powers are concentrated in one councillor who is elected by the council as its executive mayor.” In addition, section 60 of the Municipality Structures Act 1998, (Republic of South Africa 1998) shows that “the executive mayor in turn hands picks a mayoral committee.” Furthermore, “Municipal Structures Act 1998, ss. 43 and 44” (Republic of South Africa 1998) also depicts that “the collective executive system entails the election by the council of an executive committee that broadly ‘mirrors’ the composition of the municipal council.” It is suggested that the introduction of the indirectly elected executive mayor has been particularly successful in large cities, where it has contributed to visible executive leadership. In general, stakeholders appear to be relatively satisfied with the system. There are however, concerns around potential exclusionary effects. The executive mayor system appears to have created a wide gap between executive councillors (that is, councillors on the mayoral committee) and ordinary councillors who are not part of the mayoral committee (Atkinson 2007). These councillors feel increasingly disadvantaged due to the lack of access to documentation and information flows. A report on the functioning of the mayoral executive system remarked that: “it is clear

that the relationships between the mayoral executive committee and non-executive councillors are not based on democratic values, but display a lack of transparency; autocratic decision-making; and accountability. This is expressed by stakeholders as a lack of respect for one another, a culture of secrecy, and perceptions of marginalisation” (Atkinson 2007).

Improving Community Participation

The involvement of communities in municipal affairs is not only a key objective of local government but also one of the main reasons for South Africa’s choice of developmental local government. Success in this area is thus of paramount importance. Government’s recognition of this importance is evidenced by an elaborate and progressive legal framework for participatory governance at municipal level.

Municipalities are tasked to involve communities in the drafting of their integrated development plan, their budget, and in taking decisions regarding service delivery and development. Furthermore, the law contains a legal framework for ward committees. These committees generally comprise ten representatives of various sectors or geographical areas in the ward. They are elected by the voters in the ward. The committee is chaired by the ward councillor. Its role is to advance participation of the community in the affairs of the municipality, particularly in relation to development planning. The concept of a ward committee follows similar practices elsewhere, such as the village development committees in Botswana (Serema 2002).

However, an apparent contradiction exists between the progressive legal framework for community participation and persistent incidences of protest targeting councillors and municipal administrations. Although government has created ample spaces, platforms and procedures for community engagement with local government, it is clear that communities still elect to take their grievances to the streets. These protests expose not only the current shortcomings in service delivery but also the presence of untapped local energy and involvement with municipal governance. Atkinson suggests that the frustrations of communities are threefold. They relate to poor service delivery, unresponsive decision-making and conspicuous consumption by councillors and officials (Atkinson 2007). It

rather emphasises the need for adequate strategies at municipal level for translating this potential and the enabling framework into genuine engagement.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study have shown that the Amathole District Municipality implementation of developmental policies could be used as strategic frameworks designed to serve as a guide in all departments, thereby leading to sustainable development and effective service delivery. The results of the study have also shown that the management officials in Amathole District Municipality need to identify and rectify weaknesses in promoting developmental local government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Amathole District Municipality secure greater participation by residents in matters of governance. Besides the fact that this is a constitutional and legislative requirement, it is also one of the important principles of good corporate governance. The Amathole District Municipality (ADM) must urgently focus its efforts on enhancing public participation and communication. To achieve this, the following is recommended:

- Improvement of communication strategy and systems.
- Development of comprehensive and integrated public education and outreach programmes.
- Review and renewal of institutional systems.
- Sufficiently budgeting and provisioning of other adequate operational requirements to enhance public participation.

Communication between government and citizens should be seen as an integral part of service delivery and governance. A culture of open and on-going communication should prevail, not limited only to crisis communication, marketing and media statements. The business of council and key policy decisions made by council and its committees should be communicated properly and timeously. The Amathole District Municipality should not rely on the local media for communicating with its audiences, because media is mostly sensational and reports on what it thinks its clients want and to sell its

product. A comprehensive communication strategy accompanied by implementation plans with proper time frames needs to be developed and inputted upon by stakeholders.

It is further recommended that the Ward Committee System should not be a voluntary option for local government, as is currently the case, but compulsory. The Amathole District Municipality should go further and audit the functionality of its ward committee system and institutionalise it. Ward committees should be allowed to attend meetings they are currently not allowed to attend, like Mayoral Committee and Procurement meetings, to enhance transparency and to educate the public on Council decision making processes. Furthermore, the Municipality should develop a monitoring and evaluating system for ward committees, so as to improve their performance.

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